

Evaluating the Impact of Basic Design Fundamentals Education on the Creative Process of Fashion Design Students in Surabaya, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This academic paper explores the influence of Basic Design Fundamentals (BDF) education on the creative process of fashion design students in Surabaya, Indonesia. BDF education, rooted in the principles of design, serves as a foundational element in various design disciplines, including fashion. The study employs a mixed-method research approach, combining quantitative Likert scale assessments and qualitative interviews with ten students from the University of Surabaya's fashion design program. The research reveals that BDF education significantly enhances the creative abilities of fashion design students in Surabaya. The majority of participants strongly agree that BDF education positively impacted their creative process, resulting in more visually appealing and well-structured designs. Moreover, BDF education empowers students to strike a balance between creative intuition and systematic thinking, fostering innovative design solutions. However, some participants suggest the need for a more direct application of BDF principles to fashion design projects to bridge the gap between theory and practice effectively. Overall, this study underscores the vital role of BDF education in nurturing creativity and problem-solving skills among fashion design students in Surabaya. The findings offer valuable insights for curriculum development, emphasizing the potential benefits of integrating theoretical design principles with practical applications, thereby enhancing the quality and competitiveness of fashion design graduates. Future research may explore the broader applicability of these findings across diverse cultural and educational contexts.

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1. Introduction

Fashion design is an interdisciplinary subject that encompasses not only art and design education but also managerial and business education. This means a fashion designer must create looks that are not only pleasing to the eye but also widely accepted by the potential target market/buyers (Goworek, 2010). This requires considering trends, problem-solving, and making use of creative processes to meet the needs of the contemporary fashion industry. Fashion design is a field that heavily relies on creativity and innovation. For fashion design students to develop their skills and excel in the

industry, it is crucial to provide them with a strong foundation in basic design fundamentals. This educational program, known as "Basic Design," focuses on introducing students to shapes, colors, rhythm, and light, allowing them to explore and experiment with these elements in their designs. Furthermore, interdisciplinary experiences and education helped prepare the students for the fashion industry. These theories and fundamental principles lay the groundwork for the creative process in fashion design, guiding students in their exploration of innovative and aesthetically pleasing designs that are also marketable and aligned with current trends.

In Basic Design Fundamental (BDF), students will understand the main characteristics of the design elements and the principles to make the elements in order to aesthetically pleasing the audience, which is the potential target market. The effective usage of lines, shapes, and colors with the wise projection of the principles combined with the apparel structure and materials are necessary for creating an exceptional and appealing design in parallel with the fashion trend. Contemporary clothing design should integrate function, design content, and technical considerations to satisfy both physiological and psychological demands (Yen & Hsu, 2017). BDF was actually started in classical design schools like Bauhaus and mainly applied to architectural design (Boucharenc, 2006). Any design-related field education like landscape architecture, architecture, planning, and interior design must impart the skills of translating the research data into designs by effectively communicating visual concepts and design ideas through written and verbal means (Milburn & Brown, 2003).

In the field of fashion design, BDF education is also taught at the beginning of the curriculum. BDF such as the elements and principles of design are taught at the beginning of the design course in order to understand the concept of design (Watson, 2003). Surabaya's fashion landscape is characterized by its unique blend of local aesthetics, cultural traditions, and market preferences. As such, designers in Surabaya need to possess both skill and creativity in order to thrive in this highly competitive and dynamic industry. Many universities in Surabaya offering a major in fashion design have already recognized the importance of incorporating BDF education into their programs to enhance their students' skills.

However, the impact of BDF education on the creative process of fashion design students in Surabaya has not yet been assessed. Studying its impact could contribute to the understanding of effective educational practices that can enhance the creative abilities of fashion design students in Surabaya. This knowledge can inform curriculum development, teaching methods, and instructional strategies to better prepare students for careers in the fashion industry.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Basic Design Fundamentals (BDF)

'Basic Design' also known as 'Foundation Courses' worked as the basis of the pedagogy of many schools of design and architecture around the world. The course has undergone many changes since the 1920s and even disappeared (Boucharenc, 2006). BDF education constitutes the core discipline of design and arts, which is an important basis that supports other design courses (Çelik, 2014). BDF education is usually taken during the first year of the 4 year design education to form the students' understanding of design principles. In BDF education, one must learn to acknowledge the many elements of art/design, which are: color, texture, space, form, shape, dot, and line.

Those elements will be constructed in principles of design, such as balance, dominance/emphasis, hierarchy, scale/proportion, unity/harmony, similarity/contrast, and movement/rhythm (Powsey, 2020). Furthermore, after finishing the BDF education, the students can move forward in more advanced courses such as design projects, embedding their knowledge of the design elements and principles of design, with inspiration as the binding context and the final product as the medium, in which in this case, fashion products such as apparels, lifestyle products, and accessories.

2.2. Fashion Creative Process

In Fashion Design and Development (FDD), a revolutionary product is not the main focus, instead, a fashion designer aims to adapt existing fashion products or synthesize current paradigms (Grigorenko et al., 2008; Ruppert-Stroescu & Hawley, 2014). On the contrary, Ruppert-Stroescu & Hawley identified eight key attributes in the fashion design and development process that impacted creativity: 1) research and development, (2) selling price, (3) nature of the product, (4) consumer taste level, (5) technique, (6) number of designs created and reproduced in a season, (7) consumer perception and life cycle of the product, and (8) source of design inspiration. A good fashion designer should not only master creative skills but also technical skills such as sewing, draping, tailoring, patternmaking, construction techniques, and illustration skills. Research done on the scope of South Korean fashion designers, their creativity is affected by cultural factors, including their organizational systems, groups, the fashion system, individuals, and family (Hwang et al., 2014).

2.3. Basic Design Education in Fashion Design

Elements and principles of design help designers create a platform to enable them to communicate their artistic message through the fabric and the shape of the fashion product. They also help direct the designer on the best use of the fabric, prioritizing what to portray in a design and the best way to present it, which was proven in the research based on 105 respondents representing 60 designers and 45 consumers (Siaw, 2014). A fashion product design should conform to current fashion yet still look individualistic. The combination of fabric characteristics, cutting lines, shapes, colors, and textures must highly be considered artistically. To effectively integrate the fundamental components of design, such as color, line, texture, shape, and form, it is imperative to possess a comprehensive understanding of the principles of art or design, commonly referred to as harmony, proportion, balance, rhythm, and emphasis. Familiarity with these principles is essential for generating visually captivating effects and for critically assessing the quality of designs (Sumathi, 2007).

3. Research Method

This study employed a mixed-method research approach to explore the influence of BDF education on the creative process of fashion design in Surabaya. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to provide a comprehensive understanding of this topic. The quantitative aspect involved using a Likert scale and open-ended questions to evaluate fashion design students' self-perceived abilities, confidence, and proficiency in applying basic design theories to their fashion creations.

Afterward, following the collection of open-ended question responses, a comprehensive semi-structured interview will be conducted with the carefully chosen

participants. During this interview process, the students' experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding how their education in BDF has influenced their creative process in fashion product design will be examined. The selected respondents are students from the esteemed fashion design program at the University of Surabaya who have completed their final projects or graduated from the program. A total of 10 students were interviewed as part of this study endeavor.

4. Results & Discussion

Based on interviews conducted with 10 students from the Faculty of Creative Industries at the University of Surabaya, it was found that a significant majority (7 out of 10) strongly agreed that BDF education played a crucial role in enhancing their creative process as fashion design students. The remaining three participants also scored highly (8 or higher). These findings suggest that integrating BDF education in Surabaya, Indonesia has a positive impact on the creative process of fashion design students. This research contributes to existing knowledge and highlights the importance of incorporating BDF into the fashion curriculum for aspiring designers in this region.

Four participants in the study reported experiencing an enhancement in their ability to create visually appealing designs as a result of incorporating the fundamental principles taught in BDF. Moreover, two individuals expressed a notable increase in confidence regarding their design capabilities through this educational approach. Additionally, two participants acknowledged that they were able to cultivate and refine their own unique design style by applying what they had learned from BDF education. Lastly, one participant emphasized how this educational approach broadened their knowledge and comprehension of various design techniques.

According to one participant, the importance of BDF is evident in her ability to effectively utilize theories like color theory and design principles theory in her designs. This knowledge serves as a foundation that allows her to seamlessly integrate inspiration with fundamental design principles, resulting in more effective and impactful designs.

"I utilized repetitive shapes visual in my bag design project and created wavy lines with gradient colors, I also used contrast color theory in my last project to make each element more noticeable." - Respondent Z

The student's BDF class provided her with the chance to study various textile materials and gain a comprehensive understanding of their inherent qualities. This practical exploration empowered her to apply essential design principles, resulting in more sophisticated and polished creations. In the field of fashion design, BDF plays a crucial role as it serves as a foundation for students to not only learn fundamental skills but also nurture their individual creative expression and develop a distinct style (Cheng & Ou, 2016).

One student emphasized that understanding BDF played a crucial role in striking a balance between creative intuition and systematic thinking. This integration allowed her to not only rely on her innate creativity but also incorporate a structured and logical thought process into her design work. The research conducted by (Kilicaslan & Ziyrek, 2012) in 2012 supports the idea that combining creative thinking with a systematic approach fosters innovative design solutions. Additionally, Respondent A, who had prior sewing skills before pursuing a fashion design degree at university, highlighted how

learning fundamental principles of basic design greatly enhanced their ability to create visually appealing and well-structured garments.

"Before this, I tended to create design based on pure intuition without considering the principles of design. Which resulted in a massive visual disconnect and lack of cohesion in my designs. After understanding the basic principles of design, I now can balance my design by utilizing the basic design principles such as Empty Space." - Respondent A

Additionally, it is important to note that in fashion design schools, an alignment between basic design education and the characteristics of fashion design must be established. This includes a comprehensive understanding of current market trends and needs, as well as a thorough knowledge of textile properties and fabric manipulation techniques. Upon completion of their foundational education in BDF, students will possess the necessary skills and expertise to effectively apply their knowledge within the realm of fashion design.

One participant emphasized the role of BDF in developing students' understanding of design. This education introduces students to shapes, colors, rhythm, and light using various materials and individual ideas. By doing so, it prepares them to create well-balanced designs that are widely accepted. The participant expressed their appreciation for how the program enhanced their design skills, enabling them to create more engaging and visually appealing designs. The program also helped them develop a refined sense of taste in design and taught them effective ways to make a lasting impact through their work. These facts also aligned well with Cross's article (Cross, 2001), in which design methodology nurtures a unique perspective and style. The importance of BDF in the field of fashion design is further supported by several studies.

However, few participants agreed that BDF must be adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of fashion design. This perspective is supported by research that highlights the importance of integrating fundamental knowledge and design practice in BDF education. This integration helps students develop not only their technical skills but also their ability to think critically and creatively in the context of fashion design.

"There are still gaps between the basic design principles projects and its application to fashion design," stated Respondent A.

Based on her observations she found that most of the students struggled to apply the basic design principles because, in the class of BDF, the project didn't use fashion objects. She suggested a more direct application of BDF to fashion design projects in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

The participants also acknowledged the significant impact of BDF on their design process. They found themselves applying the fundamental principles of design instinctively and effortlessly, resulting in aesthetically pleasing products that adhered to established norms. As a result, they felt confident in their ability to implement theory directly into their designs without needing explicit reference or guidance during the creative process. Cross' arguments in his article (2001) offer valuable insights into this phenomenon.

He highlights the contrast between design disciplines and sciences, emphasizing their distinct processes and modes of understanding. While sciences focus on developing theories and rigid laws, design disciplines prioritize practical application, contextual relevance, and real-world functionality. The students' innate grasp of design

principles can be interpreted as a reflection of this "designerly" way of knowing – they possess a tacit knowledge that is acquired through education and refined through repeated practice in real-world scenarios. As Cross suggests, this intuitive approach goes beyond following explicit rules; it stems from immersive learning experiences and hands-on engagement. Ultimately, BDF not only imparts knowledge but also fosters a unique cognitive mindset that aligns with the specific demands of design disciplines.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, there is ample evidence to support the importance of BDF education in fostering problem-solving skills and nurturing creativity among students. BDF education helps to see differences in design properties and promotes right thinking (Besgen et al., 2015). BDF also helps to raise awareness and provide visual sensitivity in transferring an image onto the design field (Özgen et al., 2021). However, from the experiences of the fashion design students, the BDF class must be more practical toward fashion design properties. With the integration of BDF into fashion design projects can bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Furthermore, the findings from this study indicate potential enhancements in fashion design education in Surabaya or more broadly in Indonesia. One possible improvement is the integration of theoretical concepts of design principles with practical applications through fashion design projects. This has significant implications for curriculum development in fashion design programs, potentially improving the quality of graduate outcomes and increasing the competitiveness of fashion design students in this specific field.

However, this study is limited to the experiences of only ten students from the University of Surabaya. Their experiences may not necessarily be representative of all fashion design students across different geographic or cultural contexts. Future research could expand this study by considering a more diversified sample and perhaps incorporating various pedagogical approaches used in different institutions.

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