Service learning through clothing alteration: A study with fashion students

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this on-going research study is to assess student-learning outcomes from a service-learning component in the form of garment mending & alterations services offered to the GSU community. Minimal literature exists on the Fiber Textiles & Clothing (FTC) field pertaining to service learning. As such, it will contribute greatly to Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the FTC body of literature.

Literature review

- Service learning is an approach to SoTL that integrates a relevant community service aspect, alongside academic content (Bowen, 2010). In a service learning course component, students are expected to provide and reflect upon the service experience so as to gain deeper understanding of course content, gain a broader appreciation of the program discipline (degree path), and gain a sense of civic responsibility (Bringle, 1995).
- Although service learning studies, under the umbrella of SoTL research have begun to gain traction in many disciplines, the Fiber Textile and Clothing (FTC) field have yet to follow suit. Some SoTL studies in the FTC field include the collaborative learning to explore careers (Frazier & Cheek, 2005), problem-based learning to improve knowledge retention of textile basics and to enhance student understanding of scientific principles (Farr, Ownbey, Branson, Cao, & Starr, 2005), active learning in a product and materials analysis class (Kadolph, 2005), and preparing global citizens for leadership in the textile and apparel industry (Lehew & Meyer, 2005).
- Kovarik and College (2010) point out that service learning can have a positive influence on a student’s academic performance - as many college students have reported learning theoretical underpinnings of content, but still have no clear understanding of application.
- An in-depth analysis of service learning within SoTL, conducted by Bowen (2010) yielded four overarching themes. The identified themes “capture the nature, experiences, and outcomes of service learning-based SoTL projects” and guided the proposed study (Bowen, 2010, p. 7).
- Themes: 1) real-world application, 2) collaboration and interaction, 3) meaning making through reflection, & 4) enhancement of course content.

Background

- In the Fall 2015 semester, the FMAD program launched a sustainability-driven garment alteration service for the Georgia Southern University community.
- This garment alteration service, titled “FMAD Stitch” (now: FMAD Stitch Shop) was funded by the Center for Sustainability.
- Students enrolled in FMAD 3236-A – Apparel II, were required to log five shifts in the stitch shop as part of the course requirements in a form of a service learning component.

FMAD Stitch Learning Outcomes

1. Develop & practice management skills, such as client communication, data management & mentorship skills,
2. Develop & practice apparel construction skills,
3. Apply problem-solving techniques to advanced construction issues, and
4. Develop textile sustainability knowledge & awareness of garment life.

Study Research Questions

1. Does participation in FMAD service learning increase student confidence in garment construction, business management, & communication?
2. Does participation in FMAD service learning increase skill competency in the areas of garment construction, business management, & communication?
3. Does participation in FMAD service learning increase sustainability awareness related to apparel/fashion (student & client)?
4. What is the current status awareness of the FMAD program at GSU and does participation in Stitch Shop increase awareness about the FMAD program?

Subjects

- Fashion Merchandising and Apparel Design (FMAD) students enrolled in the Apparel II (FMAD 3236-A) course during Fall 2015 at GSU
- Approximately 3500 students
- GSU students, faculty and staff (clients) of the FMAD stitch shop.

Instruments

- FMAD students:
  - Activity Log
  - Learning Growth reflections (mid-term & final)
  - S-ESA&P (Self Efficacy, Sustainability Actions & Perceptions) Survey
  - FMAD 3236-A Grades (final grades and project grades)
- CHHS students
  - FMAD awareness survey
- Clients (GSU students, faculty, & staff)
  - Satisfaction & Sustainability Action survey

Research Design

1. Activity log - completed at the end of each shift. Required.
4. Student IDs used to link responses to grades
5. Grades calculated at end of semester.

Results – Activity Logs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction Process</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance &amp; Patience</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighing Options</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling New Challenges</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for Others</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data analysis

- Qualitative data: Nvivo
- Activity logs & reflections → coded into themes
- Quantitative data: SPSS
  - Pre & post S-ESA&P (Confidence) surveys
  - Client Satisfaction & Sustainability actions post-service surveys
  - CHHS student awareness survey

References


