Service Learning through Clothing Alteration: A Study with Fashion Students

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Service learning through clothing alteration: A study with fashion students

Rachel Eike, PhD., Beth Myers, PhD., and Diana Sturges, PhD.

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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 in the Fiber Textile & 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 been 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.
  - Funded by the Center for Sustainability
• This garment alteration service, titled “FMAD Stitch” (now: FMAD Stitch Shop) was organized as a service-learning shop for students pursuing a degree in Fashion Merchandising & Apparel Design (FMAD).
• 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
  - 23 Females, 1 Male; 24 students total
• Students from the College of Health and Human Sciences 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.

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

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 (Critical Thinking)</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>

References

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