Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

A Fashion Paradox: Reflective Thinking for Fashion Forecasting

Alyssa Dana Adomaitis
Berkeley College, aadomaitis@citytech.cuny.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa_proceedings
Part of the Fashion Business Commons, and the Fashion Design Commons

https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/itaa_proceedings/2013/presentations/172

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Symposia at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Textile and Apparel Association (ITAA) Annual Conference Proceedings by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
A Fashion Paradox: Reflective Thinking for Fashion Forecasting  
Alyssa Dana Adomaitis, Berkeley College, New York  

Key words: Critical Thinking, Fashion Forecasting, Teaching

New approach/Purpose of strategy. With the competitive nature of the fashion industry, professors strive to prepare their students for successful career paths. It is important that an undergraduate curriculum be designed so that students’ work reflects high standards and incorporates critical thinking skills. Critical thinking analyses are often difficult for students who are stressed, short-on-time, and may be utilizing the Internet as their primary source of information.

The best teaching practice to be shared in this presentation is the application of John Dewey’s *Reflection as a Meaning Process* (1933) in a Fashion Forecasting course. Dewey’s ideas concerning reflective thinking (1933) provides a method to move students beyond rote memorization, a summation of information, or a simple rewording of an author’s ideas. Fashion Forecasting is an ideal context to develop reflective thinking as it requires students to think beyond a tangible time and predict future fashion in a systematic way based on environmental, social, and political criteria.

Roger’s (2002) treatment of Dewey’s (1933) critical thinking and reflection ideas provided four criteria that were integrated with Brannon’s (2010) steps in predicting fashion trends to produce a learning experience that developed students’ critical thinking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roger’s (2002) criteria</th>
<th>Brannon’s steps in fashion forecasting</th>
<th>Adomaitis’ (2013) mini lessons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reflection is a meaning-like process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships and connections to other experiences and ideas.</td>
<td>1. Identify basic facts about past trends</td>
<td>1. Identify causal relationships between fashion and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Reflection is systematic, rigorous, disciplined way of thinking with its roots in scientific inquiry.</td>
<td>2. Determine the causes of change in the past</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reflection needs to happen in a community; in interaction with others.</td>
<td>3. Determine differences between past forecasts and actual behavior</td>
<td>2. Research historical continuity among fashion trends using forecasting jargon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Reflection requires an attitude that values the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and of others.</td>
<td>4. Apply forecasting tools and techniques</td>
<td>3. Fashion in the global stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Determine the factors likely to affect trends in the future</td>
<td>4. Critical thinking and reflecting upon the forecast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Follow the forecast and look for deviations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Revise forecast when necessary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implementation of strategy/practice. Students are assigned a two-year (short-term) forecast to make in a specific category (e.g., dresses, suits). Students begin the forecast by searching for current fashion trends at different levels of the market, such as high fashion or mass fashion. Students at this stage learn that fashion forecasting is a causal relationship between the specific style and the social
realms of a society. Recognizing this relationship moves the student through the first two forecasting
steps (i.e., Adomaitis’ (2013) mini lesson 1 or Roger’s step 1 and Brannon’s step 1 and 2) as it is
entails the identification of trends and their relationship to economic, social, political, and cultural
events. For example, students recalled the dominating colors red, white, and blue used in fashion
during the Obama–Romney election campaign of 2012.

The second step in Adomaitis’ (2013) outline coincides with Rogers’ second step in critical
thinking and Brannon’s third and fifth steps in conducting a forecast. There is historical information
about past trends and actual events that shape both fashion fads and flops. By researching fashion
history, researching timelines of fashion change, and studying designer interpretation of fashion
trends, students are guided through a step-by-step research approach about fashion and how to
forecast fashion trends for upcoming seasons by identifying repeating waves, pendulum swings, and
cycles that re-occur in fashion.

The third step in Adomaitis’ (2013) mini lesson places fashion in a global context. Fashion is
group behavior, a form of social copying (Stone, 2010). Thus, fashion exists in a social context.
Students begin to think beyond their personal experience of fashion and reflect on how fashion is
interpreted by different people, cultures, and regions of the world. By using Stylesight, students
research urban street fashions in cities such as Tokyo, New York, England, and Milan.

The fourth step in Adomaitis’ (2013) mini lesson fosters critical thinking and reflection on
the forecast. Keeping a journal about fashion predictions and having students consider them twice a
week is one way to indicate their personal skills of reflection and research and whether it be they are
on track with the actual assignment of predicting fashion trends.

Description of effectiveness. When outlining forecasting using these steps as guidance, students
began to engage in actual forecasting rather than simply searching for others’ forecasts. Students
used critical thinking skills to move through a forecast with an understanding that fashion connects
with the recent past (i.e.; movies, music, celebrity), reflects current events, such as economic
downturns, cultural impacts (i.e.; immigration reform), and political influences (i.e.; presidential
race) that continually shape trends, as well as, the fact that trends are adapted and modified by all
types of consumers. In addition, using this approach, students had an easier time forecasting global
trends as well as (in addition to) trends for non-western cultures.

Indication of plans for continuation, revision, or follow-up. Lecturing on the forecast topic so it
coincides with the forecast assignment provided a context for each step of the forecast/critical
thinking. Breaking the actual assignment down as mini assignments provides a scaffolding for the
students can be time consuming yet it was worthwhile as students “got it.” Each semester, having
critical thinking as a guideline along with the fashion forecasting text, students of varied academic
abilities were able to complete a forecast trend book.

References:
Kegan, R. (1994). In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life. Cambridge,
MA: Harvard University Press.
thinking. Teachers College Record, 104, (4), 842-866.
(Eds.), Reflection in teacher education (pp.31-39). New York: Teacher College Press.