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The impact of digital technology on design students; the changing learning journey and the emergence of a learner interface

The session reflects on the research conducted in the investigation of fashion design students' learner journey and the pedagogical impact of digital technologies on their research behaviour. The internet has dramatically changed teaching environments and it is inconceivable to expect students to operate without it. Our observations in controlled experiments with and without internet access identify that fashion design student research pathways rely heavily on digital information and digitising physical experiences thus compromising tacit knowledge and experiential learning through the integration of multiple senses. They use digital information to validate research enquiries appearing to give secondary digitised information importance over original material.

The session presents the digital interface that has been developed as a direct consequence of the learner journey research conducted. The aim of the interface is to facilitate an enhanced integration of the digital and physical learning opportunities, thus encouraging physical object research enquiries, collaboration and engagement in a familiar supportive digital environment. The interface is in its first phase having been presented to a panel of students, teaching staff and technicians with encouraging feedback and welcome suggestions for content.

The VLE has emerged from the research and evaluation of the changing needs of fashion design students. Fashion design teaching is very much a practice-based discipline. Fabrics, technology and silhouettes may alter, but the key skills that are imparted on practical fashion courses remain constant and require an integrated approach. Research is fundamental to the fashion design process however digital information through the internet has opened up new alternative routes for discovery and shifted the balance of their learning practice in particular their engagement with physical properties. The use of the internet by students, when conducting such research is therefore a central issue for practice based educators.

Tabs:

- Working closely with learners
- Changing learn journeys
- VLE's