

Extension Activities in the Fashion Design Program: Opportunities for the World of Work

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Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which, throughout history, have been responsible for building and deepening knowledge, involve the training of individuals who may enter specific professional careers. They have been challenged to respond to society's increasingly demanding requirements regarding qualifications. The consolidation of an individual's training process in higher education is based on the three pillars that support this formation: Teaching, Research, and Extension. Extension stands out because it has been the subject of national debate throughout the history of education—particularly higher education—given the importance of this stage, which once had a merely welfare-oriented character. Currently, the curricularization of extension activities has emerged from the need to standardize this axis within Higher Education. This process was made possible by the creation of Resolution No. 7 of December 18, 2018, from the Higher Education Chamber of the National Education Council, which establishes the Guidelines for Extension Activities in Brazilian Higher Education and regulates the provisions of Goal 12.7 of Law No. 13.005/2014 (which approves the National Education Plan – PNE 2014–2024). At the Federal Institute of Piauí (IFPI), regulation on this matter was enacted through Normative Resolution 131/2022 – CONSUP/OSUPCOL/REI/IFPI, of April 25, 2022, which establishes the Guidelines for the Curricularization of Extension Activities in IFPI undergraduate programs. Given the above, this study aims to analyze the opportunities that arise from extension activities in the Fashion Design Technology undergraduate program at IFPI, Piripiri Campus.

1 Development

This study used a qualitative approach, employing bibliographic, documentary, and descriptive research methods. Bibliographic research supported the theoretical framework: various relevant studies in the area were analyzed to underpin the present work. Documentary and descriptive methods were also employed.

The Fashion Design undergraduate program at the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Piauí (IFPI), Piripiri Campus, began in 2016, following the goals set out in IFPI's Institutional Development Plan

(PDI) for the period 2015–2019, which focused on verticalizing course offerings within existing technological axes. The curriculum of the Fashion Design program develops skills and competencies aimed at the diverse possibilities of professional activity in the fashion field, in conjunction with the needs of the city of Piripiri and the surrounding region. The Piripiri campus serves students from approximately twelve municipalities in the region and one municipality in Ceará. The Fashion Design Technology program in Piripiri is justified by the city's long-standing reputation in lingerie industrial production. Piripiri is the fourth largest city in Piauí, located 157 km from the capital, Teresina, and its development is favored by its location on the edge of federal highway BR-343, which connects Piauí and Ceará. Until mid-2016, the municipality was considered a lingerie manufacturing hub in the state of Piauí.

According to a diagnosis carried out by the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) in 2013, the city then had approximately 37 formal industries and more than 100 small informal garment workshops that outsourced services; about 71% of these businesses had trademarks registered with the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI). The Piripiri garment market reached an annual turnover of R\$ 22 million and generated around 600 direct jobs in the city. In recent years, the need for transformation and renewal has become evident due to the rapid and constant changes in the market. The fashion design technologist must have a flexible and contextualized training base that considers the contemporary role of the fashion designer and the new demands of the world of work. The aim is to train professionals not only specialized to work in the fashion market but also capable of exploring opportunities beyond the traditional labor market.

In this sense, the Fashion Design curriculum provides students with theoretical and practical experiences that encompass skills oriented to diverse professional possibilities and to local and regional demands. Even before the implementation of the undergraduate program, the Industrial Production Axis – through the Technical Clothing Course (both in the Integrated High School modality and in the Concurrent/Subsequent modality) – already stood out for its extension activities and was a pioneer in carrying out extension projects at the Piripiri Campus.

The first project, entitled “Clothing in Action,” was carried out in 2010 with the initial Clothing Design classes at the Piripiri Campus, in partnership with the Social Service of Commerce (SESC Ler) in Piripiri. In 2012, the extension project “Fashion and Sustainable Education” was implemented in partnership with a private school in the municipality; it sought to develop sustainable garments using recyclable materials collected by students during a school competition. Due to the resourcefulness of one participating student, an extracurricular internship was created: she assisted in developing projects and creative workshops at the school. After completing the Technical Course, the student enrolled in the Fashion Design Technology program, where she continued her internship and, later, upon finishing higher education, was hired by the school.

Similarly, in 2013 the “Fashion Charity Tea” extension project was developed in partnership with the Association of Parents and Friends of Exceptional Children (APAE) and three lingerie industries in Piripiri. The project aimed to produce a fashion show with participating brands and raise funds for the institution. Through this partnership, one of the companies selected two students for extracurricular internships; upon completing the course, one was hired by the industry as a clothing technician and remains employed there. The other opened her own atelier and continued working for the industry as a window dresser and as an assistant in new collection development. Both students later enrolled in the Fashion Design undergraduate program.

Among other projects, “Fashion, Culture and Historicity: The Cultural Resignifications of Clothing Forms in the Quilombola, Indigenous, and Gypsy Communities of Piripiri” aimed to provide cultural visibility and social inclusion through fashion. The project resulted in garments inspired by these communities, which were presented at the PeryPery Museum and are now part of the museum’s collection. A two-year internship was offered to one outstanding student, who was later hired by the institution after graduating. Over the ten years of the program, approximately 62 extension activities were carried out in the field, including projects, courses, workshops, technical visits, and events. These activities were developed in partnership with public and private institutions, aiming to break down barriers and build bridges with the community by bringing theoretical and practical knowledge.

2 Conclusion

Given the above, the emergence of the Higher Technology Major in Fashion Design fostered the improvement and expansion of extension opportunities at the Piripiri Campus. The curricularization of extension has contributed to formalizing the link between teaching, community engagement, and the local industry, generating internships, employment opportunities, and cultural visibility for the region. This study highlights how extension activities in the Fashion Design program at IFPI — supported by partnerships, practical projects, and community engagement — create meaningful professional opportunities for students while strengthening ties between the institution and the socio-economic context of Piripiri¹.

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