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Spotlight on Fashion Design Education

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Spotlight on Fashion Design Education

As fashion education is booming, some stances are claiming that while the industry is growing and changing, education is not. With regard to the rising recognition of the fashion industry, the aim of this paper is to investigate the level of alignment between the needs of the fashion industry and the curricula of the Dutch fashion design education. Interviews were conducted with six professionals from the fashion or education sector and with three enrolled students. Surveys with students and alumni were obtained to provide a further analysis. Two main themes arose from the research, namely The Industry and The Education System. These themes were juxtaposed to define if the Dutch fashion design education sector is adequately constructed towards the needs of the industry. The Outcome has important implications for the fashion education sector, recruitment, and fashion design students.

Keywords: fashion design; education; fashion industry; collaboration; The Netherlands

Introduction

The global garment industry was estimated to reach a total value of $2.4 trillion in 2016, accounting to one of the most important industries worldwide (Berg and Amed, 2016). It is part of the creative industries and thus has, besides its artistic nature, an economic value. Creative industries, by definition, describe industries that merge creation, production, and commercialization in an imaginative product or service (Global Alliance, 2006), being a balanced symbiosis of art, culture, business and technologies (Lauzikas and Mokseckiene, 2013). Thus, it must be clarified that fashion cannot be regarded as pure art, but is referred to design, because its end goal is to fulfil consumer need and generate profit (Abnett, 2015).

Generally, the popularity of the industry has increased enormously over the last ten years, which can be reasoned by the excessive promotion of fashion in social media platforms and its grown appeal as a profession (Mellery-Pratt and Amed, 2015). Being a
fashion creator is often associated with privilege and fame, as designers are often presented as icons to the masses (Roso and Huiskens, 2016). Stardom is not the only allure, but the perception of pleasure in work, earning money with creative self-expression by portraying individual taste and identity to the public is a very desirable thought (Bill, 2012). Accordingly, more and more people worldwide started pursuing a fashion education (Mellery-Pratt and Amed, 2015; Bill, 2012) in the hopes to achieve success with their own vision.

However, it is said that schools, academies, and universities are training young creatives to become catwalk designers and celebrities, embracing individuality in a time where society is more and more longing for altruism (Edelkoort, 2015). This suggests that the current education system is inadequate with the present zeitgeist. The Business of Fashion’s (BOF) first Global Fashion School Ranking shows similar outcomes. The survey showcases that a gap between the expectations of students and their actual expertise exists. Furthermore, students and alumni report that they feel unprepared for the professional world, lacking especially technical and business skills (Mellery-Pratt and Amed, 2015), creating uncertainty and concern for a lot of young graduates.

This article aims to expose if a mismatch between education and the industry is also present in the Netherlands. Bearing in mind that students of today are the creators of the future, it is significant to remember that graduates need to receive professional and realistic perspectives in order to correspond to the developments of the industry.

The Fashion Industry

Dutch Fashion

The global fashion industry is affected by economic, geopolitical, cultural, and technological indicators (Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley, 2014), performing in a
collaboration of business, creativity and digitalisation (Amed, 2016b). Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the standards of the industry have changed, and therefore also the working habits of fashion designers. Comparing the designer’s environment of today with the 20th century’s one, presently, fashion creators are facing a higher level of completion, enhanced consumer behaviour and changing technology (Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley, 2014).

In the Netherlands, the creative industries are very successful. The country is one of the global leaders and the sector is the fastest growing in the Dutch economy, generating 2% of the country’s GDP (Netherlands Embassy and Consulates China, n.d.). Therefore, the financial worth should not be overlooked. In regard to fashion, about 90,000 people are employed in this sector and the fashion market value is estimated at €14.5 billion (Strijbos, n.d.). Dutch fashion is described as conceptual, innovative and process-oriented (Netherlands Enterprise Agency, 2017), operating successfully in the ready-to-wear industry in the middle to premium market (Teunissen, 2011) with both international brands and small design labels (Teunissen et al., 2013). Especially the commercial sector is a strong component of the Dutch fashion business (Van den Berg, 2017).

Withal, people from the industry still describe the Dutch fashion market as small and limited compared to its competition (Tap, 2017, Schipper 2017), even though the Netherlands has a considerable trading history. The Dutch’s mentality might have a positive effect on the industry, as they are depicted as realistic with a drive to innovation and as having a good balance between work and life, making them more efficient (Schipper, 2017). As to Renema (2017), a consultant at the Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, the Netherlands’ urge and success in innovative thinking and design are rooted in the lack of a foundation and tradition in fashion.
When it comes to developments such as sustainability and technology, which are also vital for the future of the Dutch fashion business (Tap, 2017), the Dutch seem to do have a high awareness (Schipper, 2017; Van den Berg, 2017). Regarding to Schipper (2017), even though the engagement in sustainability is still in a small part of the industry, the Netherlands are at the forefront of creating a good example. Despite the notion that the development is still going too slow (Schipper, 2017), others have a positive outlook on this development, as also Dutch laws are forcing it (Van den Berg, 2017).

Regarding the fact that nowadays cross-over collaborations are the course of achieving innovation, Dutch designers like Iris van Herpen or Pauline van Dongen are currently setting a fine example. They are not partisan designing the old-fashioned way, but are eager to think outside the box, experiment with different production methods and engage with other industries (Tap, 2017). Cross-over collaborations are celebrated in the Netherlands, as well due to the fact that the government is financing such cross-over projects which progress innovation and creative solutions for societal problems. Yet, it is doubtable if some of these programs are part of the economy, as for wearable technology, this novelty has not yet reached the mass market (Renema, 2017). Some say that the relationship between the garment and the body is missing and that aesthetics and its message are still primal purchasing motives (Van Zijverden, 2016). Nevertheless, they can be regarded as entrepreneurial and are certainly enabling new possibilities in the industry that can gain more importance in the future (Renema, 2017). Therefore, the Dutch have an enhanced sense for new developments and are keen in progressing further in this sector.
Individuality vs. Collectivism

Besides influences only affecting the Dutch industry, fashion designers are facing general impacts that take place globally.

As stated by Venturi, the principle of Florence’s fashion school Polimoda, big fashion companies are not demanding star designers anymore, but they need people who understand the economic side of creating a collection, e.g. the part of merchandising (Abnett, 2015). This enhances the notion that a designer’s vision cannot anymore be the only quality that drives to success. Using creativity to create something unique and outstanding has shifted to using creativity in order to create a commercial product.

Creativity is still the main force of fashion and the main attribute of fashion designers. Looking at the definition of creativity, it is described as an individual performance that is based on generating new ideas (Mills, 2012). Nevertheless, designers need to understand that creativity as an act in an organisation, which is the case for the majority of designers, cannot be endlessly free. In a company, restrictions like cost, style or the end consumer need to be taken into account. Hence, this is a paradox if creativity is perceived as a free artistic performance (Paris, 2008). Consequently, fashion design has to incorporate commercial thinking and organisational values.

The collective element of the fashion design industry is often omitted, as creativity, the vital part of design is respected as a very personal, and therefore individualistic process. Without the designer’s contribution, the industry could not function, but it must be conceded that the designer depends on the collaboration with other actors in order to achieve the creation of fashion. Thus, if fashion is seen as a cultural product, then it automatically includes social corporation, collective activities and groups (Kawamura, 2005). So, designers are needed for their individualistic vision, yet they cannot survive on their own.
Collaboration also nurtures innovation. Tap (2017), the Business Development Manager at Modint, a research and consulting firm for the fashion industry, says that working together with other industries and learning each other’s skill is pushing the boundaries of fashion. Yet, collaboration which occurs within the fashion industry only is not advisable unless it showcases an evident win-win-situation. Therefore, collaboration needs to be regarded in a broader sense, as interaction with other industries, so-called cross-over projects (Tap, 2017).

Thus, the discourse of individualism and collectivism within fashion is significant. While individualistic vision and creativity are still often the drive of success, these traits, however, need to be reinterpreted, as times are changing. So while individualism will remain the core, designers need to seek collaboration and interaction with others. This way, creativity can develop further.

**Two Types of Designers**

In the eyes of Loppa (2015), the former educator at the Royal Academy in Antwerp and the current director of Polimoda, the fashion industry needs two kinds of designers, on the one hand, the creative dreamer and on the other hand the structured creative. Linking this idea to Ruppert-Stroescu’s and Hawley’s (2014) analysis of Robert Sternberg’s Propulsion Theory of Creative Contributions, we differentiate between adaptive creativity and leadership creativity. Sternberg, a professor of human development at Cornell University, attributes to leadership creativity a high level of individual expression, innovation, novelty and experimental approach, while adaptive creativity is defined by a more problem-solving approach with a focus on convergent thinking and analytical as well as scientific methods (Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley, 2014).
Translating this example explicitly to the fashion system, leadership creative designers have a unique vision and taste, targeting the high-end market with customers who expect craftsmanship, quality and aesthetic distinction. Adaptive creative designers, on the contrary, intend to translate existing trends into their market, which concludes in mass-market lower-priced products, meaning that these designers’ main goal is to create an existing idea in a new context by using the limitations of their company and consumer in regard to price, quality, and execution (Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley, 2014). Connecting this model to Loppa’s statement, the creative dreamer can be regarded as the leadership creative designer, whereas the structured creative is ascribed to the adaptive creative designer. Also, Van den Berg (2017), the founder and commercial director of Fashion Solution, a Dutch fashion head-hunting agency, differentiates between stylists and designers. As Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley analysis, she explains that stylists are working for big companies, mostly for fast fashion brands, while designers are hired by fashion houses in a higher end market (Van den Berg, 2017).

Considering the fact that the industry distinguishes between a stylist and a designer in the professional environment, it indicates that the same education can lead to two different job descriptions, which requires different sets of qualifications. Both these types are visible in the fashion industry. Therefore, the future vision of students, as well as the profile of their educational institution, might define their expertise as well as professional specialisation.
**The Needed Skill Set**

**Collaboration**

Bearing in mind that the work culture of fashion designers has shifted to a multidisciplinary environment, new and wider skills are required in the modern day work world. Particularly related to the collaborative attitude, due to the present technology focused economy, the industry demands designers who can and are willing to work together with experts from alternative specialisations, setting up partnerships and collaborations (Van den Eijnde, 2015). Therefore, an open mind and a collective spirit are required. Collaboration is not only restricted to cross-over projects, but also to build up a network for the future. This is an important asset of a future professional (Van Zijverden, 2016).

**Technology**

New technology is especially often regarded as the main influence for the future (Tap, 2017; Schipper, 2017; Van den Berg, 2017), and must, therefore, be taken seriously into account when designing fashion. Fashion designers who have the technological skills are able to fight the pressure of heightened competition, can execute their work on a more inclusive level and are finally capable of meeting the new standards of the modern day paradigms (Maciver and Malins, 2015). Examples of incorporating technology in fashion organisations are the use of smart textiles, body scanning technology or computer-aided design (CAD). These are tools gaining more relevance.

**Technical Knowledge**

Fashion design, however, is not only based on development and creation of ideas and garments. It must be understood that fashion in its historical context was appointed as a craft, which signifies technical skills and thus establishes the core and
basis of fashion design. Ergo, fashion designers are at least required general technical knowledge of garment construction in order to assemble an orderly fashion item that meets the standards of the industry. Furthermore, if technical skills are to hand, designers can cooperate on the production process and direct others on the desired execution. The understanding of how the garment is created is just as important as its aesthetic, as functionality and wearability are crucial features of fashion (Reddy, 2014). Also, Schipper (2017), design recruiter at the Movers & Shakers agency in Amsterdam, confirms that companies wish professionals with technical skills and often realise that these are missing in young designers.

Business

Nonetheless, the biggest impact and change on the fashion designer’s line of work is the increasing relevance and awareness of the business side of the profession (Mietzner and Kamprath, 2013). As a designer in an interview has stated: ‘strategic planning and marketing account for 90% of the overall success of work, and only 10% depends on creativity’ (Lauzikas and Mokseckiene, 2013). Talent is vital, but nowadays designers need to bring more to the business (Schipper, 2017). This means, that while creativity is the main drive of the profession, commercial thinking and marketing understanding are indispensable. Accordingly, it can be concluded that for designers who have a comprehension of marketing strategies and the managerial part of fashion, it is not only easier to understand or communicate with co-workers, but it also allows higher involvement in the decision-making process. In a time where everyone can call oneself a designer and producing clothing is not a huge obstacle anymore, the differentiation in strategy and consumer empathy is decisive (Lauzikas and Mokseckiene, 2013).
Sustainability

One of the biggest issues, which is not only affecting fashion but which has a global impact on society is sustainability. As argued by Tap (2017), creativity has to be used in order to solve bigger problems, and sustainability is one of them. Even though it is not a hard skill, companies and generally the fashion industry request an understanding, as well as working methods that have a sustainable nature (Schipper, 2017). Circular design, alternative materials as well as the reduction of over-production will become more dominant in the future (Van Zijverden, 2016). This means that new processes and working methods need to be acquired and those common ones have to be developed further.

The Fashion Design Industry Heptagon

Looking at the needed skill set, the present fashion practice of a fashion designer can be defined by six main components that are driving the industry, namely business, creativity, technology, sustainability, technique and collaboration. All these elements influence the professional world of designers and are vital in order to succeed in the industry.

For her Master thesis ‘Recrafting Craft’, Van Zijverden (2016) also analysed the fashion design education in the Netherlands, however only restricted to art schools. Within her research, she depicts the requirements for future fashion professionals, where she also covers the elements technology, sustainability, collaboration and business. Additionally, she mentions one more aspect, specifically presentations skills. Based on her study, future fashion professionals are expected to communicate and present adequately own works, as well as inspirations and visions (Van Zijverden, 2016). As well, Van den Berg (2017) acknowledged that these skills are missing among young students and are crucial, as they will be needed throughout the whole career.
Therefore, a seventh element presentation can be added to vital fashion professional skills, forming a heptagon (Figure 1). Not to mention, all elements cannot be looked at individually, as they are intertwined and shape each other. Furthermore, depending on the specialisation of a designer and taking into account that the industry differentiates between stylist and artistic designers, some skills are more important for one designer than another, and vice versa.

Figure 1. Fashion Industry Heptagon.

Summing up, the industry requires designers who besides their talent have a commercial vision, which includes consumer behaviour understanding and merchandise skills. Furthermore, creativity is not only restricted to a unique concept and taste level but needs to be used in a contemporary context, such as in solving societal problems or developing new ways of designing. This again is linked to the next principle that is sustainability. The Dutch fashion industry is eager to adapt to alternative materials and processes that are environmentally and ethically revised. Yet, technology is probably the biggest force that changes the industry and must be therefore integrated into all
levels of the working processes. When referring to innovation, sustainability and technology are of course part of it, however, it cannot be achieved without collaboration. A networking mindset and interaction with other industries are taking place more and more in the Dutch fashion industry and are demanded in order to nurture creativity and future developments. A crucial element of the profession of fashion designers is the technical skill, so technique. Even though it is one of the fundamental bases of fashion creation, its importance is still the same. Last but not least, are presentation skills, which help alumni to show their strengths and know-how to the professional world.

The Fashion Education System

The General State of Fashion Education

Over the years, fashion education has diversified itself into numerous academic specialities with training from the field of science, commerce and naturally from art and fine arts (Reddy, 2014). With its elevated interdisciplinary nature (Kawamura, 2005), fashion training’s essence lays in the experimental and project-based learning approach. Students worldwide can now choose from a broader range of fashion educations, but in like manner fashion design education institutions have different foundations in their curricula (Mills, 2012).

The Dutch design education culture is strongly rooted in a practical, hands-on working approach. Practice rather than theory is prioritised, while theoretical information is only handed over in theory influenced subjects like art and culture history, lectures, and classes that help developing techniques. Speaking of all design education institutes in the Netherlands, the Bauhaus philosophy of teaching was very influential and is still noticeable today (Van den Eijnde, 2015). Akin to the Bauhaus model, the Dutch fashion design education is constructed around the workshop, so the
fashion design atelier, creating the key location and attention of the studies. Even if this is not a realistic representation of the modern professional work environment anymore, as production is mostly outsourced, technical skills have to be learnt and especially at art academies the significance of crafts is highlighted (Van Zijverden, 2016).

The following schools were analysed in regard to the needs of the industry, as they offer fashion design courses, so courses in the contexts of garment and collection creation:

- Royal Academy of Art, The Hague (KABK)
- ArtEZ Institute of the Arts, Arnhem
- Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam
- Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam (WDKA)
- Amsterdam Fashion Institute, Amsterdam (AMFI)
- Amsterdam Fashion Academy, Amsterdam
- University of the Arts Utrecht, Utrecht (HKU)
- The Maastricht Academy of Fine Arts and Design, Maastricht (MAFAD)

The following tabular comparison (Table 1) shows a general overview of the fashion design courses of all schools mentioned above. The information summarises the main characteristics and compares the schools regarding vision and educational approach.
Bachelor

Textile Design (4 yrs)
Fashion Design (4 yrs)

Fashion Design (4 yrs)
Fashion (4 yrs)
Fashion Design (4 yrs)

Textiles and Fashion are a visual language mirroring the zeitgeist combining tradition, innovation and research

Challenging creative environment fostering individuality, authenticity and talent

Free artistic environment with room for experimentation regarding fashion as practice and visual culture

Fashion as a form of communication with focus on presentation and message

Bachelor

Fashion Design (2 yrs)

Vision

Students

Developing fashion creators who are independent and self-conscious with a personal style and approach

Developing fashion creators with a unique and convincing vision on fashion

Developing fashion creators who are able to work individually to inspire the future of fashion creation

Developing fashion creators with collaborative approach combining artistry, economics and societal developments

Mission

Unique Selling
Point

Integrated courses (Textile Design and Fashion Design) facilitating interaction between students

Multidisciplinary approach with focus on innovative and technological tools

Enhanced relationship of garment and body

Self-development by supporting additional electives developing skills outside the course

ArtEZ

(Kabk.nl, n.d.)

(artez.nl, n.d.)

(rietveldacademie.nl, n.d.)

(wdka.nl, n.d.)

KABK

Bachelor

Textile Design (4 yrs)
Fashion Design (4 yrs)

ArtEZ

Fashion with Textile Design (3 yrs)

Gerrit Rietveld

Fashion Design (4 yrs)

WDKA

Fashion Design (4 yrs)

Table 1. Dutch Fashion Schools Comparison.

Bachelor

Fashion Design (4 yrs)

Vision

Amsterdam Fashion Academy

Fashion with Textile Design (3 yrs)

HKU

Fashion as communication telling a story about trends, zeitgeist and vision on beauty

MAFAD

Commercial and hands-on setting combining creativity with social, economic and cultural education

Daring and demanding environment nurturing independent development with a focus on art and fashion

Bachelor

Master

Do not hallucinate.

Regardless the fact that each school has a different focus and specialisation, the main goal of all fashion education institutes is to create independent fashion designers with a strong unique language and style. Referring this outcome to the stance of Edelkort (2015), who claims that fashion education approaches an individualistic concept of
fashion creation, this could be confirmed. The priority of education seems to be self-development of own skills and abilities as well of personal taste. Nevertheless, if looking closely on the unique selling point of the schools, and how independence is related to, some schools have developed a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach by providing interaction as well as fostering developments in fashion. Thus, Edelkort’s stance is not completely applicable in all Dutch schools, as while individuality is enhanced, collaboration is not left out. Especially schools as ArtEZ, WDKA or HKU set an example of updated curricula and educational strategies in regard to cross-over partnerships.

**Student and Alumni Feedback**

In order to gain an understanding of the perspective of students and alumni, and how they perceive their education, both surveys and interviews were conducted. For the surveys, 16 enrolled students and 37 alumni from different educational institutions in the Netherlands answered questions on their motivation to study fashion design and how they experienced their education and development so far. Furthermore, three enrolled students were interviewed in more depth.

In regard to the outcomes, there is a lot of accordance on some topics. For instance, when asked about the reason for enrolling for a fashion design course, almost all respondents said that it was their passion for a long time already. In some cases, some had already previous experience or educational background in that field. In regard to the expectations of the study, the opinions were mixed, as some had no expectations at all while others’ were exceeded. Positive reactions included that the study enabled self-development and realisation of own vision and identity. On the other hand, negative reactions are linked to the fact that schools did not provide a realistic view of the professional job profile, neither did it show a commercial point of view,
indicating that students design in a bubble without a link to the way of working of the industry. When talking about acquired knowledge, most respondents agreed that they have learned technical skills during their studies. As well, it is mentioned that they have mastered design artistry. However, even though technical skills have been acquired, some still say that they would like to deepen them. Interesting is the fact that business and commercial background knowledge is particularly missed, as design courses don’t offer them in the curricula. All schools of the respondents offer internships. Many of the students who already obtained an internship say that it is where they have learnt the most. Besides experiencing a professional environment, students say that they were able to improve and gain new technical skills as well as developed organisational and teamwork competencies.

Comparing the schools’ strategies with the student and alumni feedback, it is vital to underline that due to the fact that schools foster individual development, the relationship to the course for students is very personal. The atmosphere and community influence the outcome of the studies. Expectations of students and alumni were not always met, but this could be reasoned with unrealistic anticipations or inadequate representation of the schools and courses. Whereas business and managerial skills are missing and are also not included in the curricula, most students feel still prepared enough for the industry. On the contrary, these are skills that are missed among alumni, saying they are vital and required in the professional environment. Therefore, alumni state they could have been better prepared if this knowledge would have been provided. Still, in the end, soft skills as collaboration, networking or teamwork are determinative about the success in the professional world. Thus, education needs to not only provide sufficient career guidance in order to inform students about realistic goals and plans to enter their career, while setting a focus on exactly these soft skills.
**Juxtaposition and Implementation**

To investigate whether the Dutch fashion design education is adequately constructed in regard to the needs of the industry, all seven elements of the heptagon need to be considered with reference to the results of the analysis on the Dutch fashion system.

It can be concluded that not all elements of the heptagon are implemented in the curricula at a sufficient level. For the further discussion, it must be acknowledged that the level of application varies from school to school. The following Table shows the level of implementation (Table 2).

**Table 2. Level of Implementation.**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Implementation</th>
<th>Creativity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>Amendable</td>
<td>Technique</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>Business</td>
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As seen in the table, only the level of creativity can be qualified as sufficient. All schools cater self-development and realisation of artistic vision, which is also recognised by students and alumni. However, technique, sustainability, technology, collaboration and presentation are ranked as amendable elements.

In regard to technique, by all means, every school provides classes and workshops that help students to develop technical skills. However, students and alumni, as well as professionals from the industry wish the level to be higher. Besides teaching
traditional handcrafts, schools need to teach students the application of modern materials and techniques that are practised in a manufactured cloth (Hoang, 2016). Additional electives could be a solution to provide students with more practise and knowledge if needed.

A similar discussion can be lead vis a vis technology and collaboration. Some schools, as KABK or ArtEZ have a higher level of implementation and are already embracing new tools and ways of working. Still, both digital and collective skills need to have a higher importance as they are becoming an indispensable part of the industry. For example, students have to learn to interact with new digital tools in their everyday work, instead of in selected areas only (Hoang, 2016). As new devices are mostly not affordable for schools, collaboration might be the solution to conquer technology as well. Creative Labs, which are seen globally at other schools, do not only arrange space for interaction but provide students with highly advanced facilities.

Likewise, presentation is something that has to be improved in regard to what the professional environment expects and values. This aspect is crucial for a lot of new graduates, as it facilitates to get a job. A deepened focus must be set during the studies to enable students to get use to this practice.

In terms of sustainability, none of the schools mentions publicly their engagement and practice on this topic, neither do students or alumni have an opinion on it. Therefore, it is difficult to indicate the level of implementation. However, due to the fact that sustainability hasn’t been mention, it indicated that it needs more attention and can, therefore, be embraced more in education. Schools should help their students to engage more in sustainable projects, learn from other industries and studies. Study assignments are the basis, but institutions can establish new projects and paradigms.
The only element that is evidently insufficient is business. Besides the Amsterdam Fashion Academy, which provides some business knowledge, but rather entrepreneurial skills instead of managerial and marketing expertise, none of the schools give the students insight in this field. Some schools are more commercial than others, as AMFI for instance, but courses are not given. Production, merchandising or marketing classes could give design students basic knowledge on these topics, which they will face in the professional world. Fashion schools should not become business schools, however, they need to rethink extending their curricula.

All in all, the Dutch fashion education landscape shows potential for renovation, as some institutes are already implementing new elements to their curricula. Still, in order to create the best experience for students, schools should act upon the elements of the heptagon in regard to their vision.

Feasibility, however, is a debatable aspect. While schools national wide need to cut costs and hours, implementation of new projects into the curricula can be seen as a challenge regarding time and money, as both elements are required in order to improve the educational system. Especially new technological and technical machines and devices stress the topic of budgets. Also, as business classes are until now missing, the implementation would mean a complete restructuring of the curricula. This shows that implementation will, first of all, take time and money.

A step in the right direction would be a clear definition of the positioning of schools, in order to create an achievable plan for the future which would be appropriate to the profile of the school. Once schools define their scope of engagement, implementation can become more feasible.
Conclusion

The current zeitgeist of the fashion industry is defined by enhanced interaction and cross-over collaborations that nurture multidisciplinary projects. The future professional’s working practice is influenced by seven factors that all together can be summarised into a Fashion Industry Heptagon. Concluding the degree of alignment of industry demands and fashion design education in the Netherlands, it can be said that the level is still high, despite the fact that one element is missing and five other have room for improvement. Schools need to define their focus, evaluate their strategies and mirror them in their curricula and facilities in order to provide the best possible education. It is noticeable, that the Dutch schools, in general, have a good sense of the needs of the industry and can define what is required in the professional world. Hence, the potential for a successful implementation and improved education is given, once financial and time obstacles will be overcome.


