Integrating Creative Problem Solving into the Field of Fashion Education

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Abstract
Tuban, East Java, Indonesia has a long history. Since centuries ago, Tuban has
Fashion professionals these days agree that changes in the fashion business are
essential and highly value creativity as a genuine source for generating new ideas in
fashion products as well as fashion business practices. As fashion professionals deal
with problems of which solutions do not exist or that need innovative solutions for
brand or product differentiation in the fast-paced environments, interest in creativity
and creative problem solving in the field has increased; therefore, fashion educators
have realized that there has been an increasing need for incorporating creativity or
creative problem solving into the fashion curriculum. In this study, the researcher
intended to review previous research on the use of creative problem solving in
classrooms in various disciplines including the field of fashion education to provide
insights and suggestions for fashion educators to integrate creative problem solving
into the fashion education curriculum. Previous attempts to apply creative problem
solving to solve issues in fashion classrooms have mostly limited to promoting
divergent thinking techniques. It is suggested for fashion educators as well as
fashion students to consider creative problem solving as a process consisting of the
four distinct stages in which both divergent and convergent thinking techniques
should be properly utilized stimulating various thinking strategies.

Keywords: creative problem solving, fashion education, divergent thinking,
convergent thinking

I. Introduction
Changes in the fashion business are essential and creativity is always highly
valued as a genuine source for generating new ideas in fashion products as well as
fashion business practices. Students in the fashion programs most likely pursue their
careers in the fashion industry. People working in the fashion industry face problems
of which solutions do not exist or that need innovative solutions for brand or product differentiation in the fast-paced environments. Given considerable interest in creativity and creative problem solving in the field, it would be beneficial to integrate creative problem solving into the fashion education curriculum. Teaching creative problem solving has tended to focus on developing students’ potential in creativity or generating many diverse ideas for problem solving especially in the field of fashion education. Therefore, a necessary effort should be made to introduce and teach creative problem solving as a process consisting of multiple steps with various thinking strategies in the field of fashion education.

Often consumer buying behavior or decision-making process is explained as a problem solving process by identifying consumers’ unmet needs (problem identification), searching for information, evaluating and prioritizing alternatives, purchasing, and reviewing the purchase. When this well-known consumer behavior theory is applied to fashion marketing, the “creativity” issue weighs heavily on fashion business practitioners as consumers always expect to see new products and to have new experiences both in brick-and-mortar stores or online stores these days. Titus (2000) explored the similarity between marketing practice and the creative problem solving process and suggested an instructional approach that promotes the use of the creative problem solving process and techniques in marketing classrooms. Here, in this study, previous research on the use of creative problem solving in classrooms in various disciplines including in the file of fashion education is reviewed.

II. Creative Problem Solving Process

In this study, the Creative Problem Solving Thinking Skills Model, originally based on the Osborn and Parnes model of creative problem solving and refined by Puccio, Murdock, and Mance was chosen to provide a framework for applying creative thinking to solve problems and to bring positive changes to the existing world. The creative problem solving process involves multiple ways of thinking deliberately and intuitively applied to the three conceptual stages – clarification, transformation, and implementation (Puccio, Murdock, & Mance, 2005, 2007; Puccio, Mance, & Murdock, 2011, see Figure 1).

According to the Creative Problem Solving Thinking Skills Model which is a comprehensive cognitive and affective model designed to promote creative thinking and to generate solutions and positive change, users can freely move in between steps as needed by executing the assessing the situation step. The assessing the situation step located at the center of the framework helps users identify where the process should begin. Around the assessment stage, there are three conceptual stages including clarification, transformation, and implementation. In the clarification stage, the following question “What needs to be resolve?” should be answered through exploring the vision and formulating challenges. The transformation stage is the process where generating ideas and options to solve a problem and refining the best ideas into workable solutions take place. Exploring acceptance and formulating a plan are the two parts found in the implementation stage. Each stage requires a dynamic balance of divergent (an extensive search for many diverse and novel ideas) and convergent thinking (selecting workable solutions through critical evaluation of alternatives) that should be performed separately.

Williamson (2011) tested 116 participants of arts and science undergraduate UK students (51 arts and 65 science) on convergent thinking, divergent thinking, preferred learning styles, and creative problem solving skills using an ill-defined management and public policy problem. Contrary to the previous research findings between the 1960s and