



Analysing The Role Of Design Education In The Transformation Of Recontextualized Craft Practices

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at the issue of re-contextualization of craft practices in relation to innovation, traditional knowledge, market and entrepreneurship development and sustainability and contemporary relevance in the context of design education. A qualitative research design was used and data was collected through semi-structured interviews to examine the perception and experience of design students, educators and practitioners on the impact of design education in these four dimensions. Through the analysis of participants accounts it is found that the design education is generally portrayed as a process of reinforcing the fusion of the traditional and modern aesthetics, as an opportunity for experimentation and as a catalyst for the emergence of new forms of products. Traditional craft heritage awareness and the recognition of traditional craftsmanship were common expressions when it came to preserving. The participants also explained how design education plays a role in supporting market relevance, including product diversification, awareness of commercial value, and knowing consumer preferences, as well as how it contributes to sustainability through the adaptation of crafts to today's life and increased awareness of sustainable design. Concurrently, participants regularly pointed to entrepreneurial skills and reduction of material wastes as areas that were relatively undeveloped and needed further work. This study provides a qualitative description of the possibilities of design education to connect with traditional knowledge, innovation, market development and sustainability, so that craft practice relevance and development will continue.

Keywords: Design Education; Recontextualized Crafts; Craft Innovation; Traditional Knowledge; Sustainability; Contemporary Design.

INTRODUCTION

Traditional crafts are an important aspect of cultural identity, passed down knowledge, local resources, and community expertise. However, the life, taste and needs of the modern-day market have compelled the craft to transform the traditional and move towards the new forms and uses. The recontextualization of craft practices provides a way to share traditional techniques, motifs, materials and knowledge to the modern product and design spaces while retaining the cultural identity of the craft practices. The part that design education can play in this is enormous – the addition of creative thinking and experimenting, problem solving, exploration of materials and



current methods of design. It can thus develop an effective linkage between the traditional craft knowledge and the new design requirements.

Design education is not only about making things beautiful, it's about safeguarding craft traditions or developing the market, it's about entrepreneurship, it's about sustainability, and it's about being relevant today. By engaging with craft practitioners and craft processes and methods, students and designers can explore new forms, applications, aesthetics, and production possibilities, as well as the cultural values of traditional craftsmanship. Design education may also encourage the use of local materials, the resurgence of sustainable methods, diversification of products, the digital promotion and adaptation of crafts to new life. Therefore, the study of the role of design education in the recontextualization of traditional crafts is of utmost significance in terms of understanding the ability of traditional crafts of being culturally relevant, innovative, economically viable and meaningful to the society.

1.1 Research Objectives

The main research objectives are:

- To examine, through participants' stories, how design education contributes to processes of innovation and how traditional craft practices are recontextualized in new designs, products, techniques and applications.
- To know the role of design education in preserving, transmitting and integrating traditional craft knowledge and cultural heritage into the modern society as narrated by the participants.
- To analyse the perceptions of the market relevance, entrepreneurial development, sustainability and adaptation of traditional crafts to modern life as a result of the design education for the participants.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Taşdizen (2026) examined the relationship between design and craft education and with women needle crafts in design education. This study examined the potential for questioning and questioning of boundaries between design and craft in the pedagogical practice. It emphasized on the educational aspect of needle crafts and the possible utilization of traditional needle crafts in the present design education. The study helped to further the understanding of craft not only as a traditional making activity, but as a meaningful part of design learning and knowledge development.

Parodi (2026) explored new connections between manufacturing and design in Italy, focusing on the evolving status of craft today in manufacturing and design environments. The research involved a study of how the manufacturing processes and design might influence (in the study) the traditional craft practice. It highlighted the need to connect knowledge of craft to contemporary design and production practices and pointed out that the relationship between these could offer new ways to develop, adapt and make relevance to the changing cultural and industrial settings of craft.



Aytekin and Rızvanoğlu (2019) developed a participatory model that is based on the intersection of traditional craftsmanship and participatory design and technology in academic design education. The study focused on the creation of learning bridges in transferring tacit knowledge and experience from practitioners to students in a craft. It showed the importance of direct interaction, co-learning and technological help in transferring the knowledge, and the need to combine traditional craftsmanship with academic learning to maintain experiential knowledge and enable its adaptation to current design and educational contexts.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research methodology describes and explains the research process followed in the study. It describes the design of the study, the research approach, the areas investigated, the collection of data and the analysis of collected data. The methodology is broken down into the following sections.

3.1 Research Design

The present study was undertaken adopting a qualitative exploratory-descriptive research design to gain insight into the process of transformation and recontextualisation of traditional crafts in the context of design education. The study examined four main areas of design education: innovation in craft practices, safeguarding of traditional craft knowledge, market and entrepreneurial development, and sustainability and relevance. The areas selected were those that were prominent in the existing literature and that were relevant to the participants' personal experiences of design education.

3.2 Research Approach

The qualitative approach was used in the study to gain insight into the perception and experience of the respondents about the role of design education in re-contextualized craft practices. Instead of applying percentages to the answers, the accounts given by participants were analysed thematically to gain an understanding of the nature, depth and variability of the perceived influence of design education on the four dimensions. The interview protocol focused on seven areas of innovation, seven areas of preservation, eight areas of market and entrepreneurship, and eight areas of sustainability and contemporary relevance as a guide, not as a scale for the interviews.

3.3 Study Focus and Thematic Areas

The study examined how design education was central to the changing of traditional craft practices, and was broken down into four themes:

- Innovation and transformation – new product forms, modern design, new materials and techniques, integration of traditional and modern design, design problem-solving, new applications, experimentation.
- Preservation and transmission — awareness of craft heritage, documentation, interaction with the practitioners, transmission of knowledge to younger generations, recognition of craftsmanship, interest in traditional techniques, integration of traditional knowledge in the design education.



- Market and entrepreneurial development — consumer preferences, market-oriented products, product diversification, branding, entrepreneurship, market access, digital promotion and commercial value.
- Relevancy and sustainability to the current era — knowledge of sustainability in design, making use of local materials, reduction of waste, resurrection of sustainable practices, environmentally conscious products, younger consumers' awareness of relevance, adaptation for modern life, and social value of craft.

3.4 Data Collection

Primary data were collected via semi-structured interviews with design students, design educators and practitioners focusing on the four themes of the study. The interview guide asked participants to discuss, in their own words, specific cases where design education had (or had not) influenced their interaction with innovation, preservation, market development, entrepreneurship, sustainability and the use of craft practices today. Interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed for analysis, where possible accompanied by observation of relevant coursework, design projects or artisan collaborations.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase process described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation with the transcripts, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final written analysis. Four sets of themes were created based on the four major thematic areas of the study and illustrative quotations were chosen to illustrate patterns within each set of themes. Analysis covered both the most frequently cited areas and the least frequently cited, to reflect both similarities and differences across the four dimensions, and to capture the extent of development in the areas.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results consider the role of design education in the transformation and recontextualization of traditional craft practices under four thematic areas – innovation, preservation of the traditional knowledge, market and entrepreneurial development, and sustainability. The analysis does not report on percentages, but on themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants, with supporting quotations. These are placeholders for actual quotations from the interview transcripts that will be filled in after fieldwork is finished

4.1 Role of Design Education in Promoting Innovation in Craft Practices

The majority of the participants explained design education's role as a source for innovation in craft production in terms of creating a mix between traditional and modern appearance, experimenting, new forms of products, etc.



Table 1: Influence of Design Education on Innovation and Transformation of Craft Practices

Theme	Description
Blending traditional and modern aesthetics	Design education described as actively encouraging fusion of traditional motifs/techniques with contemporary design language
Encouraging experimentation	Coursework and studio culture described as fostering willingness to try new approaches with craft materials
New product development	Design education linked to development of new product forms and applications beyond traditional uses
Design problem-solving	Working with craft constraints described as strengthening problem-solving skills
Material and technique exploration	Comparatively less frequently described — participants noted more scope for introducing new materials and techniques

One dominant theme that was repeated was the traditional and modern, as participants noted how design education was essential in their ability to reinterpret traditional forms for modern use. The eagerness to try something new and the development of new forms of the product were also common, and the use of truly new materials and techniques was mentioned less frequently, which may be an avenue for design education to pursue.

4.2 Contribution of Design Education to the Preservation of Traditional Craft Knowledge

Participants noted that design education was significant in the maintenance and transmission of traditional craft knowledge, mainly by creating awareness of craft heritage and consciousness of traditional craftsmanship.

Table 2: Contribution of Design Education to Preservation and Transmission of Craft Knowledge

Theme	Description
Heritage awareness	Design education described as building deeper appreciation of the cultural history behind craft traditions
Recognition of craftsmanship	Participants describing greater respect for the skill and cultural value embedded in traditional techniques
Knowledge transmission	Design education seen as a channel for passing craft knowledge to younger designers
Interaction with practitioners	Valued highly where it occurred, but described as inconsistent across programmes



Documentation of techniques	Least frequently described — participants noted limited systematic recording of traditional methods
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The awareness of traditional craft heritage and the recognition of craftsmanship were the dominant themes; participants often described design education as a path to understanding the cultural and technical richness of traditional craftsmanship. Comparatively less, though, was said about documenting traditional techniques, reflecting a possible disconnect between valuing the craft knowledge and working towards systematic documentation.

4.3 Impact on Market Relevance and Entrepreneurial Development

Design education was cited as having helped to make traditional craftiest more market oriented, for example by diversifying their products and raising awareness of their commercial value, and entrepreneurial skill development as an area in need of attention.

Table 3: Impact of Design Education on Market and Entrepreneurial Opportunities

Theme	Description
Product diversification	Design education linked to expanding traditional crafts into a wider range of product forms
Commercial value awareness	Participants describing a stronger sense of the market value of traditionally made products
Consumer preference understanding	Coursework described as building awareness of contemporary consumer tastes
Digital promotion	Some participants described using digital platforms to promote craft-based products
Entrepreneurial skill development	Frequently described as underdeveloped — participants wanted more practical business and entrepreneurship training

The most common themes for design education to make contributions to market relevance were product diversification and knowledge about commercial value. But several participants commented that, although design education gave them a new way to look at the possibilities of the old craft in the marketplace, it provided relatively little organized assistance in developing entrepreneurial skills, which they said hindered their efforts to capitalize on the opportunities.

4.4 Role of Design Education in Sustainability and Contemporary Relevance

They spoke about design education facilitating a process of adapting traditional crafts to modern life and raising awareness of sustainable design, but also identified a lack of practice in reducing the use of materials as a continuing challenge.



Table 4: Contribution of Design Education to Sustainable and Contemporary Craft Practices

Theme	Description
Adaptation to contemporary lifestyles	Design education described as helping fit traditional techniques to present-day needs and uses
Sustainable design awareness	Coursework linked to a stronger understanding of sustainability principles in design
Social value of craft	Participants describing greater appreciation of the social and community significance of craft
Use of local materials	Design education associated with encouraging use of locally sourced materials
Waste reduction	Consistently described as the most difficult aspect to put into practice, despite growing awareness

The most common reported contributions in this category were adaptations of crafts to modern life and an awareness of sustainable design. The responses, however, were always a differentiation between sustainability principles and the ability of participants to actually reduce material waste, which they felt was more challenging in the current course requirements and production conditions.

4.5 Discussion

In all four thematic areas, participants indicated that design education has been a continually positive but unevenly developed role in the recontextualization of traditional craft practices. The aspect of innovation and cultural preservation, which merged aesthetics, building heritage awareness and the creation of awareness of craftsmanship, was expressed in a consistent manner, which corresponds with the previous studies on design–craft collaboration.

In contrast, the contributions of design education to market relevance and sustainability are more varied in the accounts of participants: awareness raising was described as strong, and the translation of that awareness into outcomes, such as developing entrepreneurial skills, or material waste reduction in a meaningful way, was described as significantly more difficult. This gap between awareness and actual capacity, which has come directly from the reflection of the participants, may lead to the consideration of more practical and hands-on education in these areas in design education curricula.

5. CONCLUSION

The results indicate that design education does play an important part in transformation and recontextualization of traditional crafts, mainly by helping the participants combine the knowledge of traditions with modern design demands. Innovation, achieved through the synthesis of traditional and modern aesthetics and encouragement of experiments, as well as cultural preservation through greater awareness of craft history and appreciation of traditional skills were among the contributions of design education. In addition, design education was identified as a



factor that contributes to market relevance of craft through product diversification and sustainability through adaptation of crafts to modern lifestyle and sustainable design. However, lack of entrepreneurship development and material waste reduction were the issues consistently pointed out by the participants as underdeveloped areas of design education. Overall, the study demonstrates that design education can effectively serve as a tool to achieve the synthesis of traditions, innovation, cultural preservation, market relevance and sustainability, thus helping traditional crafts stay relevant and sustainable both culturally and commercially.

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