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Sustainability Education for Design Students: a Lesson in Teaching and Learning Strategies

Abstract

Apparently acknowledging the consequences of our unsustainable lifestyle is not enough to change us to a more sustainable one. How to make each of us take responsibility for the damage we are causing remains challenging. Unavoidably designers must partially take blame in providing new products and services that perpetuate unsustainable living. Thus sustainability education for future designers who will be in a position to shape the way we live is undoubtedly important. This paper presents experiences taken from a sustainable design course, experiences that could contribute strongly in planning effective sustainability pedagogy for the future. The implication in effective sustainability education regards not only what we learn but also "how" we learn. In light of this, different teaching and learning strategies were used to meet the course objective – nurturing the students' responsibility for their actions towards sustainability. The paper examines the key successes of productive course strategies: personal footprint quiz making the students realized how their daily activities have an impact on our planet; firsthand experiences from visiting places where sustainable efforts have been made inspiring and motivating the students to take sustainable action; self-study and knowledge sharing through case study presentation broadening the students' view of sustainable design. The course outcomes were successful. The students have not only tried to change their own lifestyle, but in addition influence those of others'. Furthermore, they have changed their view of the design profession. A designer is no longer someone who designs cool and attractive stuff but a person who has a great responsibility for future sustainability.

Keywords: sustainability, education, design, teaching strategy, learning strategy