

Rethinking Design Education: India's Key to Sustainable Fashion's Future

Published on 08 Nov 2025 | By IFI Correspondent



India's fashion and textile sector stands at a cross-roads: as one of the world's largest textile producers, the industry also contributes disproportionately to waste, pollution and resource-intensive practices. Educational institutions, particularly design and fashion schools, have a pivotal role to play in reshaping this narrative. Recent voices in India's media and education landscape emphasise that sustainable fashion depends not only on brand actions but on **rewriting how designers are trained**.

Why Change in Design Education Is Essential

1. From Trend-Driven to Responsibility-Driven Design

Traditional fashion curricula often reward novelty, volume and rapid turnover. But sustainability demands a shift: designing for longevity, for responsible materials, for circularity. Without re-educating young designers, the same "make-more, sell-more, dispose-quickly" mindset persists. The move towards ethical and eco-aware design is increasingly cited in Indian analyses of design education.

2. Incorporating Real-World Environmental and Social Contexts

Designers must understand the full value chain: from fibre farming to dyeing, from factory labour conditions to end-of-life disposal. In India, where hand-loom, artisan crafts and large-scale manufacturing sit side by side, design education needs to reflect those complexities. Institutions like National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) are already embedding sustainable practices in campus labs and curricula.

3. Technical Innovation and Sustainable Skills

Sustainability in fashion isn't just a moral choice—it requires new technical skills: zero-waste pattern cutting, digital prototyping, material innovation, supply-chain transparency. Without updating curricula, graduates risk for the evolving industry. Recent reports emphasise this need in India.

What Needs to Change in Indian Design Schools

- **Curriculum refresh:** Including modules on circular economy, sustainable materials, ethical sourcing, lifecycle analysis.
- **Interdisciplinary learning:** Merging design students with environmental science, textile engineering, data analytics.

- **Hands-on, context-specific projects:** For example, working on sustainable textiles from local ecosystems or reviving regional crafts with eco-methods

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