

**MULTIPLE FASHION: INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE IN CONTEXT  
OF DOWN SYNDROME**

**Júlia Almeida de Mello<sup>1</sup>**

**Gabriel Soares Romanelli<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Pós-doutoranda em Linguística, Letras e Artes (PPGA-UFES, LEENA), bolsista da Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Espírito Santo (FAPES), Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/2648924540669238>. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8454-2453> e-mail: [juliaalmeidademello@gmail.com](mailto:juliaalmeidademello@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Licenciatura em Letras Inglês-Português, Faculdade Saberes (2021); Bacharel em Comunicação Social, Universidade de Vila Velha (2005). E-mail: [gabrielsoaresromanelli@gmail.com](mailto:gabrielsoaresromanelli@gmail.com)

## 1 INTRODUÇÃO

The “Moda Múltipla” Extension Project ran from April to December 2022, partnering with the FAESA University Center and the Vitória Down Association. Its goal was to promote social inclusion for people with disabilities (PwD) through student-community interactions. Specifically, the project aimed to increase representation of PwD in the fashion market and help designers adapt to diverse consumer needs.

Recognizing that disability extends beyond medical labels to include societal barriers, the project sought to address these barriers in the fashion industry. It acknowledged that fashion often overlooks PwD, leading to standardized designs that don't accommodate different body types and limited opportunities for involvement in the industry.

To tackle these challenges, the project aimed to integrate Teaching, Research, and Extension activities. While it aimed to address various disabilities, the 2022 edition focused on individuals with Down syndrome in collaboration with the Vitória Down Association. By involving students and professionals from different fields, the project aimed to foster dialogue and action, amplifying voices that advocate for diversity and inclusion in fashion.

The project recognized the scarcity of professionals with Down syndrome in the fashion industry and emphasized the importance of inclusion and education to drive meaningful change. Through collaboration and shared knowledge, the project aimed to create a more diverse and inclusive fashion landscape, respecting the unique needs and experiences of marginalized communities.

## 2 MULTIPLE FASHION: CHALLENGES, PROCESSES, AND INCLUSION

Structuring a university extension project from a teaching standpoint is no easy feat, especially when integrating it into multiple courses. The coordinator of such a project must also be prepared to handle unforeseen challenges that arise along the way. Despite thorough academic groundwork laid in data collection, methodological studies, partnership building, and literature review during project development, obstacles emerged during implementation.

For example, initial resistance from many professors considered for the project team hindered progress in the early stages of “Moda Múltipla”. Despite commitments from eight faculty members, only one contributed significantly, necessitating ongoing adjustments to project plans. Additionally, student dropouts due to various reasons disrupted the activity schedule, prompting multiple recruitment drives to maintain participation levels.

Nevertheless, the project successfully facilitated interaction between the institution and society, providing practical experience for academic, professional, and civic development, and contributing to the social inclusion of people with disabilities. The project

comprised twenty sessions held at various locations, with twenty-six students ultimately participating across different academic disciplines.

Methodologically, the project aimed to meet the clothing needs of individuals with Down syndrome, foster autonomy in fashion choices, train students in inclusive fashion, and promote customization by individuals with Down syndrome. It progressed through four stages: planning and product development, customization workshops, fashion production, and project launch.

Each stage involved collaboration between students, project coordination, Vitória Down staff, and users. Initial sessions introduced Down syndrome and its characteristics, while subsequent workshops focused on streetwear concepts, upcycling, and graffiti techniques. The project culminated in a fashion editorial, exhibition, and runway show, garnering media attention and expanding discussions on social inclusion.

Despite challenges, the “Moda Múltipla” project achieved its objectives through adaptability, empathy, and collaboration. The exchange of experiences and ideas enriched the process, demonstrating the transformative potential of inclusive initiatives.

### 3 CONCLUSION

The project’s comprehensive analysis led to a recurring realization: a broader perspective is imperative. Despite the fashion industry’s purported commitment to diversity, driven mainly by commercial motives, it persists in prioritizing narrow standards of body types, behaviors, and characteristics that inadequately represent the true spectrum of diversity.

The project made significant contributions to pedagogy, training, and knowledge dissemination, particularly within the realm of fashion design. Additionally, it fostered interdisciplinary collaboration involving graphic design, psychology, human rights, social inclusion, disability rights, and the visibility of individuals with Down syndrome (T21). By forging new partnerships and disseminating findings widely, the project expanded the educational and research network. Consequently, it facilitated enduring advancements in academic disciplines such as fashion design, graphic design, law, and psychology, ultimately enhancing societal well-being through inclusive fashion initiatives.

Moreover, the “Moda Múltipla” project sought to establish itself as a pioneering endeavor within the domain of extension activities. It embraced an integrated and interdisciplinary approach, in line with the institution’s overarching objective of fostering greater collaboration between students and external communities.

Among its notable outcomes were initiatives such as exchanges focusing on fashion product creation for individuals with Down syndrome, facilitated through collaborative meetings and courses between students and members of the Vitória Down Association.

Additionally, the project organized workshops tailored to the needs of individuals with Down syndrome, led by both students and faculty members. Fashion production courses were also conducted to prepare promotional materials and runway shows, with active involvement from students and professors alike. The dissemination of findings through external runway shows, alongside collaborative efforts in burgeoning academic and market domains, further underscored the project's impact. Lastly, the establishment of an interinstitutional network dedicated to inclusive fashion and disability advocacy stands as a testament to the project's lasting influence and commitment to societal betterment.

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