University Intervention for Capacity Building and Social Empowerment through Garment Sector Based Distance Education Courses Suiting the Post Multi – Fibre Arrangement Era – Indian Context

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The globalisation era ordains tertiary institutions to analyse the impact of both national and international policy changes on commerce, industry and socio-economic conditions of the populace and, work out salutary measures. In pragmatic terms, the institutions need to generate curricular inputs for inculcating essential skills. India became a signatory to the GAAT in the year 1947, the year of its independence; the implication is that political colonialism could glide into knowledge based economic colonialism, if unwilling to face globalisation challenges. India and other developing countries have to adapt to technological changes for ensuring self reliance and socio-economic welfare. The spirit of "Learning to live together" and "Learning to be" is to be adopted (Jacques Delor) utilising international relationships through the Commonwealth, United Nations, etc. In this Paper, significance of Multi Fibre Arrangement (MFA), its impact on Indian garment industry and comprehensive educational measures needed to be taken for facing the resultant challenges are discussed.

1. INDIAN GARMENT INDUSTRY AND MULTI FIBRE ARRANGEMENT

The textile industry in India, being the second largest employer, provides direct employment to over 33 million people and contributes 17 per cent to exports (Matrix Clothing, p.10). Since 1974, The Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) enabled developed nations to restrict imports from developing countries through a quota system. The Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) was designed to abolish MFA quotas through four stages within a decade (1995-2004) ending before January 2005. The product groups to be integrated at each stage include tops and yarns, fabrics, made-up textile products and clothing (http://www.bharattextile.com/features/research-brief/).

2. ABOLITION OF MFA – IS IT A BOON OR A CURSE?

In the post MFA, the following are some of the positive features of Indian Garment industry:

i. Potential of doubling the export earnings by the year 2010
ii. Enhancement in fashion design skills and international recognition (http://resources.alibaba.com/topic/224736/Indian_Textile_Industry.htm)
iii. Phenomenal growth in the textile sector during two year period following the expiry of MFA

Post MFA studies predicted that growth in textile sector over a period could generate additional employment for approximately 12-17 million workers, 5 million being skilled.

Prominent among the demerits of abolition of MFA are: increased competition, escalated production targets, long working hours and even adoption of cost cutting "social dumping" procedures such as reduced wages, denial of social security benefits, etc. particularly for the "the unskilled and semi-skilled" (which constitute major chunk among the garment workers) (http://www.ccsindia.org). The large retailers (emerging through mergers) wield considerable influence over price, which could intensify the problems of the industry. (Report: International Labour Office, Geneva). Non-adherence could lead to reduced business or even to closure of units due to possible re-location in complying nations. The immediate reaction among the producing countries might be to try to minimize production costs and labour costs, even if the latter has minimal role in the costing process.

The post MFA changes have global impact on millions of workers. The trade unions allege violation of workers' rights, women being the hardest hit. The Management of a few garment units attribute reports regarding labour ill treatment as a campaign motivated to undermine exports. A non-profit organization, Civil Initiatives for Development and Peace (Cividep -India), mentions "according to ILO standards, manufacturers here are supposed to comply with certain rules like the local labour laws, safety and health issues and social security measures. Not all, but several of them are violating these rules."

(http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/bline/2003/09/20/stories/2003092002091700.htm)

3. OTHER ISSUES CONCERNING WORKFORCE

The scenario is quite complex due to interplay of multitude of factors. A few of them are listed below:

i) **Rupee Appreciation** could affect the competitiveness and profitability of the textile industry leading to job loss to the tune of 5.79 lakhs during 2007-08, as per study conducted by Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (Annual Report 2006-07, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry).

ii) **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** has the potential to augment growth in the manufacture of textiles and apparel through technology transfers, employment generation, international business relationships, and management and training modernization (http://www.cid.harvard.edu/archive/india/pdfs/fdi.pdf). While FDI is desirable, the competitive spirit required for attracting international investors could have an "abrasive effect" on protective labour laws through introduction of hiring and firing policy and the like.

iii) **Technology Switch Over** in garment units requires enhancement in investment, skills and training. Non-adaptation could result in closure as happened in the case of considerable textile units in Coimbatore, the Manchester of Southern India. A study sponsored by the Apparel Export Promotion Council and carried out by the Textile Committee, Mumbai in the wake of the post-MFA (http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/bline/2003/09/20/stories/2003092002091700.htm) shows that less than 6 per cent of the workforce and, around 2 per cent at the supervisory level had formal institutional training.

In this context, it is relevant to refer to The Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) [prepared by a team of consultants from Harvard University and the Boston Consulting Group], which gives India 52nd position based on survey of businesses in 59 countries on eight issues – openness to FDI, governance, financial stability, infrastructure, adoption to new technologies, industrial Management practices, fair institutional practices and labour. India is assigned 56th position based only on labour issues which cover labour costs (relative to international norms), efficiency, the level of basic education and skills, etc. (http://www.cid.harvard.edu/archive/india/pdfs/fdi.pdf) A Report on the status of garment industry workers in India highlights the immediate need for labour empowerment through skill enhancement. (http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/may/eco-garment.htm).

4. NEED FOR MULTIPLE STRATEGIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN GARMENT SECTOR

Knowledge of the challenges faced by the Education System in India (viz., access, participation in terms of Gross Enrolment Ratios, equity, quality, relevance, management, and resources) and, an analysis of the contemporary socio-economic issues are pre-requisites for deliberating on capacity building initiatives for the Garment Sector. The new millennium India presents a complex demographic milieu of skewed development amidst its surging economy. The nation has the fastest growing middle class, while nearly a quarter of its population live below the poverty line. India has some of the world class institutions in Management and Engineering sectors and, in contrast, nearly 40 percent of its people are illiterate. Twenty five percent of total child population in the elementary age group does not have even primary education and, 53% of children drop out of school before completing the elementary level, or grade VIII. 75% of the poor live in rural areas and are daily wagers, self employed and landless labourers. Considerable farmer suicide cases are reported. Large scale migration in search of employment is noticed from the backward regions to the developed regions, resulting in tension in the migrated locations. There is a view that globalisation procedures have intensified the regional, rural-urban, social, and gender divides. All these considerations have led the Government of India to formulate the XI Five Year Plan motto as "Towards faster and more inclusive growth", symbolic of the stress on socio-economic justice.

Apart from the issues associated with the percolation of Education in India, the garment related courses, being part of vocational courses, have to face the challenge of providing integrated skills and finding appropriate partnerships (inter-institutional, industry-academia, etc.). Yet, the vocational educational institutions can get inspiration from UN Millennium Project (http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/costs_benefits2.htm). The

term “capacity building” or “capacity development” describes the task of developing levels of human and institutional capacity. Capacity building should foster the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and values to all the stakeholders. (http://uk.oneworld.net/guides/capacitybuilding).

The XI Plan Approach Paper of the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India proposes that the Industrial Training Institutes should take the lead towards capacity building in vocational areas, though other institutions would play a supplementary role. As per the post MFA survey sponsored by the Apparel Export Promotion Council and carried out by the Textile Committee, Mumbai, there are an estimated 328 institutions providing formal education and training programmes in textile and fashion design technology. (http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2005/10/08/stories/2005100800410700.htm) These include public funded institutions like the National Institutes of Fashion Technology, Industrial Training Institutes, Apparel Training and Design Centres (ATDC), Sardar Vallabhbai Patel Institute of Textile Management, and Army Institute of Fashion and Design. Pearl Academy, New Delhi, JD institute of Fashion Design, Mumbai, Academy of Fashion and Art Design, Jaipur are some of the private institutions offering fashion design courses.

The question arises whether these initiatives are enough to generate five million skilled work force. Should we not utilise a wide spectrum of alternatives? Utilising partnerships and Distance Education mode need consideration in this regard.

5. DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

The Educational Institutions could focus on developing partnerships with other educational institutions, different funding wings of the Government (such as Textiles, Labour, Human Resource Development (HRD), etc.), manufacturers’ associations, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), labour organisations, etc. The academic activities need to be planned with the active participation of the stake holders. A recent feature in Indian University governance is that inter-institutional partnerships are provided legitimacy through appropriate statutory amendments. The inter-institutional partnership opens up opportunities for an interesting variety of pedagogical and technological strategies and improvements in the quality of learning materials enabled by a build up of critical mass of scholars otherwise isolated.

The industry-academia collaboration can help bridge the demand-supply chasm of the work force and, facilitate curricular relevance in terms of compatibility with industrial skill requirement. The survey sponsored by the Apparel Export Promotion Council (http://cade.athabascau.ca/vol5.2/8_moran.html) states that the educational institutes rarely interact with the industry for designing syllabi and, only 13 per cent of the technical institutes are found to interact with the garment industry to frame their syllabus.
The different avenues for the Institution-Industry partnership include:

- Involvement of the experts from industries in curriculum planning and development
- Utilisation of CDs of live industrial processes
- Special Lectures being delivered by the industry representatives
- Supporting Internship
- Provision of continuing education to the labour force
- Adopting industrial problems as project work

Although the extension programs add a third dimension to the educational institutions, according to the policy frame work of UGC, the privately run institutions are in a disadvantageous position in planning for extension education programs as compared to state funded institutions. The impediments are optimising work output and making financial provisions. However, the saving grace comes out in placing the accent on partnerships with NGOs, which possess expert understanding of the local needs and can provide a vital feedback mechanism. The institutions can help in preparing the courseware in local language, training the trainers and providing infrastructural facilities for community education. Special project mode operation could be adopted with financial aid from the funding agencies.

6. USE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION MODE

The scope for Distance Education mode is immense. Open learning serves as a source of education for the employed, marginalized and disadvantaged sectors of the society. As per the XI Plan document of HRD Ministry (for the period (2007-2012), Distance Education system contributes 25% to enrolment in Higher Education with around 1982 academic programs which include practical based Science Programs and a few Technology Programs as well; the cost per student in DE mode is calculated to be 42% of that in formal system. Seven million enrolment is predicted in all streams through DE mode by 2012 year end. (XI Five year Plan, HRD Ministry, Government of India). Distance Education Institutions are fore-runners in collaborative arrangements utilising cost effective methods of cooperative course development, adoption, adaption, credit transfer, sharing of human resources, hiring of infrastructural facilities as well as equipment and, teleconferencing.

The Garment Sector based Distance Education Programs are in the nascent stages. National Institute of Open Schooling, New Delhi offers various garment sector based stand-alone and life enrichment courses of six month and one year duration in distance mode. At the tertiary level, Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences (SMUHMTS) and Annamalai University offer distance education courses in Fashion Design areas. We shall discus in detail the efforts of SMUHMTS.

7. DISTANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVES BY SMUHMTS

The Directorate of Distance Education, Sikkim Manipal University of Health, Medical and Technological Sciences, Manipal, Karnataka offers B.Sc. Fashion Design (3 year duration) along with 41 Academic Programs in other streams. The students are provided printed study materials for all the Subjects. The theory and practical counselling support is given at the Learning Centres spread across the country. The uniqueness of SMUHMTS is the additional support it provides through satellite mediated instruction known as 'Very Small Aperture Terminal" (VSAT) sessions [for around 820 hours per Semester] beamed through the studio at Manipal. The students can participate in these sessions through the Learning Centres which have receiver antennae. Around 120 Sessions are made available for Fashion Design students. The VSAT CDs are also made available on request.

SMUHMTS believes in adopting innovative approaches and maintaining contemporary curricular relevance. The University has recently revamped the B.Sc. Fashion Design Course using the fragmental modularisation approach advanced by Miomir Despotovic, Iskra Maksimovic and Aleksandra Pejatovic (http://www.vetserbia.edu.yu/). The following are the constituent modules:

- Certificate in Computer Application in Fashion Design (Six Month duration)
- Diploma in Fabric Ornamentation (One year duration)
- Diploma in Pattern Making and Stitching (One year duration)
- Advanced diploma in Fashion Design and Illustration (Two year duration)
- Advanced diploma in Merchandising (Two year duration)

The fragmental modularisation is illustrated in the Annexure along with general modularisation (approach that is so far followed) and Block Modularisation (another possible curriculum design). The colour codes and the names of the subjects are also indicated. The distinct advantages of the suggested fragmental modularisation approach are:

i) Exit offer through shorter modules
ii) Motivational Credit Transfer facility for future build–up through horizontal and vertical mobility (culminating at the highest level with B.Sc. FD)
iii) Suitability for the employed category to adjust pace of study

For Continuing Education Programs, the fragmental modules are proposed to be used along with the capsules in the following areas:

- TUKA CAD for pattern making, marker making and grading

- Pattern making
- Apparel Merchandising
- Quality control

For empowerment through Extension Education, efforts are being undertaken to offer capsulated Programs. The aim is to open up employment opportunities for the destitute women, unemployed youth and underprivileged sections of the society. It is planned to make available the following Extension related activities in local languages in partnership with Self Help Groups and NGOs.

- Pattern Making and Stitching
- Embroidery
- Batik Printing
- Tie and Dye
- Stencil Printing
- Soft Toy Making
- Fabric Painting.

8. SOME CASES OF EXTENSION EDUCATION AND CONTINUING ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY OTHER UNIVERSITIES/INSTITUTIONS

A few cases of effective implementation of Extension Education and Continuing Education Programs in Garment Sector are cited below:

S. No	Name of Institution	Continuing Education Programs	Extension Education Programs
1	Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore		1. Apparel designing 2. Embroidery and Painting 3. Embroidery and fashion designing 4. Aari embroidery 5. Pattern making
2	PSG College of Technology, Coimbatore	1. Production technology in apparel industry 2. Apparel and Fashion Designing 3.Embroidery and surface ornamentation 4. Apparel quality testing standards and apparel costing 5. Computer aided fashion designing 6. Apparel manufacturing technology 7.Computer aided apparel designing using LECTRA	
3	Kongu Arts and Science College, Erode		1. Embroidery classes for physically challenged students 2. Dress designing for adults 3. Embroidery for adults
4	Krishi Vignyan Kendra in association with G.B. Pant University of Agriculture & Technology, Pant Nagar		1. Cutting and stitching of garments by preparing draft 2. Embroidery 3.Extraction and utilization of unconventional fibres 4.Entrepreneur Development among farm workers: Topics like screen printing, tie and dye, block printing and batik printing are taught

The encouraging feature is that Avinashilingam Deemed University, Coimbatore reports income levels varying from Rs. 1500 to Rs. 8500 for a few women engaged in different jobs in Garment Sector as a consequence of its Extension Programs.

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19. http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/may/eco-garment.htm
20. http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2005/10/08/stories/2005100800410700.htm
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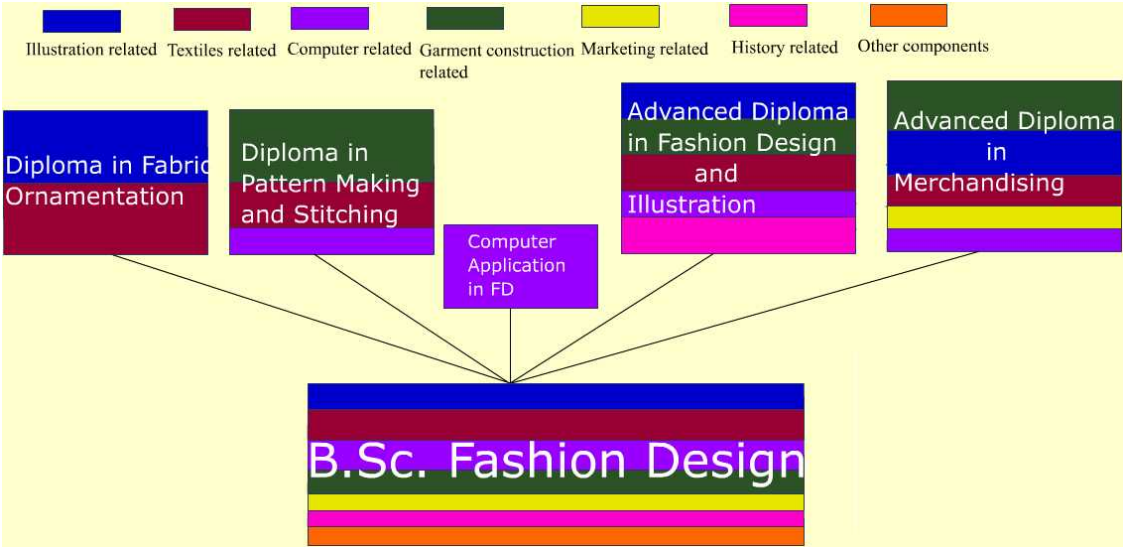
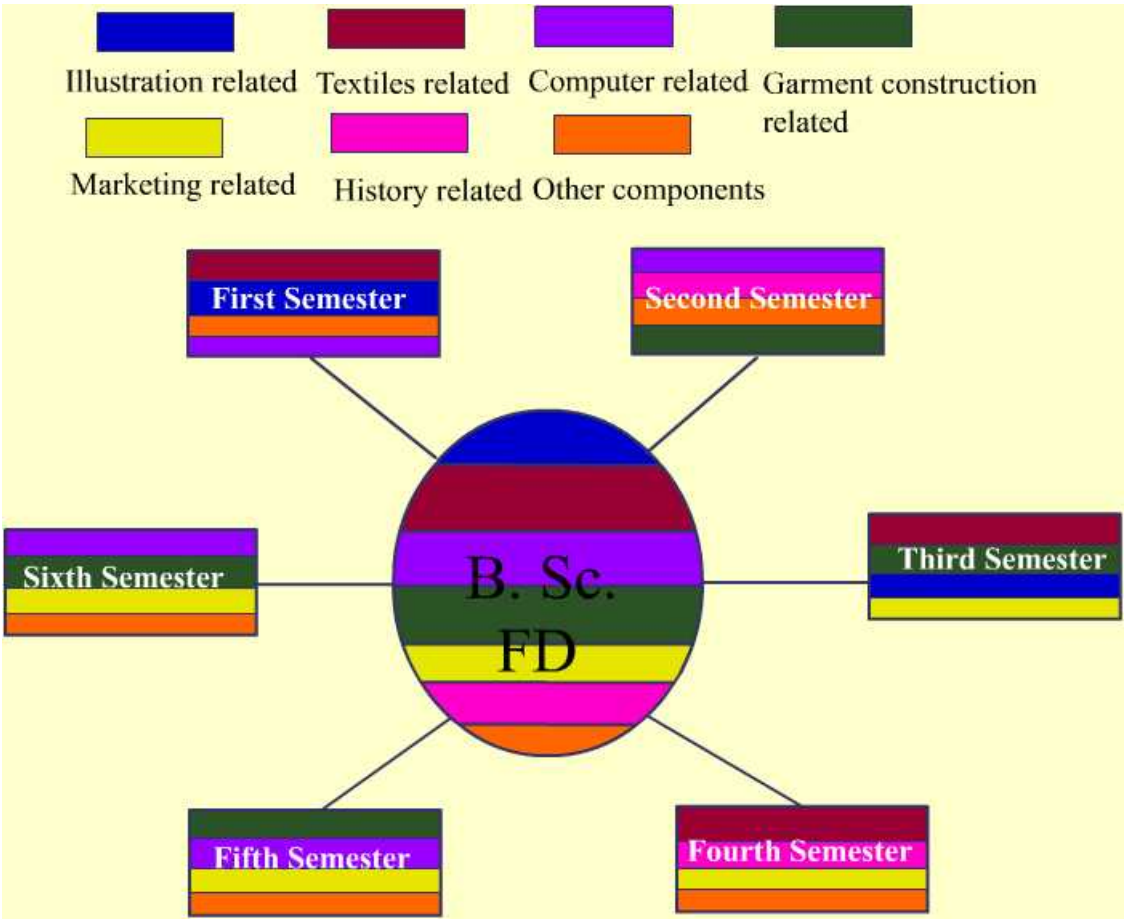
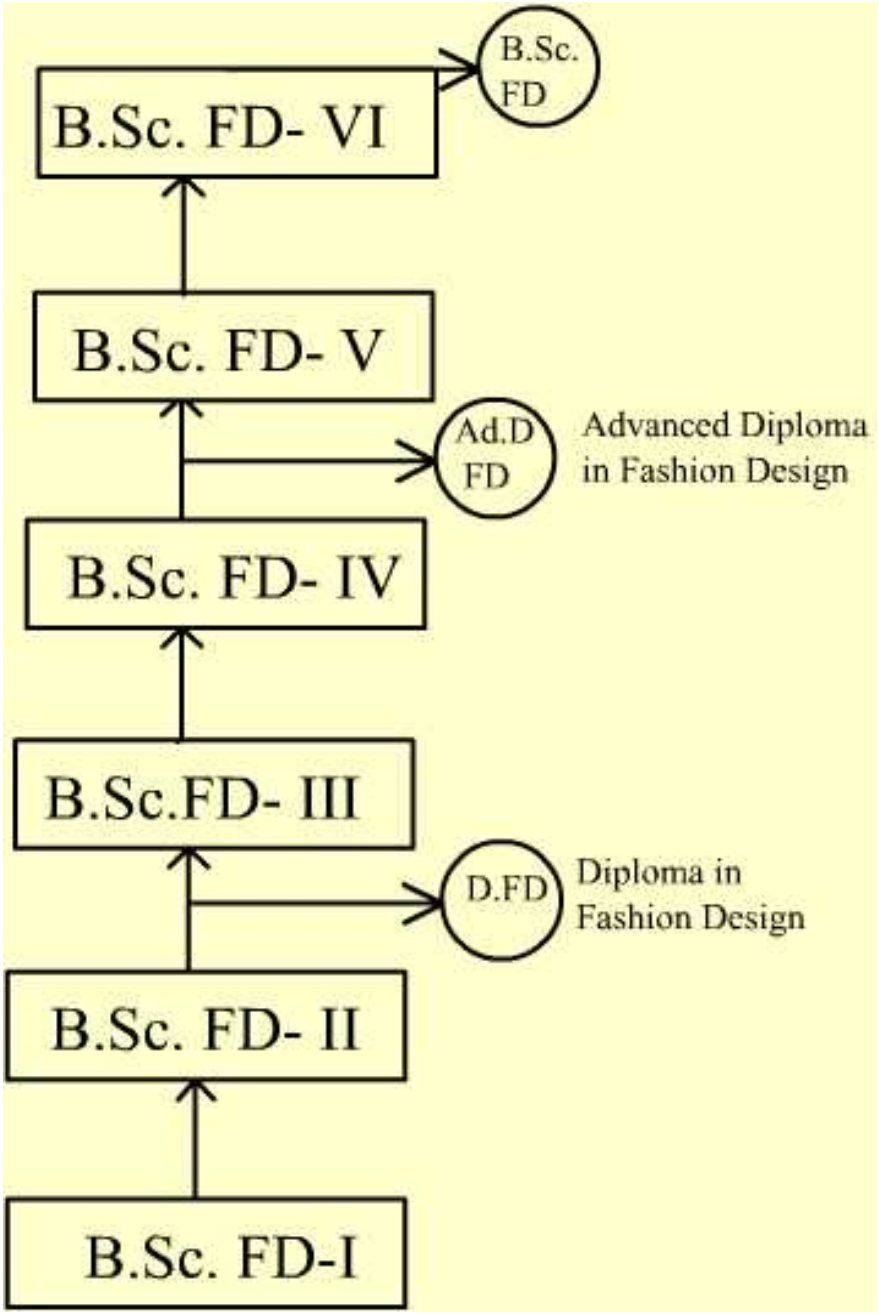
ANNEXURE



Fragmental Modularization



General Modularization



Block Modularization