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Assessment of Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of the Manufacturing Process (sewing) in Apparel Sector Organizations, Sri Lanka.

Postgraduate Diploma in Management Leading to the Degree in Master of Business Administration (MBA)

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Abstract

Garment industry in Sri Lanka had contributed significantly to the economy during the past two decades. It provides direct employment to more than 350,000 people in the country. Due to the phasing out of the multi-fibre agreement in early 2005, the industry is facing direct competition from countries like China, Vietnam, Canada, India & Pakistan in order to safeguard its market share of USA.

Even though Sri Lanka has been able to establish a good reputation on quality of the product, the other countries are also developing fast in this aspect. The main challenge to Sri Lanka would be to serve the customer with superior quality, faster & cheaper. The central problem addressed in this research is why the garment manufacturing process is not geared to serve the customer requirements effectively in the present competitive business.

The objective of the research was to examine, analyze and draw conclusions on the factors influencing the effectiveness of the manufacturing process (sewing) in apparel sector organisations in Sri Lanka.

After reviewing the cause & effects, the following key variables were identified as having direct impact on the central problem.
(i) Degree of skilled labour.
(ii)Degree of advanced Technology.

After reviewing relevant literature, further factors affecting each of the key variables were identified and a conceptual framework was developed followed by a conceptual model for effectively meeting customer requirements.

A judgement sample of 10 garment manufacturing companies from medium & large scale was selected for the study. Actual performance figures were studied to determine the overall effectiveness of organisations. Structured interviews were conducted with senior management to get insight of how each factor identified under key variables were practiced & structured questionnaires were administered to find out the general opinion of the respondents on the contribution of each factor.

The outcome of the survey was that skilled labour and advanced technology are vital areas to be concentrated and improved in order to serve the customer effectively in the present business scenario. There were several underling factors that contributed towards skilled labour & advanced technology.

Under the factors that contributed to development of multi skilled labour, training & retraining had helped organisations in meeting their objectives to a greater extent. It was revealed that content of the training needs modification to serve the present business requirements. Also it is recommended that further studies were required on

this aspect. Even though skill grading & rewarding was evident in majority of organisations, organisation policies in promoting & rewarding should be based on the performance & not merely on experience. Majority of organisations had skill inventories but these could be used more effectively with a computerised database. Method improvements done in lines had helped most of the organisations to uplift operator skills.

Under the factors that contributed towards advanced technology, the material handling system in the manufacturing process needed to be critically looked at for further improvements. It was revealed that the advanced featured machinery used will help to improve quality & efficiency of the product being manufactured. It is important to know the exact requirement of the advanced featured machinery so that proper utilisation is obtained. There had been a favourable response on the level of work place engineering done in order to enhance the effectiveness of the manufacturing process. Performance capturing and identification of defects in the process must be done in a proactive manner in order to improve the process.

Each of the above areas are explained in detail in the proceeding chapters.

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