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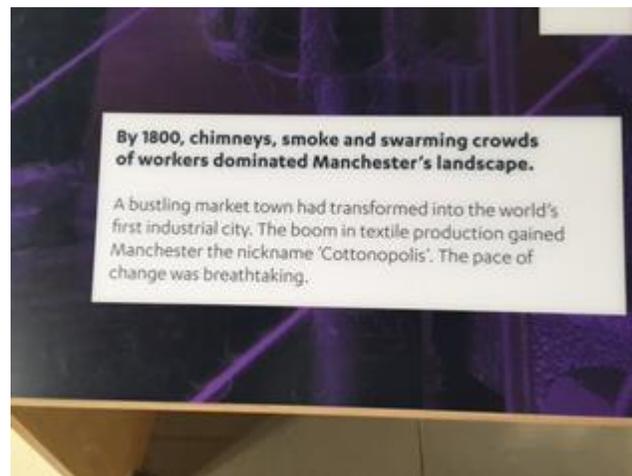
## **A REPORT ON IFFTI FACULTY EXCHANGE**

It is a matter of pride and privilege for me to be the first from my institute to take part in the IFFTI Faculty Exchange Initiative that took place from 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015 to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at Manchester Metropolitan University.

This two-week program was planned and structured in consultation with Prof Jane Ledbury, Prof Shuyu Lin and Prof Alison Welsh of Hollings Faculty, Manchester Metropolitan University. The objectives of this exchange program, which were mutually agreed upon by all parties involved, were as follows:

- Development of a Research Proposal in the areas of common interest.
- Learn and adapt the best practices on curriculum and pedagogy in the areas of Fashion Technology and Management

On 12th July I took my flight from Hyderabad to Manchester, it was my first visit to any European country. Manchester is a vibrant city formerly known as 'Cottonopolis' has hung up its clogs and now emerge as a major center for culture and commerce. The city is very proud of its industrial past as well as its influences on music and sport.



Picture 1: 'Manchester' World's First Industrial City

My host institute was Department of Apparel, Hollings Faculty at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). MMU is one of the UK's largest and most popular universities with academic

roots dating back to the early nineteenth century. I was awestruck with the infrastructure of MMU, which creates an outstanding and inspiring learning environment.

On my first day, I had a welcome meeting with Prof Jane, Dr Shuyu and Prof. Alison. We discussed my plan for the next 13 days in detail. The three lovely ladies tried to familiarize me with MMU, Manchester and United Kingdom as a whole. During the second half of the day, Dr Shuyu gave me a tour of various facilities and departments of MMU located in All Saints campus. Facilities at Department of Apparel included CAD Labs, Design Studios and specialized sewing and joining machines and equipment, 3D body scanner, sew-free bonding equipment, automated and laser cutting equipment, 3D printing and digital pattern-cutting software.

The same evening, Prof Jane, Dr Shuyu and Prof. Alison took me out for a welcome dinner. I was really touched by this gesture. Informal discussions during the dinner gave us an opportunity to understand each other's culture.



Picture 2: Dinner with the Host

The second day was spent on research discussions with Prof Julia, Prof Naomi and Dr Shuyu. During the first half of the day I presented my research work in the area of Service Quality in Higher Education to the group. During second half of the day, Prof Julia presented her research work on Buyer Supplier Relationships. We also discussed how this research can be extended in to a joint research proposal. Since Annual Teaching and Learning conference was scheduled on Wednesday, it was decided that we would meet again on Thursday and Friday to come up with a concrete joint research proposal.

As per a prescheduled plan, an Annual Teaching and Learning conference was organized by The Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) on Wednesday 15th July, 2015. CELT is one of the support functions at MMU and it aims at creating formal and informal continuing academic professional development (ACPD) opportunities for all staff at MMU. This conference gave me an opportunity to interact with faculties of different departments of MMU. Conference started with a keynote presentation by Prof Malcolm Press, Vice Chancellor, MMU. There was

another interesting session on ‘Higher Education Pedagogy- Learning from the Creative Practices Literature’ by Prof. Vicky Gunn, Glasgow School of Art.



Picture 3: Annual Teaching and Learning Conference

Later in the day, a few parallel workshops were held. I attended a workshop on Using Play dough for Creative Learning by Prof. Emma Jenkins and Jane Wood. Various types of weave structures were demonstrated in this hands on workshop using play dough. I also attended a workshop on Good Practice Exchange. It included a collection of inspiring examples of good practices from around MMU.



Picture 4: Play dough for Creative Learning

(<https://www.flickr.com/photos/21614692@N02/19553841779/in/album-72157655510494190/>)

Prof Julia, Prof Naomi, Dr Shuyu and I met again on Thursday and Friday to discuss our research areas and finally came up with the research proposal as given below:

## **Research Proposal 1**

### **REASONS FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT:**

To compare and contrast students' perception about service quality in Fashion Education. It will be an extension of the research that has already taken place in the National Institute in Fashion Technology (NIFT) in India. The purpose is to compare and contrast the research findings within NIFT and MMU (Hollings) respectively.

### **AIM:**

To compare and contrast students perception about service quality in Fashion Education in UK and India.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

It is well known that quality is a concept, which applies traditionally to manufacturing and production. But the growing role of services in the world economy, and the increased competition within the sector, has made the concept of quality and its importance indispensable for success and survival of the service providers.

Many researchers have argued that service quality is the key to success (Buzzel and Gale, 1987; Grönroos, 1990). As a consequence, interest in the evaluation of service quality has arisen. Interest in service quality is obvious when one finds that poor quality places a firm at a competitive disadvantage. Available literature provides plenty of service quality evaluation methodologies. Service quality has most often been defined in terms of customer perceptions.

Researchers have thus, suggested that educators should evaluate student perceptions of educational service quality. Although, number of studies has been carried out in the different streams of higher education (engineering, management, pharmacy, nursing, hospitality and tourism); but literature lacks any substantial study in the fashion education.

Thus, the study will be carried out to assess applicability of a scale developed in India, to measure service quality of fashion education institutes from student's perspective, to British Fashion Education context. Also study aims to compare and contrast Indian and British students' perception about service quality of their institute.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

Quantitative methods will be employed to compare and contrast the students' perception of Service Quality in Fashion Education.

The 'Z test' will be used to compare and contrast the students' perception of Service Quality on all nine dimensions (i.e. input quality, curriculum, academic facilities, interaction quality, support facilities and non-academic processes, academic processes and campus) of service quality.

I spent weekend at London exploring British Museum and Victoria & Albert Museum. One particular exhibition which I found interesting at British Museum was ‘Shifting patterns Pacific barkcloth clothing’. The exhibition showcased a selection of about 77 garments, headdresses, masks and body adornments dating from the 1700s to 2014. The cloth made from the inner bark of trees is a distinctive art tradition dating back to about 5000 years ago in the islands of the Pacific. This barkcloth art is finding its relevance even today with newer perspectives for cultural expression. More and more urban Pacific Island designers are using barkcloth elements and patterns into garments made for the catwalk. Key learning from this exhibition is to explore the possibilities of traditional Indian crafts in contemporary fashion.



**Picture 5:** Contemporary Developments of Barkcloth Clothing

After whirl winding weekend at London, it was back to research work with Dr Shuyu. Dr. Shuyu presented her research work in the area of the innovation process from product ideation to commercialization particularly in the creative sectors like fashion. And here germinates the idea of second joint research proposal. The joint research proposal developed out of discussion with Dr. Shuyu is as below:

## **Research Proposal 2**

### **REASONS AND PURPOSE FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT:**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of the Indian crafts in driving high-end fashion innovation. The reason of taking this study is to explore how traditional Indian crafts contributes to the contemporary high-end fashion sector.

### **AIM:**

This study aims to explore the contemporary applications of the Indian crafts in the high-end fashion context.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

This study will explore the role of the Indian crafts in driving high-end fashion innovation based

on the content analysis of secondary data, due to its exploratory nature. The sources of secondary information are listed below:

- Books and Journals;
- Library archives;
- Diaries;
- Film;
- Government publications and official statistics;
- Newspapers and magazines;
- Organisational records, for example court records, inspection reports, annual reports and so on;
- Pictorial representations (drawings, maps and photos);
- Television programmes;
- Website pages and the internet.

The purpose of this content analysis study is to identify the existing applications of the Indian crafts in the high-end fashion sector. This will aid to the understanding regarding the role of the Indian crafts in contributing to the high-end fashion innovations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There is a growing demand for unique and authentic hand made products throughout the world (McIntyre, 2010). Designers world over are looking for ways to innovate and differentiate their high fashion products. Handmade craft products which reflect local identity or highlight cultural value offer this sought-after differentiation (Lin, 2007; Moalosi, Popovic, & Hickling-Hudson, 2007). Innovating products with authentic characteristics by adapting crafts from world over could be a good strategy to develop high fashion products which reflect differentiation and self-expression. Such products will help designers to fill a unique niche and build identity in the high end fashion context (Dillon, 2008).

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Wednesday July 22, 2015, I had an opportunity to attend summer school on Learning Innovations Six Principles. This was an interactive workshop on how technology can help support the MMU's strategy for learning, teaching and assessment. The workshop discussed about technology enablers like Dropbox, Google Docs, Evernote, QR codes, Moodle Forums, NearPod, LinkedIn, FaceTime, Skype, Sonru, Podcast, iMovie, WordPress, Tumbler, Blogger, Online Test, Padlet and Goggle Reader.

During my visit I also explored the possibility of joint research with Prof Zhimin Chen. Prof Chen has done an extensive research in the area of Quality Management in International Fashion Clothing Supply Chains between Great Britain and China. We discussed about the possibilities of extension of this research in terms of clothing supply chain between United Kingdom and India.

One of the day I had a long discussion with Prof Jane on key features of Memorandum of Understanding which my institute NIFT and MMU are underway to sign. We also discussed the fine prints of Faculty Exchange Program, which NIFT and MMU are looking forward to start. I also tried to understand the unique project 'Connect', which Prof Jane is leading at MMU. This is a joint project between MMU, a US University at Buffalo, an Australian University at Melbourne and an Asian University at Beijing. The project connects student community across the globe and aims to educate fashion students on the importance of sustainable innovation in the fashion industry.



Picture 6: With Prof Jane Ledbury

I had a meeting with Prof Caroline to gain understanding of the MMU's unique compulsory course 'Synergy unit' across all the streams. This course is designed to provide an opportunity to students to develop their career plan and give them an opportunity to develop their problem solving skills.

All the courses at MMU have a strong focus on employability, professionalism and enterprise. MMU encourages its students to think of themselves as 'Early Career Professionals'. Throughout their studies, it provides an array of resources and opportunities that allow students to develop their commercial and professional awareness, to think critically, communicate effectively and demonstrate professional values – skills and attributes which are vital when entering the world of work. And to achieve this one of the unique initiative of MMU is Professional Development Week which is planned across all the streams two times in a year. During this week various workshops, like Career Farm- An Assessment Program, Explore Your Career Options, Building Your Brand, Confident Public Speaking, Essay Writing and Critical Thinking, Time Management, Succeeding at an Interview, Guide to Psychometric Tests to name a few, are organized.



Picture 7: Employability Focus at MMU

Last day was presentation of two joint research proposals to Prof Alison, Head of the Department Apparels. I also submitted the draft of my Report to Prof Jane.

I am really thankful to Prof. Alison, Prof. Jane and Dr Shuyu, who have helped me through charting the program to successful completion of the visit. I am also thankful to IFFTI for their initiative which gave me this great opportunity of Faculty Exchange. I am grateful to my Institute for supporting me at every process of this exchange. Without the financial add from my institute this exchange could not have been materialized.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Following two research proposals were generated to achieve the first objective:

1. Role of the Indian crafts in driving high-end fashion innovation.
2. To compare and contrast students perception about service quality in Fashion Education in UK and India.

Annual Teaching and Learning Conference and Summer School on Learning Innovations- Six Principles gave me an opportunity to learn about best practices in curriculum and pedagogy being followed at MMU and to achieve my second objective.

Discussions with Prof Jane and Prof. Caroline gave me in depth knowledge about MMU's focus on employability. In 2016 when NIFT plans to revamp its curriculum, we may also think of including a course similar to Synergy Unit to enhance employability of our students.

This exchange program enhanced my intercultural competencies and it will help me to facilitate student's global preparedness. This international exposure has equipped me to infuse a global perspective into teaching/learning activities for students. It will help me in optimizing and transforming classroom teaching and learning by integrating global issues, activities, and experiences into class content and learning objectives.

This exchange has further strengthen the relationships between NIFT and MMU.

