

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT

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CONTENTS

Sr. No.	TITLE & NAME OF THE AUTHOR (S)	Page No.
1.	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH STATUS AND EXPENDITURE ON HEALTH <i>MURAT DARCIN</i>	1
2.	THE ANALYSIS OF THE SERVICE QUALITY IN HOTEL INDUSTRY <i>DR. ELEINA QIRICI, DR. ORIOLA THEODHORI & DR. ESMERALDA SHKIRA</i>	6
3.	A STUDY ON SOCIO – ECONOMIC STATUS OF INTEGRATED FARMERS IN NORTH WESTERN ZONE OF TAMILNADU STATE <i>SASIKALA. V & RUPASI TIWARI</i>	10
4.	ORGANIZATION CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR: IT'S RELATION WITH MANAGEMENT STYLE AND ITS ANTECEDENTS <i>AFAQ RASOOL, DR. MUHAMMAD RAMZAN & GHULAM MUSTAFA SHAMI</i>	15
5.	EXISTING GAP BETWEEN THE FINANCIAL LITERACY AND SAVING/INVESTMENT BEHAVIOUR AMONG INDIAN WOMEN: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCES TO COIMBATORE CITY <i>DR. R. MATHIVANAN & K. MOHANARANJANI</i>	20
6.	AN ANALYSIS OF AWARENESS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS CONTINUOUS AND COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION IN CENTRAL INDIA <i>PRASHANT THOTE, L.MATHEW & D.P.S RATHOURE</i>	26
7.	CURRENCY FUTURES POTENTIAL IN INDIAN CAPITAL MARKETS <i>DR. DEEPAK TANDON, DR. NEELAM TANDON & HAVISH MADHVAPATY</i>	29
8.	DETERMINANTS OF INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT TO AGRICULTURE IN UNION TERRITORY OF PUDUCHERRY: AN ECONOMIC ANALYSIS <i>K. VIJAYASARATHY, A. POUCHEPPADRAJOU & M. SANKAR</i>	38
9.	AGED RURAL PEOPLE'S HEALTH PROBLEMS: A CASE STUDY OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT <i>J. CYRIL KANMONY</i>	43
10.	HEALTH STATUS OF THE SKILLED COALMINE WORKERS: A STUDY IN JAINTIA HILLS DISTRICT OF MEGHALAYA <i>DR. B.P.SAHU & DR. P. NONGTDU</i>	50
11.	A STUDY ON VODAFONE TAXATION – INDIA'S VIEW <i>DR. G. VELMURUGAN</i>	55
12.	APPLICABILITY OF FISHER HYPOTHESIS ON INDIAN CAPITAL MARKET <i>DR. SAMIRAN JANA</i>	58
13.	GLOBALIZATION AND CHANGING LIFE STYLE OF INDIAN MIDDLE CLASS <i>AMANDEEP KAUR & RANJEET KAUR</i>	62
14.	PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF POWERLOOM UNITS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOMANUR CLUSTER IN COIMBATORE CITY <i>DR. D. ANUSYA & R. PREMA</i>	69
15.	WORK LIFE BALANCE OF WOMEN FACULTY WORKING IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS: ISSUES AND PROBLEMS <i>DR. B. VIJAYALAKSHMI & T. NAVANEETHA</i>	73
16.	GEMS AND JEWELLERY: THE DARK HORSE OF INDIAN EXPORTS <i>PURNASHREE DAS & SAURABHI BORTHAKUR</i>	76
17.	AN IMPACT OF FINANCIAL DERIVATIVES ON INDIAN STOCK MARKET <i>C.KAVITHA</i>	80
18.	NEW HORIZON IN MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE ROARING NEED OF PHILANTHROPY MANAGEMENT COURSES IN INDIAN MANAGEMENT INSTITUTES <i>DR. TRIPTI SAHU</i>	87
19.	THE ROLE OF HOME-BASED ENTERPRISES (HBES) IN DEVELOPMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SONITPUR DISTRICT OF ASSAM <i>MANOJ KUMAR HAZARIKA & DAISY RANI KALITA</i>	93
20.	EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL PROCEDURE IN INDIAN ORGANIZATIONS <i>DR. NILESH THAKRE</i>	98
21.	WASHINGTON MUTUAL, INC.: FORTUNE 500 TO NOWHERE <i>RAJNI KANT RAJHANS</i>	101
22.	FDI IN ORGANIZED RETAIL SECTOR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA <i>DR. NAVITHA THIMMAIAH & ASHWINI.K.J</i>	103
23.	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT INFLOWS INTO USA <i>DR. G. JAYACHANDRAN & V.LEKHA</i>	107
24.	ARIMA MODEL BUILDING AND FORECASTING OF GDP IN BANGLADESH: THE TIME SERIES ANALYSIS APPROACH <i>MONSURA ZAMAN</i>	113
25.	INFLUENCE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CORPORATE CULTURE TO THE STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT MATURITY, BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CONSUMER SERVICE UNIT OF EAST JAVA REGIONAL V OF PT TELEKOMUNIKASI INDONESIA <i>MUHAMMAD SYARIF, BUDIMAN CHRISTIANANTA & ANIS ELIYANA</i>	118
26.	HAS PARTICIPATION IN URBAN AND PERI-URBAN AGRICULTURE CONTRIBUTED TO POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY? THE CASE OF BAHIR DAR CITY, ETHIOPIA <i>SURAFEL MELAK & GETACHEW YIRGA</i>	123
27.	INSURANCE MARKET DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ETHIOPIA <i>TERAMAJE WALLE MEKONNEN</i>	129
28.	IMPACT OF MACROECONOMIC VARIABLES ON STOCK MARKET RETURNS <i>AMARA & SHAHID ALI</i>	136
29.	IMPACT OF CHANGE AGENT'S ASSOCIATION IN CHANGE PROCESS <i>RITU SHARMA</i>	140
30.	INDIA'S TRADE WITH BRAZIL: POWER AND LATENT FOR FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS IN TRADE <i>NASSIR UL HAQ WANI, KANCHAN TANEJA & SUMAIR NABI</i>	143
	REQUEST FOR FEEDBACK	148

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PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF POWERLOOM UNITS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOMANUR CLUSTER IN COIMBATORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

The powerloom sector produces more than 60% of cloth in India and textile ministry's estimation says that more than 60% of the country's cloth exports originated from that sector. But modernization in looms is less and Indian industry still lags significantly behind US, China, Europe, Taiwan etc. (Texmin, 2005). There are less than 15,000 modern looms, whereas traditional looms are in large numbers. In Value addition and the manufacturing of fabrics according to customer's compliances, is not possible due to obsolete technology of looms. This study will therefore posit a discussion of problems and prospects of powerloom industry that may upgrade them up to the present global competition.

KEYWORDS

modern equipment, power cut, spare parts, warp stop, weaving.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian textile industry is one of the largest industries in the world with a massive raw material and textiles manufacturing base. Our economy is largely dependent on the textile manufacturing and trade in addition to other major industries. About 27% of the foreign exchange earnings are on account of export of textiles and clothing alone. The textiles and clothing sector contributes about 14% to the industrial production and 3% to the gross domestic product of the country. Around 8% of the total excise revenue collection is contributed by the textile industry. So the textile industry accounts for as large as 21% of the total employment generated in the economy. Around 35 million people are directly employed in the textile manufacturing activities. Indirect employment including the manpower engaged in agricultural based raw-material production like cotton and related trade and handling could be stated to be around another 60 million.

In the textile industry, the weaving sector has been identified as one of the poorest technological links in the value chain. What makes the problem more serious is that the decentralized sector, both the powerlooms and the handlooms, which are accounting for the production of 76% of our fabrics needs, is marked by an overabundance. The textile industry can be broadly classified into two categories, the organized mill sector and the unorganized decentralised sector. Being a controlled sector, the organized mill sector has a complete information base on the organizational set-up, machinery installation, production pattern, employment etc. However, information-base on the decentralized sector on the above parameters is inadequate and policy planning has so far been based on hearsay and rough indirect estimates.

The organized sector of the textile industry represents the mills. It could be a spinning mill or a composite mill. Composite mill is one where the spinning, weaving and processing facilities are carried out under one roof. On the other hand, the decentralized sector has been found to be engaged mainly in the weaving activity, which makes it heavily dependent on the organized sector for their yarn requirements. This decentralized sector is comprised of the three major segments viz., powerloom, handloom and hosiery. In addition to the above, there are readymade garments, khadi as well as carpet manufacturing units in the decentralised sector. In a country like ours where labour is abundant and the unemployment poses a serious threat to the economic growth of the country, there is always a controversy about the production technology to be adopted. The mill sector's competitiveness is at stake given the mushrooming of a large powerloom sector that has production-function advantages. The textile production in case of the later entrants like powerlooms has therefore upset the entire production scenario. The powerlooms and mills are able to go for mass production with better quality products.

In spite of the fact that the industry could assimilate high technology levels for better quality production in the market, it has never adapted to the modern technology and, therefore, has remained obsolete. In the advent of globalisation, the Government of India, as part of its modernization efforts, has decided to induct about 50,000 shuttles less looms and upgrade 2.5 lakh looms into automatic and semi automatic powerlooms and make it cost effective.

DECENTRALIZED POWERLOOM SECTOR

The decentralized Powerloom Sector plays a pivotal role in meeting the clothing needs of the country. The powerloom industry produces a wide variety of cloth, both grey as well as processed. Production of cloth as well as generation of employment has been rapidly increasing in the powerloom sector. There are 22.69 lakh powerlooms in the country as on 31.10.2010 distributed over approximately 5.11 lakh units. The powerloom sector contributes about 61% of the total cloth production of the country, and provides employment to about 56.64 lakh persons.

More than 60% of the cloth meant for export comes from the powerloom sector.

GROWTH IN THE POWERLOOM SECTOR

The estimated number of powerlooms in the decentralized sector in the country till 31st October 2010 were 22,69,469. The year-wise growth in the number of looms installed is given below.

Year	No. of Powerlooms	Growth %
2002-2003	16,92,737	-
2003-2004	18,36,856	8.5%
2004-2005	19,02,953	3.6%
2005-2006	19,43,892	2.2%
2006-2007	19,90,308	2.4%
2007-2008	21,06,370	5.8%
2008-2009	22,05,352	4.7%
2009-2010	22,46,474	1.9%
2010-2011 (Upto 31.10.2010)	22,69,469	1.02%

Source: Annual Report – Ministry of textiles, Government of India.

PRODUCTION OF CLOTH & EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

The weaving capacity in the organized sector, along with the number of composite textile mills, however, has stagnated, because the past Government policy permitted only marginal expansion in weaving capacity in the organized mill sector. Even after the removal of restrictions in the Textile Policy of 1985, weaving capacity have been consistently declining. This is attributable to the structural transformation in the industry, leading to the de-linking of weaving from spinning and the emergence of the decentralized powerloom sector. In the organized sector the loom age capacity has declined from 1.23 lakh in March, 2000 to 0.86 lakh in March, 2005, and to 0.56 lakh in March 2008 and the same marginally increased to 0.57 lakh in 2009 and there is no change in 2010. Over the years, production of cloth in the mill sector is showing a steady growth, since 2003-04 onwards and was 1961million sq. meter in 2009-10. The total production of cloth by all sectors i.e. mill, powerloom, handloom, hosiery and khadi, wool and silk has shown an upward trend in recent years. The cloth production during April-Oct (2010-11) showed an increasing trend by 1.90% (provisional).

Year	Total Production	Production on Powerloom	% of powerloom over total production
2004-2005	45378	28325	62%
2005-2006	49577	30626	62%
2006-2007	53389	32879	62%
2007-2008	56025	34725	62%
2008-2009	54966	33648	61%
2009-2010 (P)	59809	36644	61%
2010-2011 (April to Oct 2010)	35805	22067	62%

Source: Annual Report – Ministry of textiles, Government of India.

PRODUCT PROFILE

The Powerloom Sector produces a variety of fabrics for domestic as well as export markets, such as shirting, suitings, dress material, saree, dhoti, sheetings, towels, chaddar, furnishing, shawls, blankets, tweeds etc. made out of cotton, blended, synthetic, silk, wool etc.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE DECENTRALIZED POWERLOOM SECTOR

- i. Technological obsolescence & small size of units with fragmentation
- ii. High power tariffs with uncertain power supply
- iii. Lack of credit availability & Poor marketability
- iv. Low HRD skill levels and poor quality consciousness
- v. Globalization of the textile trade & threat of import penetration

SCHEMES BEING IMPLEMENTED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF DECENTRALISED POWERLOOM SECTOR**1. GROUP INSURANCE SCHEME TO THE POWERLOOM WORKERS**

Government of India has launched a revised Scheme "welfare of Powerloom workers through Group Insurance Scheme" in association with LIC from 1st July 2003. In accordance with the XI Five Year Plan, the scheme has been modified by merging the existing Janashree Bima Yojana (JBY) Scheme and Add-on GIS w.e.f. 1st January 2008. As per the modified Scheme, the total premium is Rs.330/- out of which, Rs.150/- is to be borne by the Office of the Textile Commissioner, Government of India and Rs.100/- is being paid by the LIC from the social security fund of Government of India. Only a premium of Rs.80/- is to be paid by the powerloom weaver for getting the benefits under the said scheme.

In addition to the above, a worker under JBY will also be entitled the educational grant of Rs.600/- per child / per half year for two children studying in IX to XII standard for a maximum period of 4 years under Shiksha Sahayog Yojana (SSY). Under the said schemes, 8,15,877 powerloom workers have been insured so far involving GOI share of premium to the extent of Rs.832.80 lakh since July 2003 to November, 2010.

2. GROUP WORKSHED SCHEME

The Govt. of India has introduced a Group Workshed Scheme for decentralized Powerloom Sector on 29.7.2003, under the X five-year plan. The scheme aims at setting up of Powerloom Parks with modern weaving machinery to enhance their competitiveness in the Global Market and the same has been modified. As per the modified Scheme, subsidy for construction of Workshed would be limited to 40% of the unit cost of construction subject to a maximum of Rs. 160/- per sq. ft. whichever is less. Ordinarily, minimum 4 weavers should form a group each with 48 modern looms of single width or 24 wider width looms will be allowed to be installed. The maximum subsidy will be Rs.12 lakh per person. The scheme does not envisage more than 500 looms under one project proposal.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The Indian textile industry is structurally flawed and its efficiency and growth depends upon the corrective measures and their effectiveness. This process of improving the structural aspects of the industry was initiated in the 1985 Textile Policy, which for the first time took a sectoral view of the industry. The government is spelling out the need for an integrated approach whereby all sectors will be modernised synchronously. This integrated approach is felt to help the textile industry to achieve a reasonable level of upgraded production technology and make it strong enough to face the changed competitive global scenario from the year 2005. In order to meet the changed competitive conditions due to globalisation and liberalisation of the economy, there is an urgent need for upgrading the technology levels currently prevailing in the weaving segment, particularly the powerloom sector. All these call for the preparation and implementation of proper action plan in which all the stakeholders i.e., the government, the weavers and the other interest groups get fully involved.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The powerloom sector occupies a pivotal position in the Indian textile industry. However, its growth has been stunted by technological obsolescence, fragmented structure, low productivity and low-end quality products. The focus will therefore be on:

- ❖ Technology up gradation;
- ❖ Modernisation of Powerloom Service Centers and testing facilities;
- ❖ Clustering of facilities to achieve optimum levels of production;
- ❖ Welfare schemes for ensuring a healthy and safe working environment for the workers.

The powerloom units suffer a lot due to various problems which affect the production as well as their income. Therefore this study is conducted to find out the problems and also the prospects of powerloom units that may upgrade them up to the present global competition.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ To study the performance of the powerloom units
- ❖ To study the problems faced by the powerloom units
- ❖ To study the opinion and satisfaction level of the powerloom owners towards textile owners
- ❖ To study the awareness level of the latest technological developments.
- ❖ To offer suggestions on the basis of the results of the study.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**RESEARCH DESIGN**

A research design is purely and simply the framework of plan for a study that guides the collection and analysis of data.

The research design is descriptive in nature.

AREA OF THE STUDY

Powerloom industry is the major industry next to agriculture in Somanur. Due to water shortage, entire agriculture suffered and alternatively powerloom industry was established and it has grown over the years. In the early stages, handloom weavers diverted to powerloom in the year 1940, then slowly increased up to 1982. At present there are about 50,000 powerlooms, 900 shuttle less looms and 4000 automatic looms working in this area. Further there is a good scope for modernization of looms by installing shuttle less weaving machines under TUFS.

In this area about 40 modern sizing units are working and providing sized beams to the powerloom industry. All the sizing units are working well. The small powerloom units (capacity ranging from 4 to 24 looms) are controlled by master weavers and they supply sized beams on conversion basis and market the fabric.

The total production of fabrics is about 35,00,000 sq.m., per day, out of which 40% are utilized for local markets, 15% for direct exports, 25% for merchant exports and 20% processed and exported. All types of yarn are available to the powerloom industry in Somanur area. Hence the area of study refers to Somanur cluster in Coimbatore district.

PERIOD OF THE STUDY

Period for the study is 3 months i.e. August 2012 to October 2012

POPULATION

The population for this study is the powerloom cloth manufacturers in Somanur area.

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size in this study is 100.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Convenient sampling technique is used for the study.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The interview schedule method is used to collect data from the respondents.

SOURCES OF DATA

The study is based on primary data collection. The primary data has been collected from the powerloom units who undertake job work from the textile owners.

TOOLS FOR ANALYSIS

- ❖ Percentage analysis.
- ❖ Likerts Summated Scale.
- ❖ Chi – Square Test.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ The study was confined to Somanur cluster only and hence the results cannot be generalized.
- ❖ Due to time constraints, the number of respondents taken for the study is limited to 100.
- ❖ The limitations of the sampling technique also form the limitations of the study.
- ❖ The internal prejudice of the respondents serves as a limitation.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Number of workers and income of the unit with meters of cloth produced are independent.
- ❖ There is no significant relationship between income of the unit and satisfaction level of market rate.
- ❖ There is no significant relationship between the experience of the powerloom owners and problems faced by them.
- ❖ Income of the unit, Investment pattern, Experience and Educational qualification of the powerloom owners with satisfaction level of latest technology are independent.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

¹Gurumurthy, G, "The Ministry of Textiles' sub-group on powerloom has sought to build an additional weaving capacity of 25 billion sq mtrs under the powerloom sector for the 11th Plan period. The decentralised powerloom sector, which accounts for 60 per cent of the total fabric production capacity in the country's textile sector, is currently vested with a weaving capacity equivalent of 29 million sq mtrs."

²Mathivanan, M.S, "The thrust given to modernization of powerloom sector under the policy should result in improving the sector's export capability through enhancement in quality fabric manufacture. The textile processing sector in the endeavour to achieve defect-free and colour fast processed fabrics would also benefit the powerloom sector."

³Mohapatra, S.B, "The powerloom sector stand to benefit by CENVAT, as it would enable them to get duty refunds. The Centre had conducted a study of powerloom sector in Tamil Nadu, which revealed that 77 per cent persons in the sector were workers and 15 per cent on "preparatory side", who were not required to register under CENVAT. The remaining eight per cent were powerloom owners, who have registered under CENVAT."

⁴Soundariya preetha, M, "The Hi-Tech parks for the decentralised powerloom sector are planned under the Technology Up gradation Fund Scheme, Textile Centre Infrastructure Development Scheme and the Group Work shed Scheme. Each park will get a subsidy of about Rs. 20 crores (from the Centre and the State governments). They will generate in total 6,000 job opportunities and almost Rs. 900 crores of annual turnover."

⁵Prabhakaran, O. M, "Handlooms are generally engaged in producing processed cloth to be sold to nearby shops, while powerlooms produce grey cloth which required further processing before it can be sold. A vast majority of handloom weavers who operate power-driven 'handlooms' were found to be economically better-off. They were seen in large numbers in Tamil Nadu, AP and Maharashtra, among other states. What they were using was not discarded machinery from the mills. These were, by tradition, expert handloom weavers and were producing the very same handloom products using the very same raw materials (i e, dyed hanks) except that they were using speedier looms".

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- ❖ Majority of the powerloom owners are in the age group of 41 to 50 years
- ❖ Married male respondents run majority of the units.
- ❖ Majority of the units are run by the persons who educated higher secondary level.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom owners have an unit income of Rs 50,000 to Rs 1,00,000.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom units are proprietorship concerns and in existence for a period of more than 10 years.

¹Gurumurthy, G, "Sub – group on powerloom bets on adding capacity", The Hindu BusinessLine, September 1st, 2006.

²Mathivanan, M.S, "Powerloom sector hails textile policy", The Hindu BusinessLine, November 6th, 2000.

³Mohapatra, S.B, "Powerloom sector would benefit by CENVAT: Mohapatra", Express Textile, May 22nd, 2003.

⁴Soundariya Preetha. M s, "Work tarts for powerloom parks", The Hindu, February 3rd, 2006.

⁵Prabhakaran, O.M, "Handlooms and Powerlooms", EPW Letter to Editor, Economic and Political Weekly, January 25th, 2003.

- ❖ Most of the powerloom owners have invested their own funds for the establishment of the units between 7 and 10 Lakhs.
- ❖ Most of the powerloom units are weaving and owned 8 to 15 looms with 2 shifts per day and 2 to 5 workers employed per shift.
- ❖ Many of the powerloom units produce Gaada more than 30 meters of cloth per loom per shift
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom units facing labour problem which arises due to advance money and power cut.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom units states that low quality weaving cloth are not accepted by the textile owners but few textile owners accept it by providing half rate only.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom units gave training to the workers to improve the quality and quantity of cloth manufactured.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom units are aware of latest technology but only few units are using latest technology developments like warp stop due to investment cost.
- ❖ Most of the units stated that performance of labour, environmental conditions, labour problems, electricity charges are unfavorable to the powerloom weavers.
- ❖ Majority of the powerloom owners are satisfied with market rates, introduction of latest technology, voltage of power, availability & quality of raw material and availability & price of spare parts.

CHI-SQUARE RESULTS

- ❖ Number of workers and income of the unit with meters of cloth produced are independent.
- ❖ There is no significant relationship between income of the unit and satisfaction level of market rate.
- ❖ There is no significant relationship between the experience of the powerloom owners and problems faced by them.
- ❖ There is a significant relationship between the investment and satisfaction level of latest technology.
- ❖ Income of the unit, Experience and Educational qualification of the powerloom owners with satisfaction level of latest technology are independent.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT

1. TECHNICAL UP GRADATION

Technical obsolescence is one of the main drawbacks of the powerloom industry. The powerloom units must come forward to break – down this hazard and adopt new and modern technologies, so that the quality and quantity of cloth produced are improved.

2. QUALITY OF THE CLOTH

The powerloom units must concentrate on the quality of cloth produced. They must ensure that high quality of cloth is manufactured using the latest technologies.

3. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Finance is also another important problem of this industry. More finance is needed by the units for adoption of latest technologies. The banks and other financial institutions must come forward to advance loans to these units so that they can expand their factories and also implement the modern technologies.

4. ASSISTANCE FROM GOVERNMENT REGARDING POWER

The Government must take steps to reduce the frequent power – cuts, as they stop production and reduce the quantity of cloth produced, thus reducing the income of the units. The Government must also provide concession rates for the powerloom sector for the power consumed by the units.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study in its usual course, offers scope for further research in the following areas: 1. Working Environment and Problems faced by the powerloom labourers. 2. Investment pattern in latest technology. 3. Women Workers Perception about Work Place in powerloom units. 4. An Analysis of performance of organized sector- Spinning mills. 5. An Analysis of growth & performance of Textile Industry.

CONCLUSION

The study has aimed at finding out the problems and prospects of the powerloom sector in Somanur cluster in relation to its production efficiency and capabilities with a view to speed up modernization of the powerlooms.

Though current growth of this sector has been restricted by technological obsolescence, fragmented structure, low productivity and low-end quality products, in future Technology would play a lead role in this sector and will improve quality and productivity levels. Innovations would also be happening in this sector, as many developed countries would be innovating new generation machineries that are likely to have low manual interface and power cost. Indian textile industry should also turn into high technology mode to collect the benefits of scale operations and quality. To reap benefits of these developments Indian powerloom industry has to prepare itself for drastic technological changes and will have to focus on area such as Technology upgradation, modernization of Power loom Service Centres and testing facilities, Clustering of facilities to achieve optimum levels of production and Welfare schemes for ensuring a healthy and safe working environment for the workers in future.

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