



## Addressing Gaps between Textiles and Apparel Curriculum and the Industry in Kenya

Caroline Kobia, Mississippi State University, USA  
Paul Sang, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Kenya  
Amanda Muhammad, Bowling Green State University, USA  
Lombuso S. Khoza, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, USA  
Jaeil Lee, Seattle Pacific University, USA  
Minjeong Kim, Indiana University, USA

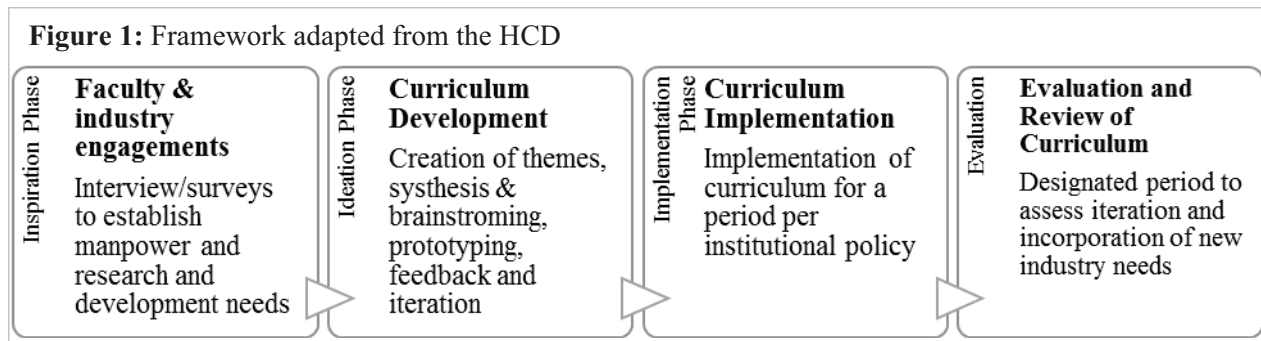
Keywords: Apparel, curriculum, Kenya, industry

The textiles & apparel (T&A) industry holds the highest potential for not only fostering Africa's export competitiveness and economic development but creating substantial employment opportunities (Tuigong & Kipkurgat, 2015). Among East African countries, Kenya and Ethiopia have the potential to become bigger players in garment manufacturing (Berg, Hedrich, & Russo, 2015). In particular, Kenya's T&A industry has earned its reputation in the global market as one of the leading emerging garment suppliers for high volumes of bulk basics. Kenya's vision for 2030 prioritizes the T&A manufacturing sector as a catalyst for the country's economic development with a projected 10 percent growth rate annually (African Cotton & Textile Industries Federation, 2010). In addition, the renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) in 2015 placed a heavy emphasis on Africa's emerging T&A industry and generated high interests among U.S. firms to source apparel from Kenya and other East African countries. AGOA has contributed to the rapid growth of Kenya's T&A exports to the U.S. and the T&A industry continues to be a highly dynamic and important sector of the Kenyan economy. However, increasing globalization brought new challenges for the Kenyan T&A industry with cheaper imports from the East and second-hand clothing from the west, while the development of skilled labor and new talents has been stalled. Despite emerging career opportunities for college graduates with a T&A major in Kenya, Nguku (2012) argues that current T&A curriculum at universities in Kenya lacks a direct practical link to the fast emerging T&A industries and has critical gaps to meet the emerging needs of the T&A industry in Kenya.

To help address gaps between the T&A curriculum and emerging industry needs in Kenya, we propose collaborative research among T&A educators from Kenya and U.S. with diverse academic and industry backgrounds. Based on preliminary interviews with Kenyan educators and relevant literature reviews, we developed the following research questions; (1) what are the current and emerging needs of T&A industries in Kenya (2) how has university curriculum accommodated these needs (3) what are the program-level goals and outcomes from the current T&A curriculum and (4) what are the critical gaps between industry needs and curriculum. To address the research questions, Human-Centered Design (HCD) will guide the research process ([www.designkit.org](http://www.designkit.org), n.d.). HCD is an ideal approach to develop an innovative T&A curriculum that addresses both the specific needs of Kenyan's T&A industry and graduates in Kenya. We will follow the three main phases of HCD: (a) *Inspiration*, (b) *Ideation*, and (c) *Implementation*. During the *Inspiration* phase, we will engage in empathetic inquiry to identify

gaps between the T&A curriculum and industry in Kenya. For empathetic inquiry, we will first conduct a content analysis of current T&A curriculum. To gain deeper insights about curriculum gaps and emerging challenges, we will further conduct interviews and survey with three primary constituencies (faculty, students/recent graduates, and employers). Our goal is to gain insights about both internal (e.g., students) and external environments (e.g., technology, trade environment) pertinent to the T&A education and industry in Kenya.

During the *Ideation* phase, we will work primarily with T&A educators in Kenya to brainstorm innovative T&A curriculums based on learning from the earlier phase and build curriculum prototypes to test. We will then gather feedback on curriculum prototypes from T&A educators and employers and go through multiple iterations to refine prototypes. During the *Implementation* phase, we will work with T&A educators to develop a plan to implement the refined T&A curriculum into their universities. See Figure 1 for the HCD process.



In order to fully realize potential benefits of the T&A industry and place Kenya in a competitive in a global marketplace, there is a pressing need to address existing gaps between the curriculum and emerging T&A industry in Kenya through collaboration with stakeholders. This study proposes collaborations among educators in the T&A programs between Kenya and U.S. to leverage the potentials of the Kenyan T&A industry. This proposed collaboration following the HCD process can be a practical example for other countries that have not yet fully realized the potentials of T&A industry for their economic and social benefits.

References:

- African Cotton & Textile Industries Federation (ACTIF) (2010). *Impact of AGOA the Textile and Apparel Industry of Kenya*. Nairobi, Kenya.
- Berg, A., Hedrich, S., & Russo, B. (2015). East Africa: The next hub for apparel sourcing. *The McKinsey Quarterly*. McKinsey, Frankfurt.
- Government of Kenya [GOK] (2008). Kenya Vision 2030: First Medium Term Plan, 2008-2012. Kenya Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.
- Nguku, E. (2012). *Analysis of Textile & Clothing Training Institutions in the East-Southern Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: African Cotton & Textile Industries Federation
- Tuigong, D. R., & Kipkurgat, T. K. (2015). Challenges and Opportunities Facing Textile Industries in Kenya in the Wake of Africa Growth and Opportunity Act. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 3(9), 520 - 523.
- What is Human-Centered Design? Retrieved from <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>