



# **NATIONAL POLICY PROPOSALS ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

**DECEMBER 2019**



**NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION  
SRI LANKA**



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126, NAWALA ROAD, NUGEGODA  
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**December 2019**

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## Foreword

The National Education Commission Act No. 19 of 1991, has entrusted the formulation of Policy Proposals on all aspects of education in Sri Lanka to this Commission.

As part of its responsibilities, the preparation of Policy Proposals on Higher Education had been conducted intermittently since its inception in 1991. In 1995 a workshop on Higher Education Policy was held and after further deliberations a document titled 'National Policy on University Education' was prepared and presented to HE the President in June 1996. In May 2000, the NEC submitted a document on 'University Admissions Policy'.

Subsequently, a Comprehensive National Policy Framework on Higher Education including Technical and Vocational Education was published in June 2009 and was presented to HE the President.

After nearly ten years, this document needed updating and the NEC decided to prepare two policy documents: one, on Technical and Vocational Education and the other on State and Non State Higher Education. The first was published in late 2018 and was presented to HE the President in May 2019.

In order to prepare the Policy document on Higher Education, almost all stakeholders were consulted at various stages from the end of 2017. Some views expressed by stakeholders were conflicting. However, most of their suggestions have been accommodated based on the consensus reached at the Standing Committee and the Commission.

The process of policy formulation is given at the end of this document in a chronological sequence.

The final policy document was placed before the Standing Committee on Higher Education at three meetings and two meetings of the National Education Commission for approval.

It will be presented to HE the President in due course.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of this venture.

**Prof. W. I. Siriweera**

Chairman

National Education Commission

## **Extracts from the National Education Commission Act. No. 19 of 1991.**

### **The National Education Commission and its Functions**

- (1) The functions of the Commission shall be -
  - (a) to make recommendations to the President, on educational policy in all its aspects, with a view to ensuring continuity in educational policy and enabling the education system to respond to changing needs in society, including an immediate review of educational policy and plan or plans and the making of recommendations to the President, on a comprehensive National Educational Policy;
  - (b) to review and analyse periodically, the National Educational Policy and Plan or plans in operation and where necessary, to recommend to the President, changes in such Policy, Plan or Plans;
  - (c) to advise the President on any other matter relating to education which may be referred to it by the President, for its advice.
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the matters in respect of which recommendations may be made by the Commission under subsection (1), the Commission may make recommendations to the President on the following matters:-
  - (a) the changes in curricula and teaching methods in educational institutions that are necessary to match education to employment, industry and social needs;
  - (b) the adequacy of guidance and counselling to students in educational institutions, to enable them to develop their potential to the full;
  - (c) the measures necessary to strengthen the links between educational institutions and the community;
  - (d) the development of educational institutions as resource centres for all round human development in the community;
  - (e) the measures necessary to reduce area-wise disparities among schools;
  - (f) the measures necessary to enhance the professional standing of teachers and other education service personnel;
  - (g) the alternate programmes that could be provided for the benefit of the children leaving primary and secondary schools prematurely, to enable them to develop their potential to the full;
  - (h) the changes in curricula necessary to foster the cultural and religious aspirations of students of all communities and religions;

- (i) the legislative changes necessary to give effect to any such recommendations.

**The National Education Policy includes the following matters:-**

Aims and goals of education; the structure of the educational system-pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, higher, informal, non-formal, adult, special, professional and religious; the establishment, location and distribution of educational institutions, including methods and criteria for admission of students and recruitment of teachers; the content of education, including medium of instruction, diversification of curricula, text books and learning material, the place of religious knowledge, observance and practice, assessment and evaluation, the examination system, certificates, diplomas and academic awards and recognition of qualifications; recruitment, placement, disciplinary control and professional growth of education service personnel including teachers, para-educational personnel, supervisors, and administrators; resources for education, including the mobilization of community participation; and ancillary services, physical education and sports.

**Composition of the Commission**

The Commission shall consist of the following:-

- (a) the Chairman of the University Grants Commission established by the Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978;
- (b) the Chairman of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission established by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act, No. 20 of 1990.
- (c) a member appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Minister in charge of the subject of Education and Higher Education;
- (d) a member appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Minister in charge of the subject of Finance;
- (e) a member appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Minister in charge of the subject of Provincial councils;
- (f) ten other members who shall be appointed by the President from among persons who have shown capacity in the fields of Education, Administration or Management or have achieved distinction in any profession. The Chairman, the Vice Chairman (Policy) and the Vice Chairman (Planning) appointed under section 5 shall work full time for the Commission.



## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>AHEAD</b>	Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development
<b>AHSS</b>	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
<b>AL</b>	Advanced Level
<b>APQN</b>	Asia Pacific Quality Network
<b>ASTHE</b>	Accreditation of Senior Teachers in Higher Education
<b>CCC</b>	Center for Career Counselling
<b>CCGCC</b>	Centers for Career Guidance and Career Counselling
<b>COPE</b>	Committee on Public Enterprise
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CGAB</b>	Career Guidance Advisory Board
<b>CG</b>	Career Guidance
<b>CGU</b>	Career Guidance Unit
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>DL</b>	Distance Learning
<b>DQS</b>	District Quota System
<b>EDP</b>	External Degree Program
<b>FGS</b>	Faculty of Graduate Studies
<b>GCE</b>	General Certificate of Education
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>GoSL</b>	Government of Sri Lanka
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institution
<b>HETC</b>	Higher Education for Twenty first Century
<b>IQAC</b>	Internal Quality Assurance Cell
<b>IQAU</b>	Internal Quality Assurance Unit
<b>IRQUE</b>	Improving the Quality and Relevance of University Education
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology

<b>MA</b>	Master of Arts
<b>MBA</b>	Master of Business Administration
<b>MIS</b>	Management Information System
<b>M.Phil</b>	Master of Philosophy
<b>M.Sc.</b>	Master of Science
<b>MoHE</b>	Ministry of Higher Education
<b>NAITA</b>	National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority
<b>NEC</b>	National Education Commission
<b>NVQ</b>	National Vocational Qualification
<b>ODL</b>	Open and Distance Learning
<b>OUSL</b>	Open University of Sri Lanka
<b>Ph.D</b>	Doctor of Philosophy
<b>PG</b>	Post-Graduate
<b>PGIS</b>	Post-Graduate Institute of Science
<b>PGC</b>	Post-Graduate Certificate
<b>PGE</b>	Post-Graduate Education
<b>PGD</b>	Post-Graduate Diploma
<b>PGI</b>	Post-Graduate Institute
<b>PHEI</b>	Private Higher Education Institution
<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnership
<b>QA</b>	Quality Assurance
<b>QAA</b>	Quality Assurance and Accreditation
<b>QAAA</b>	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Authority
<b>QAAC</b>	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council
	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission
<b>SCQAA</b>	Standing Committee on Quality Assurance and Accreditation
<b>SCSD</b>	Standing Committee for Staff Development

<b>SDC</b>	Staff Development Center
<b>SLQF</b>	Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>SWIP</b>	Single Window Integrated Platform
<b>UGC</b>	University Grants Commission
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>VC</b>	Vice Chancellor

## **Executive Summary**

This policy document is a follow up of the previous one on Higher Education published by the National Education Commission in 2009. The National Development Strategy of the Government as stipulated in the Public Investment Programme 2017-2020 and sustainable Development Goals have been taken into developing these policies. Each section contains proposed policies and strategies for their implementation. The process of policy formulation is outlined at the end of the document.

### **Governance, Finance, Resource Management**

Governance, finance and management of limited resources in the context of ever expanding student and staff numbers is placing new pressures on the government, MoH, UGC as well as the universities. These are also themes that have been subject to much discussion among all stakeholders. Presenting an overview of these issues and debates and their policy implications, the recommendations are made on the following themes: (i) Autonomy of the UGC, (ii) University autonomy and responsibility, (iii) Funding the public universities, (iv), Generating adequate funds for the universities, (v) Procedures with regard to the appointment of the Vice-Chancellors, (vi) Role of the University Council, (vii) Code of practices for academics, (viii) Recruitment of non-academic staff, (ix) Work norms for the non-academic staff, (x) Student participation in university governance, and (xi) Setting up of a Management Information System.

The main thrust of the recommendations revolves around the recognition of the following policy assumptions: De-politicization of university governance, putting in place new norms and practices for transparent and efficient governance, the need to increase state funding to universities while exploring non-state sources of funding as well and, modernizing the practices of resource management.

### **Access to Higher Education, Student Admissions and Identification of Demand for New Subjects/Disciplines**

While the demand for higher education has been increasing, access to higher education continues to be limited due to a range of factors. Policy interventions

made in order to address this dilemma has succeeded only partially. Opening the doors of higher education to the private sector in order to produce more opportunities of access is among the recent policy innovations. The need for expanding the access to higher education is also paralleled with the need to diversify disciplines, subject areas and courses aiming at re-orienting the goals and content of higher education and training.

This section discusses these new challenges under the following sub-thematic headings: (i) Student enrolment, (ii) Existing quota system, (iii) Delays in student admissions, (iv) Gender variations in student enrolment, (v) Gender equality, (vi) External degree programmes (vii) Infrastructure, (viii) New Courses and Programmes, (ix) Skills, and (x) Attitudes gap.

It offers eight recommendations to address the following policy issues: (i) reviewing and reforming the District Quota System, (ii) overcoming limitations in space and infrastructure, (iii) need for curriculum modernization and collaboration, (iv) need for allowing private higher educational institutions in the provinces, (v) introducing a new scheme of credit transfer in higher education, (vi) strengthening and widening the scope of soft skills training, (vii) creation of rewarding learning environments, (viii) revamping the external degree programmes.

### **Career Guidance and Counselling**

Career guidance and counselling has been introduced at all undergraduate programmes in state universities as a policy response to overcome the mismatch between higher education and employment, especially concerning the graduates from Arts, Humanities and Social Science Faculties. Some private higher educational institutions have also adopted career guidance and counselling in their programmes. Despite many efforts made by the MoHE, the UGC and the Universities, this important initiative still remains marginal to undergraduate education and training particularly in the faculties where it is mostly needed.

The challenge of integrating career guidance and counselling as a regular component of undergraduate training is examined here and offers nine policy recommendations. The discussion is organized around the following sub-themes: (i) Policy on career guidance, (ii) Current status of career guidance,

(iii) Career guidance and external graduates, (iv) Career guidance and private higher educational institutions, and (v) Career counselling.

The recommendations proposed are on the following policy issues: (a) career guidance and counselling in general, (ii) relevance of external models and tools, (iii) institutionalization of career guidance, (iv) professional training in career guidance, (v) updating current programmes, (vi) reconciling different views among academics, (vii) offering comprehensive programmes, (viii) transformation of teaching methodology at university levels, and (ix) skills development for external undergraduates.

The overall thrust of the analysis as well as recommendations of this chapter is that the MoHE, UGC and the universities should develop a comprehensive and result-oriented approach to career guidance and counseling.

### **Student Welfare and Discipline**

Student welfare and discipline in the higher educational sector constitute intertwined themes and they figure prominently in the state universities. Attempts made by the government as well as the university authorities to improve student welfare and manage the perennial problems of violence as well as the breakdown of discipline among students have not produced sustainable outcomes.

This section analyses different aspects of this complex problem in the state universities, and offers a series of policy options to be considered by all stakeholders. The discussion is built on the following sub-themes: (i) Welfare, (ii) Indiscipline and violence, (iii) Trends, (iv) Ragging, (v) Political control (of ragging and violence), and (vi) Students and university governance.

Six policy recommendations are proposed on the following policy issues: (i) continuous crisis in student welfare and discipline, (ii) ragging and discipline, (iii) need for better policy responses, (iv) students and university governance, (v) pluralism in representation in student unions, (vi) the need for closer interaction between staff and students.

The key argument is that the question of student welfare as well as indiscipline should be viewed by the authorities from fresh perspectives as well and

that addressing the question of ragging and violence needs a comprehensive approach, not restricted to law-and-order priorities.

### **Post-Graduate Education and Research**

The present state university system in Sri Lanka has not been designed to post-graduate training and research. However, since the 1980s, post-graduate education has expanded rapidly, and now it is an integral part of the country's university education and training. Despite such expansion, post-graduate education in Sri Lanka is still in a process of evolving, facing many challenges and constraints. Quantitative expansion has produced issues of quality and standards in this sector too.

These issues are examined here and policies are proposed to address them. The analysis is organized around the following sub-themes: (i) Post-graduate education in state universities: overall picture, (ii) Issues related to taught post-graduate programmes, and (iii) Post-graduate studies and research.

The policy recommendations proposed are under the following themes: (i) need of a national policy, (ii) a common legal framework, (iii) quality and standards, (iv) promoting full-time PG training and research, (v) need for internationalizing PG education, (vi) inter-institutional collaboration, (vii) achieving excellence in global standards, and (viii) quality of staff.

The section argues for a comprehensive review and reforming of the existing post-graduate teaching, training and research programmes with a view to make this expanding sector a legitimate component of the mainstream of the university life in Sri Lanka, while raising its quality and standards to the global level.

### **Quality Assurance and Accreditation of State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions**

The implementation of quality assurance (Q.A.) is a recent and most decisive transformation of higher education. Q.A. is essentially country specific and based on the experiences of the particular country. The selection of key components of quality assurance, approach, methods of assessment and process in quality assurance varies between countries. In Sri Lanka the

following key areas are considered for quality assurance: (I) Curriculum, (II) Teaching-learning process (III) Assessment in universities, (IV) Quality of teachers, (V) Research and innovation and (VI) Adhering to national and international norms.

Q.A. is implemented through internal and external Q.A. process. The quality assurance unit in every university assures the quality of the trifocal function (teaching, research and services) of the respective university. The state (UGC) monitors the external quality assurance process based on the recommended Q.A. framework. Further, internationalization and international cooperation can be an effective tool for higher education quality improvement. There are established sets of guidelines to ensure quality and standards in international activities of higher education institutions.

Expansion in number of students, specifically admission to Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences faculties, external degree programs and emergence of private higher education institutions have brought major challenges to contemporary agenda for quality assurance in Sri Lanka. Relevance of the curriculum, resource constraints, need for quality staff, introducing adult learning methodology (andragogy) and developing effective assessment mechanisms are some issues to be addressed to achieve good results.

### **Academic and Non-Academic Staff Development**

The purpose of staff development is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of staff to perform assigned duties in relation to achieving the goals of the institution. Staff development is imperative to ensure quality of the institution and the programmes.

The following features can be observed in the current SD programmes conducted by higher education institutions in Sri Lanka: (I) State universities conduct SD programmes in a relatively organized form compared to Private higher education institutions. (II) The SD programmes pay more focus on academic training and less attention to non-academic staff training. (III) The programmes are implemented haphazardly and are not institutionalized and professionalized. (IV) Staff take less interest in participating in SD programmes as it is not made mandatory (except for probationary lecturers) and not linked with their promotions. (V) Programmes use more traditional learning methods and giving less weightage to developing professional skills and creating positive attitudes to work.



The policy proposals on staff development attempt to address the above issues including Staff training in new methods of teaching and innovative assessment methods, enhancing research capability and post graduate training.

### **Private Higher Education Institutions and Public-Private Partnership.**

Sri Lanka's education map is no longer the same as it was a decade ago. It has been changed by the emergence and spread of private higher educational institutions awarding undergraduate, post-graduate, diploma and certificate courses. This sector's spread is taking place in a context where the state sector of higher education has not been able to cope with the ever expanding demands for higher education. The political opposition and social resistance directed against the private sector in higher education has now diminished to a great extent.

New issues have arisen with regard to the private sector's provision of higher education and they demand and warrant policy responses. This section analyses the overall picture around the following sub-themes: (i) Current status, (ii) Issues, (iii) Public-private partnership.

Policy recommendations arising from the analysis are presented under the following (i) regulatory framework for private higher educational institutions, (ii) expansion of PHEIs in the provinces, (iii) Single-Window Platform for data gathering, (iv) quality assurance, (v) collaboration, (vi) external quality support, (vii) public-Private partnerships on science and technology, (viii) visas for foreign students, (ix) need for ethical marketing, and (x) public-Private partnership.

## **CHAPTER 1.**

### **Introduction**

The Sri Lanka's system of higher education has entered a phase of transition. It is facing new challenges too. These challenges emanate from two sources, internal and global.

The internal challenges of transition emanate from factors intrinsic to Sri Lanka's own system of school and higher education. Described as conditions of mismatch between contradictory pressures that the system of higher education has been coping with, such challenges have been increasing over the years. Policy reforms in recent years have focused on minimizing the growing anomaly between university education and employment. Emphasis on skills training and career orientation in undergraduate education as well as opening of new Faculties in fields which will produce graduates with guaranteed employment in national and global labour markets has gained priority in current policy thinking. Meanwhile, the social need and demand for expanding opportunities for higher education has been increasing, highlighting the limitations of the system of state universities in terms of capacity and resources.

The external challenges arise from factors emerged in the context of the contemporary historical phase of transformations in the global system of political economy. With the rapid changes in the nature of world economy due to a combination of factors such as technological revolutions, global flows of capital, technology and labour, relentless penetration of market over the state in managing economic and social change and radical shifts in the nature of labour markets globally and locally, the goal and nature of education at all levels is being subjected to reconceptualization. As a result, there are now global trends in educational policy reforms that are intimately connected to market-centric economic reconstruction. Sri Lanka's higher educational policy reforms have become integrated with such global trends too.

Meanwhile, the expansion of opportunities for higher education in traditional as well as new areas of learning and training in Sri Lanka has been dramatic during the past few years. The government has been encouraging the

universities to establish new Faculties of Medicine, Engineering, Technology, and Nursing to meet the increasing demand for vocation-oriented degrees. The state universities are no longer the sole provider of higher education in Sri Lanka. Private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) are increasing in numbers and contributing to the expansion of student enrolment. These changes are no doubt responses to new dynamics in the global economy, rapid and unprecedented changes in the new technology and communication, shifts in the nature of global as well as national employment markets, and new demands thus placed on the very idea of university education.

The expansion of undergraduate education by the state and non-state sectors has raised two immediate concerns: the quality and relevance of education and training, and the capacity of the economy to provide employment to the increasing numbers of graduates. Meanwhile, rapid expansion of PHEIs since 2013 has also placed new responsibilities on the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) and the University Grants Commission (UGC) with regard to their registration, accreditation, monitoring and reporting, quality of programmes and outputs, infrastructure, and human resources.

In response to these concerns, the MoHE and the UGC have been spearheading reforms in the university sector. Improving the quality and standards of undergraduate education has been a key goal in recent reforms initiated by the MoHE and the UGC. The universities are also being encouraged to integrate skills training into undergraduate education as a measure to address the mismatch between university education and employment opportunities among the graduates in some fields, particularly arts, humanities, commerce and science. Emphasis on institutionalizing quality through mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation is also a notable policy response to these challenges.

Despite new policy measures adopted, anomalies in Sri Lanka's higher educational system highlighted in the 2009 Report of the Commission continue to exist along with new ones. Some of these anomalies in the overall system may be identified as follows:

The opportunities for higher education continue to be severely limited. In 2016/2017, Sri Lanka's state universities could accommodate only 30, 662 students out of 160, 517 qualified. It was a mere 19.10%. Thus, the stark

anomaly between the aspirations for higher education and the actual opportunities to receive it remains a severe social problem as well.

Although Sri Lanka's education system, primary to tertiary levels, is claimed to be 'free', the overall path to higher education is costly and expensive, with a social and urban bias. This is due to the widespread use of private tuition by parents to prepare their children for highly competitive examinations. This has resulted in a continuing situation in which, as the Report of 2009 observed, "children in low income families are at a disadvantage in gaining admission to higher education" (NEC, 2009: 15). This worsening situation of social exclusion of the poor children from higher education also reflects a deep crisis in Sri Lanka's school education in particular and in the entire system of education in general. It also raises policy questions about equity in higher education.

Similarly, public assistance to students of low-income families in the universities and other institutions of tertiary education continues to be insufficient to enable those students, who constitute the majority, to maintain healthy conditions of life. Due to the rising cost of school education because of the tuition industry and the decline of the overall macro-economic conditions, even the children of middle-income families are now in need of extra support.

The District Quota System continues to be the core criterion in managing increasing demand for the entry to the state universities. Although it has served as a mechanism in ensuring some measure of equity and equal opportunity, some of its negative consequences remain to be addressed.

Amidst severe structural, spatial and human resource constraints, the access to university education has also widened with increase in student intake to state universities. There are concerns that in some Faculties, quality of education and training has declined as a consequence of progressive increase in undergraduate enrolment. This concern is expressed particularly in relation to the expansion of the enrolment for external degree courses.

The MoHE and the UGC have also begun to initiate programmes in order to enhance the quality of university education through external assistance. The implementation of projects such as Improving the Quality and Relevance of University Education (IRQUE) and Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century (HETC), the more recent project of Accelerating Higher Education

Expansion and Development (AHEAD), and the inauguration of a quality assurance and accreditation process are the main interventions seeking a qualitative improvement in university teaching and training programmes.

Issues of violence among students, ragging, and frequent breakdown of student discipline continue to be challenges with no sustainable solutions in sight. Similarly, student agitation, protest demonstrations, and clashes with the law enforcement authorities that are often linked to grievances within the universities, but not always limited to them, are now a regular feature of the public life in the capital city, Colombo.

### **New Trends**

The MoHE and the UGC have begun to respond to the persistent criticism that Sri Lanka's universities continue to produce 'unemployable' graduates, by taking a series of new measures. Establishment of new Faculties of nursing, technology, medicine, and engineering, and integrating career guidance and career counseling into undergraduate education are two major initiatives in this regard.

Facilitating the establishment of private higher educational institutions through flexibility of policy and concessionary process of registration is a major policy trend. It seeks to widen the access to higher education while providing opportunities, though limited, to qualified students who fail to secure entry to the state universities.

The gender demography among university student populations is changing rapidly in favour of female students and this trend is particularly noticeable in Arts, Humanities and Commerce streams. There is also a severe drop in the enrolment of male students in these Faculties. The government and the universities are yet to respond to the medium and long-term implications of this trend in terms of student welfare and employment.

### **New Context**

The changes outlined above are not taking place in a vacuum. They are indeed part of a global trend in which university education is being transformed to respond to world-wide transformations under conditions of economic

globalization, rapid technological and industrial revolutions, and consequent restructuring of labour markets.

Thus, across the world, education in general is trending towards being market-oriented, producing graduates who are to be equipped with qualifications to suit the new requirements of what has been described as employability. Globalization has led to a system of higher education that strives to be competitive and academically attractive in marketable terms.

There is at present a growing discussion in Sri Lanka too on how to respond to the global pressures through reforms encompassing the entire educational sector. The government, the MoHE and the UGC have been devising new policy options, particularly aiming at modernizing undergraduate programmes so that the higher education can respond adequately to changing global trends. Addressing the challenge of minimizing the gravity of the problem of unemployment among university graduates, especially in the fields of Arts, Humanities, has also become a priority in university curriculum reforms.

Renewed emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, adoption of IT in teaching, learning and evaluation processes, setting up of new Faculties, with increasing student enrolment, that provides degrees with better employment opportunities, and emphasis on enhancing the 'quality and relevance' of all degree programmes, and setting up new mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation are among key reform measures already initiated in the public universities.

The current policy re-orientations have also led to a counter argument calling to recognize the need for universities to remain connected to their original mandate of being bastions of free speech and critical analysis in democratic society.

This perspective warns that remaining unaware of the contradictory trends in modernization, development, education and employment, and also overemphasizing the utilitarian goals of education at the cost of its value as a democratic social good, could produce a new trap from which public universities might find it difficult to escape.

Thus, dissenting voices have emerged in the universities largely from students groups and, to a limited degree from academics too, that social goals of education at all levels should not be abandoned in favour of the market needs of the world economy.

Against this backdrop of changing global and national contexts, updating the goals and objectives of Sri Lanka's higher education has become necessary. Synthesizing views obtained through a series of research studies and consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, the Commission recommends the following set of objectives for higher education.

### **Objectives of Higher Education in Sri Lanka**

- i. To maintain a right balance between social and cultural needs of the country and market demand without narrowing down the goals and content of higher education.
- ii. To cultivate among students at all higher educational institutions social awareness as well as sensitivity to values of diversity, pluralism, social harmony and human solidarity with the purpose of moulding democratic and responsible citizenship.
- iii. To develop capacities for independent and critical thinking, right attitudes and skills among students to enable them to be innovative and creative in facing challenges in a rapidly changing and integrating world.
- iv. To provide opportunities for students to learn from the latest advances in the global science, technology, social sciences and other fields of knowledge through innovative university curriculum that will enable students to learn from the best traditions of Asian knowledge systems.
- v. To harmonize relationships between higher education and the country's economic, scientific and technological advancement with emphasis on human development and social progress.

- vi. To respond to, and benefit from, economic globalization, industrial and technological advancement, and the consequent restructuring of labour markets.
- vii. To further democratize the opportunities for higher education by means of increasing enrolment while constructively addressing new challenges that such expansion will bring on society and economy.
- viii. To ensure equitable access to quality education for all students including those from low income groups and educationally disadvantaged regions.
- ix. To provide wider access to higher education to qualified students who fail to secure admission to state universities due to severe structural constraints in the existing system.
- x. To encourage public-private partnerships in higher education and to ensure harmonizing the contributions to national development through such partnerships.
- xi. To provide alternative opportunities to continue higher education for those who are not eligible for university admission.
- xii. To decide policies aiming at eradicating regional disparities in higher education.
- xiii. To maintain gender balance in university admission and selection of candidates for different Faculties and courses while taking cognizance of the need to address the issue of discrimination and constraints that women with higher educational qualifications face in securing employment.
- xiv. To meet the excess demand for higher education in Sri Lanka and the Asian region by expanding the state university education and encouraging private sector participation in higher education.
- xv. To enhance research and innovation by increasing sufficient resources, facilities and a quality faculty.



- xvi. To help learners to cope with complex choices they face in selecting higher education institutions, disciplines, courses and career paths.
- xvii. To promote accountability, transparency and professionalism in higher education management systems.
- xviii. To ensure academic freedom and intellectual autonomy within the higher education system to create and disseminate knowledge, conduct research, and make innovations.

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **Governance, Finance, Resource Management**

The concept of governance explains more than the power of giving directions and overseeing the operation of a system or an institution. The authority vested with these powers are always responsible and accountable for the decisions taken. The United Nation Development Program (UNDP) has identified the characteristics of good governance as; participation, transparency, working under a legal framework, responsiveness, consensus oriented (mediation of different interest), equity (show no member is excluded), efficiency and accountability. Further, good governance requires standards, incentives, information and accountability. Real accountability hinges on well-defined standards and adequate information.

The good governance intends to provide a balance between autonomy and accountability. In Sri Lanka state universities are fully funded by government and they enjoy limited autonomy. But, the PHEIs have more autonomy and are relatively less controlled by the state. Hence, a need arises to harmonize and to have some control over the PHIs, by the state to achieve the national higher education goals.

The chapter, widely discusses about autonomy, accountability, managing state funds, internal and external governance, equity in participation and collecting and using information and proposes policy recommendations to improve the governance in higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

#### **Current System of Governance**

There are two dimensions in the governance of state universities. The first is external governance, where the university interacts for policy, overall guidance, funding, student admission, supervision, accountability etc., with the government (i.e., the President, the parliament, ministries, treasury and the UGC). Universities get their mandate as well as finances from the government. The Ministry of Higher Education is the direct institutional arm of the government to interact with universities. The President of the Republic has an important role to play in university governance in making appointments to the office of Vice Chancellor. The Cabinet headed by the President also has a key

role in approving new universities, institutions within universities, Faculties and Departments, as well as degree programmes. Parliament votes the annual funding for the Universities. Parliament's Committee on Public Enterprises (COPE) has a supervisory role over how the public funds are utilized by the state universities.

The second dimension is internal governance. The Vice Chancellor is the Chief Executive Officer of a university. A hierarchy of bodies, created under the Universities Act No 16 of 1978, governs all universities. The Council is the highest administrative body while the Senate is the highest authority in academic matters. The Act has also created Faculties, Faculty Boards and Departments for internal governance.

### **University Grants Commission (UGC)**

The UGC is the apex body in the structure of university governance. It functions as the main link between the Ministry of Higher Education and the state universities. Its objective, as stated in the Universities Act of 1978, shows the manner in which the government commits the universities through the UGC to conform to the national policy, planning and coordination, allocation of funds to maintain academic standards, regulation of administration, and student admission. Accordingly, state universities are expected to meet the requirements of planning, coordination, and monitoring functions specified by the UGC.

The UGC formulates corporate plans for a period of five years. The first corporate plan was formulated by the UGC for the period from 1984 to 1988. The latest five-year plan was prepared for the period of 2013-2017.

### **Academic Autonomy: The Influence of UGC**

Section 15 of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 stipulates that the UGC is vested with powers to determine—in consultation with the governing authority of each higher education institution—the courses and degree programmes and academic distinctions which shall be awarded. The UGC is also the authority that determines the total number of students to be admitted annually to each higher education institution. The administration of student admission to state universities is one of the key functions of the UGC.

With regard to academic matters, the UGC has established standing committees for different disciplines or subject areas. All the Directors of Campuses and Deans of relevant Faculties are members of each stream-specific standing committee. A key function of the standing committees with regard to academic matters is the scrutiny and recommendation for approval by the UGC such proposals submitted. Universities usually submit proposals to the UGC to commence new study programmes approved by the Faculty Boards and the Senate of the relevant university. Many committees at the UGC then study the proposal. This is normally a time-consuming process resulting in long delays of granting approval to proposals that have already gone through a screening process within the University.

Thus, the prudence of UGC's excessive powers to intervene in academic matters in the universities has been subject of discussion in the universities. Some argue that the UGC's powers have led to situations where the university autonomy has been interfered with. Further, the UGC's frequent involvement in administrative matters of the universities has the capacity to adversely affect its primary role of policy planning and monitoring and raising the quality of university governance.

### **Treasury and Financial Control**

The Treasury is the source of disbursing state funds allocated from the consolidated fund, with the parliamentary approval through the annual budget. Thus, universities function with public funds and are required to follow financial regulations of the government and relevant Treasury circulars. Now, universities follow a programme budget in line with the practices adopted by the Treasury in formulating the national budget. Accordingly, the budget cycle of a university commences with the receipt of the Treasury circular calling for draft estimates ten months ahead of formulating the main budget.

The government allocates funds for universities based on UGC recommendations for both recurrent (operational) and capital (development) expenditure. However, there is no funding formula/normative funding system for the state universities. Instead, recurrent funding for individual universities is based largely on reputation of the university, although there is some relationship between funding level and types of programs offered by the

university. Universities offering courses in engineering, medicine and architecture are funded at higher per student levels than those offering arts and humanities programmes. In allocating funds, disparities among universities, especially between the established and recently established universities in different provinces are not taken in to consideration. Thus, there is no equalization scheme in allocating government funding for the universities.

### **Internal Governance**

The Vice-Chancellor is the academic and administrative leader and CEO of the university. Thus, academic qualifications, intellectual leadership, capacity and skills in governance, personality, and the esteem with which he/she is held by the university community are key to the success of a Vice Chancellor. Styles of governance identified with each individual Vice Chancellor are also crucial for good or weak governance in the universities. Therefore, the process of appointing VCs to universities has a direct bearing on university governance as well.

According to the present practice, a VC is appointed by the President on the recommendation of UGC from a panel of three names submitted by the Council of the university. This arrangement came into practice after the 1985 Amendment to the Universities Act of 1978. Prior to that, the 1978 Act provided the University Court the authority to elect the VC. Now, universities call for an open nomination process for the selection of the VC by public advertisement. The University Council selects three nominees by voting and submits their names to the UGC. The President is the appointing authority to select any one of them for the post.

The normal practice has been for the President to appoint the nominee who has secured highest number of Council votes. Yet, this practice has not been developed into a convention to be always honoured. As the VC is appointed by the President in consultation with the Minister of Higher Education, there have been occasions when VC's authority to run the university independently has been severely undermined. Such instances in the past have had negative consequences for university autonomy. Similarly, the VC aspirants from the universities have often engaged in the unhealthy practice of political and personal lobbying with political authorities, preventing the development of sound norms and conventions that are needed to protect university autonomy.

In instances where unsuitable aspirants have secured the position of VC through such lobbying, the prestige of the position as well as the quality of university education has suffered.

### **University Council**

The University Council is the highest governing authority of the university. It has two categories of members—internal and external. The VC, who is a member, functions as the chairman of the Council. Deans of the Faculties are ex officio members. There are two internal members who are elected by the university Senate. The external members are appointed by the UGC, and their number is one more than the number of internal members. Although this arrangement is supposed to ensure balanced governance, it has also produced negative outcomes when external members represent external interests other than those of the university.

### **Financial Autonomy**

Universities receive 93% of funds from the state. Ministry of Higher Education has formulated separate procurement guidelines in managing the state funds. No flexibility is given to universities to make decisions regarding the utilization of funds. They are not permitted to change subheads according to the needs of the university and to keep unutilized funds allocated for a particular year. Moreover, there are no clear policy guidelines given to universities on the generation of funds and using generated funds independently to achieve the development goals of the university.

### **Governance in non-state Higher Education Institutions**

There are two categories of non-state higher education providers in Sri Lanka: (a) degree awarding institutions established with the approval of the UGC and (b) private higher education institutions registered under the Board of Investment. The degree awarding institutions have full autonomy to appoint the Vice-Chancellor or the Executive Heads, recruit staff, decide staff cadre and their salaries, determine academic structures, generate and use funds and make decisions on the number of students and course fees.

Some private higher education institutes that are under the Board of Investment collaborate with foreign universities/professional institutes but all offer degree programmes on fee levying basis. These degree programmes are delivered directly and monitored by the respective affiliated bodies with no influence from UGC or the MoHE. Where foreign mother institutions are listed in the Association of Commonwealth Universities or International Association for Universities (IAU) degrees awarded by these universities are recognized by the UGC

Besides, the MoHE collects information on an annual basis about the degree programmes offered, details of facilities and student numbers to maintain a data base.

The growth of private higher education raises many issues which include financial propriety, skewed access bias that is in favour of a particular social segment of students, quality of staff, course fees, relevance of curriculum contents to the Sri Lankan context and the quality of the programmes offered.

## **Policy Proposals for Governance, Finance, Resource Management**

### **Autonomy for UGC**

#### ***Policy Issue 1 :***

Under the present governance system, the UGC is the link between the Ministry of Higher Education and the State Universities. All UGC members, including the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, are appointed by the President in consultation with the Minister of Higher Education. Therefore, a question arises about the independence of UGC in making decisions.

***Policy 1 : Adequate powers should be provided to the UGC to function as an independent commission.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Amending the existing Universities Act No. 16 of 1978; to make the UGC vested with independent decision making powers.

- Making provisions for the UGC to delegate some of its powers to universities, so that the UGC is relieved from excessive responsibilities under present system of centralization.
- The UGC should consist of experts in higher education such as retired Vice Chancellors, Chairmen of professional associations and leaders from business and industry.

## University Autonomy and Responsibility

### *Policy Issue 2 :*

As for university autonomy, there have been three approaches in Sri Lanka: (a) academics argue for greater autonomy with little or no interference from the government, (b) as universities are state funded, they should be strictly subjected to a regime of accountability to the government, and (c) autonomy is acknowledged but there is scepticism about the capacity of universities to defend and make commitment to the autonomy.

The concepts of accountability and transparency need to be addressed seriously along with the concept of autonomy. Autonomy cannot be divorced from responsibility and accountability. Freedom in a democracy entails responsibility and accountability. A balance has to be maintained between these two ideas.

In the meantime, the Sri Lankan government's policy of promoting private sector participation in higher education and the emergence of private HEIs raise questions about the autonomy in the non-state sector HEIs.

There is also much concern in the universities about the politicization of appointments. When academics seek political patronage for their appointments it often leads to factionalism among university communities and contributes to the weakening of autonomy even resulting in the erosion of foundation of good governance.

***Policy 2 : 'Earned Autonomy' should be provided to universities which show high performance with continuing commitment to preserving academic freedom.***



### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Developing a clear mechanism by the UGC to ensure autonomy to universities based on their performance.
- Developing a system by UGC to assess the performance of the universities in different aspects of autonomy, responsibility and accountability.
- Developing performance indicators by the UGC, jointly with universities to ensure responsibility and accountability with autonomy.
- Autonomy should be provided as a reward to universities that show excellence in performance in particular aspects, whereas low performing universities can be assisted to improve themselves.
- Bench marking universities by the UGC to improve performance of each university.
- Vice Chancellors, Academics as well as student activists should all the time refrain from actions that invite unwarranted political interference and thus weaken the university autonomy.
- Those universities which achieve high performance rate should be subject to less control and be allowed increasing operational freedom related to resource management, academic decision making, utilization of state funds and generating funds.

### **Funding Public Universities**

#### ***Policy Issue 3 :***

There is no normative funding system for public universities. Instead, recurrent funding for individual universities is based largely on the good reputation of the particular university, although there is some relationship between funding levels and number of students and the types of programmes. This system has created disparities among universities, specially among newly established universities across various provinces. These universities in certain instances have no adequate funding.

**Policy 3:** *The Ministry of Higher Education should introduce a need and performance based funding system to provide adequate funding for all the state universities.*

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Introducing a system of performance contract between each individual university and the UGC, which shall be used as incentives to improve performance based standards.
- Introducing performance indicators by the UGC that are jointly prepared with universities.
- Developing a system to maintain accountability, transparency, and efficiency in using state and generated funds.
- Allowing the universities to be flexible in taking decisions regarding utilization of funds.

#### **Generating Funds**

##### **Policy Issue 4:**

The percentage of the Gross Domestic Product spent on higher education measures the strength of higher education of a country. Public spending is justifiable as it contributes to the socio-economic growth. However, compared with other countries, Sri Lanka, spends a low percentage of the GDP to higher education, due to budgetary constraints. Hence, new alternatives for funding state universities have to be explored.

**Policy 4:** *Increase state funding to universities comparable to other developing countries in the region, promote alternative sources of funding, including self-generated income and non- state sector investment.*

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Generating more income through a range of different activities and sources.

- Encouraging Public Private Partnership (PPP) and private capital investment in the university sector with safeguards in place to preserve university autonomy.
- Establishing a centre at the UGC and separate units in universities to explore how PPPs could be developed.
- Ministry of Higher Education issues necessary guidelines on forming and operating PPPs.
- Progress in PPP is considered as a criterion in the evaluation of performance of the universities.

### **Appointment of Vice-Chancellor**

#### ***Policy Issue 5 :***

The Vice-Chancellor is the principal academic and administrative officer and the chief accounting officer of a state university in Sri Lanka. He/she provides leadership and also represents the university within the country as well as overseas. It is the responsibility of the Vice Chancellor to ensure the smooth functioning of a university and to secure a strong financial base to accomplish the university mission, vision, and objectives. Therefore, finding a well-qualified and professionally competent person for the position of Vice Chancellor is of utmost importance not only in the interest of the university, but also with respect to nation building. However, the process and procedures followed at present do not necessarily guarantee the most suitable candidate (topping the merit order) is selected and appointed as Vice Chancellor for a university.

***Policy 5: The University Grants Commission should be empowered to make the final decision in nominating a Vice Chancellor.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Amending the UGC circular 04/2018 to enable the university council to take more objective decision in nominating candidates.

- The Council of the university evaluates the candidates using appropriate parameters such as research, administrative excellence, high quality publications, professional experience and excellence in academic and administrative fields as well as personal integrity and sends a report to the UGC along with the three nominations.
- The UGC studies the report sent by the University Council and considers the merit order and number of council votes secured by each candidate and recommends the best candidate to the President for appointment.
- Nominees to the position of Vice Chancellor totally refrain from political lobbying at any level.

### **Role of the University Council**

#### ***Policy Issue 6 :***

The Council is the highest governing body of the university. It has to play a vital role in the development of the university. Hence, the Council members are expected to play a proactive rather than a reactive, role. However, universities do not fully utilize the expertise of Council members for university development.

***Policy 6:     The University Council should take direct responsibility for developing the mission and setting the strategic directions of the university.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Reviewing and updating the university mission from time to time by the Council.
- Ensuring by the Council that university development is in line with the agreed mission.
- The Council closely monitors the management of the university to ensure good governance.
- The Council also provides clear terms of reference including role and purpose to committees appointed.

- Strengthening the functions of the Audit and Management Committee.
- Setting up a Legal Affairs Committee with a clear mandate.

### **Code of Practices for Academics**

#### ***Policy Issue 7:***

Some academics consider their responsibilities to the institution and students as of lesser or secondary importance. Attempts have been made to establish work norms for academics but they have not been widely adopted. This has resulted in low standards of professionalism in teaching /research outputs, academic management, institutional commitment as well as conduct.

***Policy 7: A code of practices for academics should be introduced by the University Grants Commission in consultation with universities and University Teachers' Associations.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Developing norms and guidelines in terms of student contact hours including lecturing, tutoring, counselling and other interactive activities with the students (face-to-face or via electronic media).
- Developing mechanisms to monitor the activities of academic staff including research contributions through the Faculty, Deans and Heads of Department and appreciating and rewarding good performance.
- Designing appropriate norms for staff involved in Open and Distance Learning.
- Stern legal action should be taken against bond defaulters.

### **Work Norms for Non-Academics**

#### ***Policy Issue 8:***

There is a need to encourage non-academic staff to perform diligently and efficiently the tasks assigned to them.

***Policy 8: University administration should develop work norms for non-academic staff in order to increase efficiency of performance.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Preparing a code of conduct for each category of staff.
- Formulating a new appraisal-based scheme for annual increments and promotions.

### Students Participation in University Governance

#### *Policy Issue 9:*

The lack of discipline among students is often highlighted as a negative feature of state universities. Urgent preventive and remedial measures are required. There are disciplinary bylaws in each university as well as Prohibition of ragging and other forms of violence in Educational Institutions Act 28 of 1998. However, these can be used only to a limited extent to maintain discipline. Similarly, the absence of a culture of respecting the rights and individuality of staff, students as well as citizens seems to be a continuing feature of the background against which violent behaviour and indiscipline among students recur.

***Policy 9: Universities should promote an institutional culture in which individual rights and their inviolability are respected.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Updating the current Establishment Code of the UGC and introducing a Code of Ethics to students and staff.
- Increasing student-staff interactions by means of academic as well as extra-curricular activities.
- Promoting in the universities a culture of tolerance and human dignity in which rights of oneself as well as others are equally respected.
- Allowing student representations in different boards of governance to enable students to interact with officials and to ensure their voice is accounted for in decision making.

- Introducing innovative programmes to make students conscious and aware of their rights and responsibilities as members of the university community.

## Management Information System

### *Policy Issue 10 :*

A higher education management information system (MIS) is vital for good governance as well. It would help to plan and coordinate all the activities of the universities. Universities in Sri Lanka find it difficult to plan future activities due to the unavailability of adequate data and to coordinate the activities without a networking system. Therefore, a comprehensive MIS is required for all the universities.

***Policy 10 : The UGC should establish an integrated MIS which has facilities to regularly update the online databases at the apex body (UGC) linking with all higher education institutions operating under its purview.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Making arrangements to automate and develop an online communication system with higher education institutions in order to ensure the smooth flow of information between core systems at the UGC and Universities.
- Ensuring each higher education institution responsible for maintaining up-to-date information.
- Authenticating data at institutional level to prevent unauthorized access.
- Designing user-friendly interfaces to provide a better working environment.
- Phasing out implementation of the system in order to simplify operational activities.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### **Access to Higher Education, Student Admissions and Identification of Demand for New Subjects/Disciplines.**

Limited access to higher education is a continuing policy challenge in the field of Sri Lanka's education. Although there are PHEIs in operation, state universities are the main providers of higher education in all fields of study. In 2016/2017, 160, 517 students were qualified for university education. However, only 30, 662 of them, a mere 19.10%, were admitted to the conventional state universities. The percentages for 2015/2016, 2014/2015, and 2013/2014 were. 18.68, 17.14, and 17.53 respectively. Thus the university education has become a scarce public resource and it has led to intense competition among students to enter the university. In addition OUSL has enrolled 40230 students in 2016 and 39381 students in 2017. As OUSL recruits students at different levels and not based on GCE A Level qualifications alone, percentages cannot be calculated.

In order to address the question of severe limitations of space available within the universities for undergraduate education, the government has also taken a policy decision to increase the intake of external students. The streamlining of external degree programmes through a new scheme of Open and Distance Modes of Learning began in 2010.

Since then, there has been a phenomenal expansion of external study programmes in several universities. Meanwhile, the widening of opportunities for higher education has also brought out new policy challenges.

The expansion of access to higher education continues to take place mainly within the state university system. It puts additional pressures on the existing financial and infrastructure as well as human resource capacities of the state universities. The government has spent Rs. Millions 40, 583 in 2015, 48,915 in 2016 and 51, 395 in 2017 on university education (UGC, *Sri Lanka University Statistics*, 2017). This money is primarily spent on undergraduate education.



Along with the expansion of access, there have also been demands for increasing the government allocation for the universities and other higher educational institutions.

More access to higher education places more demands on the nature and quality of education programmes. During the past few years, the question of the quality and types of graduates that the public universities produce has become a theme of debate among policy-makers, officials, external donor agencies and development experts. The debate has highlighted the gaps between types of graduates required by the government as well as the private sector for jobs and the quality of graduates produced by the higher education institutes, particularly the public sector universities, in the country.

Issues such as poor responsiveness of the higher education system to the ever-changing labour market requirements, slow responses by the university system to demands for reform and modernization, disparities in education systems in different higher education institutions, poor linkages between universities and private sector also remain major challenges for higher education in the country.

The proliferation of institutes, colleges and schools that provide tertiary education in Sri Lanka on fee-levying basis has occurred against this background.

There has also been a marked increase in Post-graduate programmes and students too. At the same time, there is a growing concern that the Post-graduate studies in the country, at present, do not fulfil the national development agendas and requirements. Being part-time programmes, the quality and standard of teaching and training offered by them has also become a concern.

Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of students seeking higher education overseas. They are not necessarily from the upper social classes or the elitist segments of society, but from middle class backgrounds as well. Lack of opportunities in the Sri Lankan higher education system has thus compelled the middle class families too to seek education abroad for their children at considerable cost to their families and the country.

## **Student Enrolment**

Almost all students to state universities other than the OUSL are selected on the basis of the highly competitive General Certificate of Examination (Advanced Level) conducted by the Examination Department of Sri Lanka. A very small number of foreign students and children of Diplomatic/foreign/state service personnel are also selected. There are also a small number of students who enter the University under the 'special category' for having excelled in fields such as sports. The facility available for a small percentage of differently abled students to enter the state universities has also been a significant and forward-looking development.

Students seeking admission to Arts and Humanities courses are selected on all island merit basis.

Selection to all other streams, are based on 40% all island merit, 55% on District Quota system (DQS), i.e. district merit order based on the population ratio of districts and 5% for 16 disadvantaged districts out of 25 administrative districts of the country. How these 16 districts are identified as disadvantaged districts is not clear.

## **Quota System**

The experience of the District Quota System (DQS) for university admission has varied. Being an affirmative action policy, its original aim was equalization of opportunities of university education for students from underprivileged districts on the principles of social justice and equity. It has worked to a significant extent to open the doors of university education to students from underprivileged regional, social, and family backgrounds. It has also been an extension of the social welfare orientation of Sri Lanka's public policy. At the same time, it has reduced the admission of merit based number to the Universities.

The other criticism is that it discriminates against students with merit, irrespective of their ethnic background, particularly in the field of medicine. Most of these students who were qualified for medicine are compelled to enrol for other fields such as Dental Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture, Bioscience and Allied Health Sciences.

Amidst these criticisms, the DQS has continued for over forty years. Policy makers have been reluctant to abolish, or even to review it because of possible negative policy and political consequences of such a move.

The negative experience of DQS have also led to an argument to justify the establishment of fee levying and non-state higher educational institutions in Sri Lanka. The setting up of private medical and engineering institutions and the controversies that followed have their roots in the continuity of the DQS without reforms.

### **Enrolment**

University enrolment has been on an upward trend over the last few decades. However, even though the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for university education has progressively increased over the past few decades, the current rates are not satisfactory. For example, only 65 out of 1000 youth aged between 19-23 years were able to get enrolled in university education. The increase in GER has been higher among women, indicating a continuing trend among men preferring employment to higher education qualifications.

### **Delays in Student Admissions**

There is a weakness in the current system in filling vacancies of university admission that are caused due to the non-enrolment of small numbers of selected students. In general, the medicine, engineering and technology fields do not have vacancies left due to non-enrolment. However, this is a problem in many fields including general science, agriculture, allied health, physical science, humanities and social sciences in some universities. The method employed to fill these vacancies has been to push up those students who have not enrolled, based on their districts and Z-scores. This selection process to fill vacancies is a tedious and time-consuming exercise. It causes delays in the normal process of admission of students to the universities. This system needs change to achieve near 100% enrolment for all the courses.

### **Undergraduate Fields of Study**

The distribution of undergraduates by their fields of study is skewed towards Arts and Management & Commerce. While Arts and Management & Commerce undergraduate enrolment for the year 2016 accounted for 52.4% of

the total, Medicine, Engineering and Computer Sciences which have higher employability rate accounted for only 27.7% of the total undergraduate enrolment. Thus, broadening the access to higher education while enhancing its quality and employability is needed to produce graduates who can effectively contribute to the economic and social development in Sri Lanka. This indeed is a theme that has led to several experimental interventions, with external donor support, in the state university system with a view to improving the quality and relevance of undergraduate education.

### **Gender Variation**

It has been observed that over the past decade, more women than men have enrolled in the Universities and other Higher Education Institutions at the undergraduate level. Of all undergraduate students selected for the State Universities and & HEIs for the academic year 2015/2016, 63.1% from a total of 29,083 student admissions were women. In 2016/2017, out of 30, 668 total number of students, 19,107 (69.10%) were women.

There has also been a significant gender variation in student enrolment in different undergraduate courses. The percentage of women students ranged from 82.4% in Arts and Humanities courses, to 85.9% in law, to 50%–70% Management, Medicine, Dental Surgery, Veterinary Science, Agriculture, Allied Health Sciences, Commerce, and Computer Science. The percentage of women students ranged 48.7% in science, 42.3% in architecture/quantity surveying, and 45.6% in technology. Engineering recorded only 22.2%, which was the lowest rate of participation of women students. Gender equality in access to universities is diluted by gender imbalances in technology-related courses.

In 2013, in the technical colleges women were, only 15.2% of those enrolled in the National Certificate in Civil Technology of them 31.4% in quantity surveying, and 0.8% in electrical and electronics technology were women. Women enrolment in vocational training courses were 2.4% in the electrician's courses, 9.5% in construction trades, and 95.0% in dress making courses. In NAITA, women accounted for 23.7% in enterprise-based apprenticeship training and 41.3% in in-plant training. Overall, 23.5%–56.9% of those who received National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Certificates were women.

It is important to note that most courses in which there is low representation of women have a high demand in the labour market. The direction of national policies is currently oriented towards a “knowledge economy” and these gender imbalances in enrolment in technology-related courses are likely to exclude many women from participating in “knowledge economy”.

### **Gender Equality**

At the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka, there is a Standing Committee on Gender Equity/Equality in Higher Education to promote gender equity/equality in Sri Lankan universities by giving policy direction to establish gender-sensitive university cultures and university environments. The strategies developed by this committee seek to create conditions for students and university staff (academic/administrative/ support) to pursue their work without oppressive conditions, gender-based violence, and discrimination.

In most universities in Sri Lanka, a tendency has arisen for the predominance of female students as the majority in undergraduate courses. In some courses, the share of female students is an overwhelming majority. For example, in BSc Nursing and allied health sciences, almost 90% of students are women. Even the traditionally male dominant fields such as medicine, law, veterinary science, dental surgery and agriculture are now having more female than male students. Although this makes gender-based admission policy or affirmative action in university admission based on gender is now redundant in Sri Lanka, it raises new policy challenges. For example, the labour market needs to be flexible to provide more employment and opportunities for promotions and career advancement for women with higher educational qualifications.

### **External Degree Programmes**

The expansion of external degree programmes after 2010 has led to a new anomaly in Sri Lanka’s state university sector. At one level, it has opened the doors for a large number of A/L qualified students, who do not get an opportunity to enter the universities as internal candidates because of the very intense competition for enrolment, to receive university education and degrees. The opening up of the doors to other students for certificate and diploma programmes in the open and distance-learning framework has also widened

the access to university education. The most welcoming consequence of the opening of the doors for external university education so widely is that it has had a democratizing effect in the field of highly restricted and much valued, and considerably elitist, university education in Sri Lanka.

However, there are concerns about quality. The external study programmes in all universities have failed to maintain the same quality and standards of learning and training that are available to internal students. These programmes have now become an additional burden to the limited human and infrastructure resources of state universities. In the absence of staff recruitment to serve the external programmes, the same academic staff who are involved in full-time teaching in the regular undergraduate and Post-graduate programmes are engaged in teaching, assessment and examination responsibilities of external courses held on the weekends. The overworked academic staff is also attracted to working in the external degree programmes primarily due to the financial incentives built into such programmes.

Besides, the external students hardly get the same degree of teacher attention and engagement that internal students are privileged to receive. The quantum of subject knowledge and soft skills they receive is minimal and marginal. Large numbers of these external students are not exposed to the regular academic environment of the universities either. At job interviews, their performance is destined to be less than satisfactory. This defies the UGC's expectation as articulated in its policy that "the graduates and diploma and certificate holders produced through the EDP-ODL system" should be "highly employable (UGC Circular No. 932). In fact, many of these external graduates annually join the army of unemployed university graduates, making their tales of despair highly visible and audible.

### **Infrastructure**

A major dilemma arising out of the widening of access to higher education is the declining quality of life among students as well as academic and non-academic staff. Quality of education in most of the public universities in Sri Lanka has been adversely affected by the low and stagnating quality of life of the student population during their undergraduate career. A vast majority of students are from low-income families and the university life continues to fail

to provide them better conditions of living during the most crucial period of their career.

The infrastructure facilities in the universities have remained limited despite many improvements. They in fact fail to reach the standards expected from modern higher educational institutions. Non-availability of hostels with adequate space, facilities and hygienic conditions, improved access to knowledge and information, modern teaching and learning resources, well-equipped classrooms, improved library facilities, common study areas, sports facilities, better toilet and canteen facilities, efficient transport facilities, improvement of nutrition, health and hygiene, is a major contributory factor to the low quality of life among university undergraduates.

### **New Courses and Programmes**

There is now increasing pressure on the state universities to reform existing curricula and introduce new courses that (a) match global trends in higher education, (b) prepare graduates to meet the changing demands of the labour market both nationally and globally, and (c) make students gainfully employable without a long waiting period for employment.

The MoHE and UGC have also begun to give priority to setting up new Faculties of Medicine, Engineering, Technology and Nursing to meet the increasing demand for employment in these fields in the local and international job market.

However, students are weary about the inadequate resources that universities possess in developing and sustaining new study programmes. In their view, buildings, furniture, equipment, laboratories, and human resources are equally important, and they need to be in place before introducing new study programmes.

There is also increasing recognition that the university courses should also be flexible to become multi-disciplinary or cross-disciplinary in order to enable students to enhance their career opportunities and prospects for professional advancement. This points towards the need for new courses and disciplines that span across existing study programmes in science, technology, medicine,



engineering, commerce & management, law, social sciences and humanities, and aesthetic studies faculties.

Credit transfer possibilities can be a plausible method that can be used to introduce such diversity to the existing programmes. Cross-Faculty and cross-disciplinary courses and programmes will also address knowledge gaps inherent in the existing system that sustains disciplinary compartmentalization.

### **Skills**

The issue of access to higher education has at present been complicated by the question of limited employment opportunities available for graduates in some Faculties. This situation has led to an argument in the country that expansion of access to higher education has caused another social problem in the form of large numbers of unemployed graduates.

The current emphasis on employability of graduates has also placed Social Science and Humanities Faculties of state universities under severe pressure to ensure that their graduates are trained not only in academic fields, but also in skills and attitudes demanded by the labour market. The fact that the state sector employment opportunities for graduates in these fields are severely restricted makes the challenge particularly daunting. The stress on incorporating soft skills development programmes and the emphasis on competencies in IT and English in undergraduate courses is an outcome of this new tendency. Management and entrepreneurial skills are also considered as necessary for graduates of all disciplinary backgrounds. Thus, with the UGC guidance, all state sector universities have begun to incorporate career guidance and soft skills training in undergraduate education.

The present emphasis on soft skills training may not be adequate for the Faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences where graduate employment issue is particularly challenging. In addition to soft skills, they are in need of 'professional skills' that will qualify them for engagement at all managerial levels.



## **Attitudes Gap**

There is a general perception in the country, which has been expressed vigorously by the private sector, that Sri Lankan university graduates lack values and attitudes expected by potential employers. The mismatch between their academic knowledge, attitudes and real world skills is often highlighted by the private sector. While the universities are aware of this perception, steps taken to address the issue through training programmes in soft-skills development among undergraduate students require close attention, review, and improvement.

## **Policy Proposals for Access to Higher Education, Student Admissions and Identification of Demand for New Subjects/Disciplines.**

### **District Quota System**

#### ***Policy Issue 11 :***

There is a strong need to review the existing district quota system of university student admission with the view of designing a better balance between equity and merit in the context of socio-economic changes that have taken place in Sri Lanka since the 1970s. The presence of migrant communities is also not taken into account in allocating the District Quota.

***Policy 11 : A new university admissions system by maintaining a balance between the principles of equity and merit should be introduced.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Appoint a Committee of Experts to formulate a new university admissions policy.
- Review and reform the District Quota System for university enrolment.

## Limitations in Space and Infrastructure

### *Policy Issue 12 :*

With the progressive increase in undergraduate enrolment and the expansion of Post-graduate and service courses, the limitations in space and infrastructure have become a major challenge faced by all universities.

***Policy 12: The university infrastructure facilities should be increased to coincide with the increase in the intake to current and new courses/programmes.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- The MoHE take steps to further increase funding required for upgrading the existing space and infrastructure and the expansion of space.
- The Universities make maximum use of existing space and infrastructure without compromising the quality of undergraduate programmes.
- Developing a software for efficient allocation of lecture halls and class rooms.
- Consulting all stakeholders before any new policy for infrastructure development is implemented.

## Need for Curriculum Modernization and Collaboration

### *Policy Issue 13 :*

While there is a growing demand for higher education as the world of work is changing, Sri Lanka's state universities are slow to respond. University Faculties continue to be reluctant to initiate inter-faculty collaboration to introduce multi-disciplinary and skills-oriented undergraduate courses.

***Policy 13: Multidisciplinary/cross-disciplinary courses should be initiated to enhance career, professional, and aesthetic capacities of students of all faculties.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- The universities accelerate the present efforts to modernize their undergraduate programmes with an appropriate balance between knowledge, skills and values.
- The state as well as non-state universities begin to lay emphasis on building appropriate professional skills among all undergraduates through innovative programmes that require inter-Faculty collaboration as well as participation of the industry.
- Initiating Inter-Faculty collaboration for inter- and cross-disciplinary courses specifically to address professional skills requirements of students at both undergraduate and Post-graduate levels.

### **Private Higher Education Institutes in the Provinces**

#### ***Policy Issue 14 :***

Despite the ever-increasing numbers of students qualifying for higher education, the existing structure of universities cannot adequately respond to the demand. Therefore, a large number of qualified students are deprived of opportunities for higher education. This is a key factor of the crisis of higher education in Sri Lanka and it requires policy responses without further delay.

***Policy 14: Non-state sector institutions should be expanded in the provinces.***

#### **Strategy for Implementation**

- The MoHE in collaboration with the UGC and in consultation with the universities and the business community design a strategy for greater private participation in expanding higher education in the rural areas while ensuring increased access to higher education with quality and equity.

### **Credit Transfer**

#### ***Policy Issue 15 :***

The present system of higher education has institutional rigidities that do not allow student mobility from one institution to another. It also inhibits students'

creativity and interests in crossing traditional disciplinary boundaries with rigid compartmentalization such as Sciences, Arts, Humanities, Law and Commerce. There is no mobility in learning opportunities or a system of credit transfer across the board, covering state as well as private HEIs.

**Policy 15:** *Student mobility among higher educational institutions should be encouraged.*

#### **Strategy for Implementation**

- The UGC works out in consultation with state and private higher educational institutions a scheme for inter-Faculty and Inter-university credit transfer scheme.

#### **Soft Skills**

##### **Policy Issue 16 :**

Lack of access to skills while gaining knowledge is a major issue in the debate on the purpose of university education. The solution offered is training in soft skills. Meanwhile the absence of training of students in professional skills hampers their chances of obtaining employment in par with degree qualifications. This challenge is particularly evident in the Humanities and Social Science Faculties.

**Policy 16:** *The present schemes for enhancement of general skills/soft skills of graduates should be linked with programmes for building of professional skills among students.*

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- University Faculties should explore through consultation with the Industry the areas of professional skills training required for undergraduates in different Faculties related to professional skills needs for future employment of university graduates.
- Each university sets up a professional skills training unit to facilitate inter-Faculty collaboration in designing and implementing such programmes which should initially function under the Vice-Chancellor.

## **Creation of Rewarding Learning Environments**

### ***Policy Issue 17:***

The increase in access to higher education is incomplete in the absence of a rewarding learning environment in the universities as well as infrastructure such as hostels, library, teaching and learning, common study areas, sports and canteen, health, cleanliness and hygiene, and aesthetic aspects.

***Policy 17: MoHE, UGC and University Community should take initiatives and create and maintain a more conducive learning environment.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- University VCs, Deans, Student Councillors and senior staff take initiatives for a dialogue and modes of intervention with MoHE, UGC and university communities necessary for building and sustaining rewarding learning environments in state universities.
- Strengthening the existing student counselling services with adequate staff, on permanent or visiting basis, with professional qualifications in psychosocial counselling.

## **External Degree Programmes**

### ***Policy Issue 18:***

The recent expansion of external degree programmes in Arts, Humanities, Commerce and Management, Media and Communication, IT and several other fields has widened the access to university education. Yet it has created a series of anomalies such as limited human and infrastructure resources in the universities to cope with expanding enrolment for internal and external programmes, the inadequate quality of learning and training available to external students, their limited exposure to building skills and the university environment, and the unavailability of employment opportunities.

***Policy 18: The quality of existing external study programmes which are being implemented through the EDP-ODL scheme introduced in 2010 should be enhanced.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Reviewing all the existing EDP-ODL programmes strictly in accordance with the guidelines as laid down in the Manual for Quality Assurance of External Degree Programmes and Extension Courses by a committee whose members are not engaged in these programmes.
- Universities that conduct external study programmes engage the services of post-graduate students to teach in these programmes on a scheme of Teaching Assistantships.
- Universities taking immediate steps to ensure that external degree candidates get learning opportunities, tutorial classes, practical training, skills, and adequate interactions with university instructors to match the fees levied.
- The methods of distance learning being implemented by the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) could be adopted for external degree programmes as well.
- As a long-term measure, formalizing the external study programmes through the establishment of Community Colleges affiliated to universities with adequate staff drawn from the universities as well as post-graduate students and qualified visiting staff from the industry.

## **CHAPTER 4.**

### **Career Guidance and Counselling**

The Purpose of career guidance is to assist undergraduates to choose a job after graduation. Under the present higher education system the concepts career guidance and career counselling (CG and CC) are used in broader perspectives under which services and activities are provided to assist undergraduates to choose education, training, occupation and a path for life. It is considered a lifelong process due to changes that take place in life situations and structure of job market. In Sri Lanka CG and CC are conceptualized within western perspectives hence, there is a need to make the services to suite the context of the society. And also, there is a myth among academics that the contents in Humanities and social sciences disciplines cannot be linked with the world of work. They have differences in opinions on the CG and CC programs and also have doubts on whether the CG and CC activities can be accommodated with in the routine work load of the university. Further, The CG and CC services are not professionalized and institutionalized.

Unemployment among university graduates has been a major concern among higher education policy makers since the early 1970s. The discussion on what has been described as the mismatch between university education and employment opportunities has resurfaced in a twin context of the need to expand higher educational opportunities for the educated youth and new trends in the employment market.

In Sri Lanka, the state's role as the main provider of public sector employment to graduates of all fields and disciplines has become severely restricted. Meanwhile, the country's private sector has only limited capacity to generate new employment opportunities to match the ever - increasing graduate output from the universities. The proliferation of PHEIs catering to AL qualified students, who do not get admission to state universities, has also begun to produce graduates who would be competing with their counterparts from state universities in the limited job market. At the same time, new requirements for skills in both the domestic and international labour markets have made the traditional knowledge-orientation of university education redundant.

In order to face these challenges, Sri Lanka's universities have begun to shift their focus towards a number of new measures. There is now a policy re-orientation with three components. Firstly, new Faculties are being set up in the fields where employment opportunities for graduates are available in both national and international labour markets. Secondly, the soft-skills training is being integrated in the undergraduate programmes of all Faculties. Thirdly, universities have begun to provide career guidance and counseling for all undergraduate students.

The career guidance and counselling programmes that are currently in operation in the state universities are designed to provide the following services: (a) helping undergraduates to choose their career and decide their career paths accordingly, (b) assisting the universities to produce employable graduates, consequently minimizing the social problem of mismatch between university education and employability and (c) preparing university graduates to the world of work.

### **Policy on Career Guidance**

Sri Lanka's policy on career guidance in the universities has evolved through two phases. During the first phase, the need for career guidance was articulated primarily in response to the crisis of the perceived mismatch between Sri Lanka's school and university education and employment opportunities available to the educated youth. During the second phase, the concept of career guidance became re-articulated in the context of educational reforms being advanced globally under conditions of economic globalization.

Sri Lanka's current policy concern for career guidance in the universities began during the mid 1990s. The Presidential Task Force on university education reforms (1997) proposed to initiate career guidance programmes in the universities. Taking 'employability' of graduates as the key goal of career guidance, these proposals expected the universities to take steps to "develop skills in graduates relevant to employment opportunities." New measures so designed included (a) developing courses in areas such as English, Computing and Communication for appropriate skills development, (b) making computer facilities as accessible as possible to undergraduates, and (c) establishing Student Services Centers at each University.



Setting up of Career Guidance Units (CGUs) in the universities was another outcome of this Report. Each CGU was expected to develop an employment data bank with-up to date information on available jobs.

Subsequently, the UGC took steps to further institutionalize the career guidance programmes through two circulars - No. 819 of February 06 of 2003 and No. 934 of October 21 2010. The circular No. 819 of 2003 instructed the Vice-Chancellors to “undertake work in the relevant areas of Career Counselling, Information Services, Networking, Work Experience, Graduate Placement and Integration,” and “ensure stakeholder participation as appropriate” through such mechanisms as “Career Guidance Advisory Committees.” The Circular also instructed the universities to maintain, as part of information services, databases on student profiles and on employment opportunities, and also provide support for self-employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

The Circular 934 of 2010 was also significant in that it recognized the need to formalize career guidance services in the universities and proposed a framework to achieve the goals of their consolidation. It recommended the setting up of Career Guidance Advisory Boards (CGABs) at all universities under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellors, along with representatives from various stakeholder groups including staff, students, employers and industry. All universities were also instructed to set up Career Guidance Units.

Following this circular, UGC further advised the universities to initiate and implement a series of activities that included: (a) career counselling, (b) career information service, (c) networking, (d) work experience through industrial placement programmes, (e) graduate placement through internship programmes, and (f) integration of career guidance into the undergraduate curricula.

The UGC’s also established a Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling to coordinate and monitor the career guidance activities in all universities.

### **Current Status**

- Faculties that offer professionally-oriented courses such as Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, and Business and Management Studies have integrated career guidance and soft-skills programmes in their regular undergraduate programmes.
- In Faculties of Sciences and newly established Technology Faculties, career guidance programmes have lesser emphasis than in Medical and Engineering Faculties.
- Under-institutionalization of career guidance and counselling as well as soft-skills training without professionally trained staff and adequate resources is the main drawback observed in many Faculties. The lack of clarity of the 'industry' for employment, the expansion of numbers of student intakes, and uncertainties of employment in the domestic private sector seem to be the other contributory factors.
- In Faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, career guidance and skills training remain least developed and less integrated. A number of factors has contributed to this situation:
  - (a) Despite the UGC circular 934 of 2010 and its instructions, no university has so far properly institutionalized CGUs, with adequate resources and trained personnel, to serve the AHSS Faculties. Only the Rajarata University has a trained Career Guidance Counsellor
  - (b) Most members of the academic staff of these Faculties lack interest in and enthusiasm for CGU activities.
  - (c) Out of large student populations in each university only small percentages of students participate in CGU programmes, and that too during their final year degree courses.
  - (d) Absence of a clearly identifiable 'industry' (except for the subjects economics and communication/media studies) is a major obstacle for internships, industrial training and interactions with future employers for students in the Faculties of Arts as well as Humanities.

- (e) The lack of access to industry for career training opportunities is most severe in the universities outside the metropolis.
- (f) Social and cultural distance between the majority of undergraduates in AHSS faculties and the urban private sector companies continues to be a barrier to engagement between students and the business community.

### **CG and External Graduates**

Enrollment of large number of candidates for external degrees in Arts, Humanities, Commerce and Management, Information Technology, Media and Communication fields is a major facet of the recent expansion of higher education in Sri Lanka. According to UGC data, in the year 2017, a total of 17,553 were registered for external degree programmes. Of them 11,659 were for Arts, 2915 for management, 2046 for IT, 719 for Commerce, 106 for agriculture, and 108 for Science.

The problem of graduate unemployment, repeatedly highlighted in discussions among policy makers, is partly linked to the expansion of the numbers of external degree holders.

The non-availability of career guidance and skills training programmes for external undergraduates is a major lacuna in the existing attempts to address the challenge of graduate un-employability. The extension of CGU services to external undergraduates requires a wholly new approach to face the challenge of making graduates employable.

### **Career Guidance in PHEIs**

Career guidance and counselling is at a preliminary stage in the private educational institutions as well. Their institutionalization with trained staff and resources is still at the stage of conceptualization and planning. Even in institutions where there is career guidance, it is a part of general student welfare services.

Career guidance in PHEIs largely revolves around, and limited to, activities relating to internships, industrial and on-the-job training, offering short

courses on career paths, personal grooming, training students in preparing CVs and facing interviews, arranging interactions between students and representatives of the private sector, and linking students with potential employers (national as well as international) through career fairs and other networks.

### **Career Counselling**

Career Counselling is a specific area of service expected from the CGUs. It is different from, yet complementary to, career guidance. While career guidance helps students to choose a job based on information on the job market and their skills and preferences, career counselling is a longer process of engagement with students. It enables students to make informed changes and shifts in their career expectations and chosen paths. Career counselling may even involve parents, teachers and peers and is complementary to career guidance. Therefore, career counselling is a service that requires specialist professional staff trained in both career guidance and career counselling.

However, none of the CGUs in Sri Lanka has formal career counselling linked to career guidance. CGU directors sometimes undertake informal career counselling to students out of a sense of commitment and also to serve a felt need. The UGC as well as the universities are yet to give any serious thought to the career-counselling dimension of its career guidance process. The casual coupling of career counselling with career guidance is the general approach at the UGC as well as in the universities.

## **Policy Proposals for Career Guidance and Counselling**

### **Career Guidance and Career Counselling**

#### ***Policy Issue 19:***

The existing career guidance programmes in the universities are being practiced with an assumption that the job market is readily accessible to those who acquire employable skills. On the contrary, in Sri Lanka, job opportunities in the state sector are diminishing and those in the private sector remain limited. In the meantime, number of graduates entering the job market is

rapidly increasing. Hence, a comprehensive career service system which helps the undergraduates to make decisions in accordance with choices about their career path and to prepare them for a future career, rather than limiting the services to developing career skills and assisting in finding jobs, need to be envisaged.

**Policy 19:** *Empower students through career guidance and career counselling to make decisions concerning their education, career and life without limiting such advice to choose a job after graduation.*

### Strategies for Implementation

- Training academics in career counselling and career planning in order to enable them to conceptualize, introduce and implement career counselling and career planning programmes.
- Institutionalizing career guidance and career counselling services in the Universities.

### Relevance of External Models and Tools

#### **Policy Issue 20 :**

Assimilating the Western system into career guidance in Sri Lanka may not necessarily match with the local context due to specific cultural and socio economic conditions of Sri Lanka. Career paths and choices have social, cultural and class contexts. Similarly, the assessment tools currently used in Sri Lanka has no local relevance. Concurrently, critical and dissenting voices are heard from some academics in Sri Lanka who make a strong case for reforming the approach to career guidance programmes.

**Policy 20:** *Establish career guidance and career counselling systems to suit the cultural and socio-economic context and realities of the Sri Lankan society.*

### Strategies for Implementation

- Adopting new tools that are sensitive to local social, cultural and class conditions to measure students' interests, abilities and aptitudes in accordance with local relevance which will help to ensure reliability, validity and usefulness of data collected.
- Developing new models in career guidance and counselling to suit Sri Lankan culture, social context and changing realities of the job market.

### Institutionalization of Career Guidance

#### *Policy Issue 21 :*

Career Counselling and Career Guidance have to be performed by professional counsellors who should have close interactions with students. But, most of the Directors and staff of CGUs perform their duties while functioning as full-time academics. The immediate and crucial importance of institutionalization of career guidance and counselling has not so far been recognized by responsible authorities.

***Policy 21 : Institutionalize professional career guidance and career counselling services in the universities to strengthen the existing system.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Properly institutionalizing the Career Guidance and Counselling processes in the universities, through revising and updating the UGC circular 934 to reflect a new plan.
- Creating Centres of Career Guidance and Counselling (CCGC) instead of the present Career Guidance Units in each university.
- Creating permanent positions for the Directors and other staff of career guidance and counselling centers.
- Appointing professional career counsellors.
- Enhanced funding for CCGCCs to make them financially viable and sustainable.

## Professional Training in Career Guidance

### *Policy Issue 22 :*

Staff working in career guidance units are not adequately exposed to systematic practices of career guidance and counselling and not given sufficient professional training in skills related to counselling either. Hence, there is an urgent need to professionally train career counsellors in Sri Lanka.

***Policy 22 : Professional training should be provided to staff in the Centre for Career Guidance and Career Counselling to effectively carry out their role.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Introducing Post-graduate study programmes in the Sri Lankan University system to provide professional education and training to CCGCC staff.
- Providing opportunities for overseas professional training for CCGCC staff in collaboration with foreign universities.

## Updating Current Programmes

### *Policy Issue 23 :*

For the last three-decades career guidance programmes of universities in Sri Lanka have been revolving around a limited agenda and no improvement or updating is made after a thorough evaluation.

***Policy 23 : Universities should update and strengthen the existing career guidance and career counselling programmes to address the current and emerging needs.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- UGC and universities jointly undertaking a review on existing career guidance programmes.
- UGC providing adequate funding for this project.

## Reconciling Different Views among Academics

### *Policy Issue 24:*

Programmes of career guidance and counselling initiated in Sri Lankan universities have so far achieved limited success. Justification for providing career guidance have gained general acceptance but there are disagreements about the choice of skills and their utility beyond labour market requirements. There is also caution expressed in AHSS Faculties that skills training program should not reduce the importance of subject components and they show reluctance to integrate skill related courses, because they assume that no academic content of AHSS Faculties can be integrated with job market needs.

***Policy 24: Universities should reconcile the different and dissenting views that the academics hold with respect to career guidance and career counselling programmes being implemented in universities.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Setting up in each university a Career Guidance Advisory Board with representations from different perspectives and approaches to career guidance and skills training.
- Coordinating the programmes and activities in consultation with the Advisory Board to enable them to benefit from a wide spectrum of ideas, perspectives and suggestions.
- Organizing dialogues between university authorities and academics who have dissenting views on career guidance.
- Integration of career guidance and career counselling programmes with academic programmes.

## Offering Comprehensive Programmes

### *Policy Issue 25:*

In view of the increasing number of youth graduating from local private universities and HEIs with better employment prospects in the private sector,



public universities should emphasize career guidance, career counselling, training in soft-skills and preparing undergraduates for employment in the public and private sectors. This calls for comprehensive programmes beyond the minimalist activities currently being carried out by the CGUs. More collaborative efforts with the public and private sectors need to be initiated to provide training for undergraduates in professional skills along with soft skills.

***Policy 25: Universities should introduce programmes for the development of professional skills required for different fields of employment open to all University graduates.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- The CCGC's designing and implementing professionally oriented training programmes as well in collaboration with private sector, Faculties and Departments.
- The CCGC's begin discussions with Faculties and Departments to widen the scope of career guidance training programmes so that relevant professional content is also incorporated into them.
- Academic Departments of the University collaborating with CCGC's to introduce professional skills components to their undergraduate courses.

### **Transformation in Teaching Methodology at University Levels**

#### ***Policy Issue 26:***

Among practitioners, there is a misconception that the courses in the disciplines of AHSS cannot be linked with the corporate world. The root cause stems not from the discipline but from the teaching methodology used.

Currently the teaching methodology used at universities is subject-centered and teacher dependent as classroom activities are planned solely by the teacher. Most of the time the teacher teaches the students and students rarely participate in the teaching-learning process. The lecturers/instructors adhere to the principles of pedagogy which is more appropriate to children.

However, undergraduates in the universities are adults who like to be independent in learning and apply their experience in learning. They are task oriented and like to involve actively in problem solving activities. They also show interest in learning what is useful to their life. Hence, academics teaching at university levels should seriously have to consider the unique characteristics of adults. The approach of Andragogy or Adult Learning explains how adults learn and how to facilitate learning among adults.

***Policy 26: Transform teaching methodology at university levels from pedagogy (Science of Teaching Children) to andragogy (Science of Teaching Adults).***

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- Staff development centers offering more practically oriented intensive courses in andragogy to academic staff, specifically to academics from AHSS Faculties enabling them to develop relevant skills among students through adult-oriented methods of learning.
- Building certain skills, such as observation, data collection, diagnosing social problems, collecting and analyzing data and problem solving at societal level through decision making into the courses currently offered by AHSS Faculties.

**Skills Development for External Undergraduates**

***Policy Issue 27:***

Enrollment of large number of candidates for external degrees is a major facet of the expansion of higher education in Sri Lanka. However, non-extension of career guidance and skills training programmes for external undergraduates is a major lacuna in the existing attempts to address the challenge of graduate unemployability.

***Policy 27: External and distance learning degree programmes should embed professional and employable skills.***

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- Revising the curriculum so as to building professional and employable skills.
- Training academics to use andragogical approaches (Science of Teaching Adults) for teaching external undergraduates.
- Universities offering post-graduate diploma in career development for Students in External and Distance Learning Programmes.

## **CHAPTER 5.**

### **Student Welfare and Discipline**

Student welfare and discipline are themes in Sri Lanka's university life that are closely inter-related.

#### **Welfare**

Issues relating to student welfare are linked to Sri Lanka's legacy as well as decline of social welfarism and free education.

Education in state universities costs students only minimally in terms of tuition fees. Even in the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering where education entails higher costs and carries higher monetary value, students pay only nominal fees. Most students also receive financial assistance in the form of bursaries and Mahapola Scholarships. Students also have access to highly subsidized hostel facilities, and food at university canteens, although their atmosphere, quality and hygienic conditions do not add much to improving the general quality of life of the undergraduates which has constantly remained very poor and substandard.

There has also been a demand by students to raise the monetary quantum of the Mahapola scholarship, in view of the rising cost of living. Improving the existing poor conditions of hostels, canteens and classroom facilities has been perennial demands by students.

Although there have been low - key policy suggestions to change this welfare framework replacing it by a scheme of student loans, governments have been reluctant to introduce a market-driven approach to student welfare in state universities. Regular opposition by student and academic unions as well as political parties has been the major reason that has prevented any shift away from the traditional welfarist framework in the state universities.

However, this minimalist welfarist framework has been in a crisis too, since it has not been able to ensure an environment with adequate quality of life within all state universities. The rapid and continuous increase in the numbers of student enrolment as well as the expansion of the numbers of academic and

non-academic staff has placed huge demands on the available capacities of universities to maintain physical and social environment that should sustain standards of life expected from modern universities. The pressure on the existing infrastructure facilities such as housing, hostels, classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, canteens and cafeteria, health and clean environment, and transport has been staggering.

Another major cause of the erosion of overall conditions of student welfare in Sri Lanka's universities is inter-group violence and the practice of ragging among students.

Thus, the universities are today facing a situation of accumulated crisis with regard to student welfare, despite recent increases in expenditure for the construction of student hostels and upgrading classroom and other physical facilities. Student agitations seem to be directed to protecting the minimalist and declining standards of welfare, while the governments are under pressure by global and national macro-economic realities to seek alternatives to the traditional model of public universities.

### **Indiscipline and Violence**

The issue of student discipline has been a perennial theme in policy debates on Sri Lanka's higher education. Steps taken by the authorities to prevent the breaking out and prevalence of violence in many forms – individual, social, political, and gender – among undergraduate students have been largely ineffective. Such steps include introduction of anti-ragging legislation, awareness campaigns, and even public criticism through the media aiming at shaming the student communities over their 'anti-social' behavior. Both the law and public shaming approaches have not succeeded in eradicating the culture of ragging in the universities.

Organized student groups have developed the habit of claiming that the universities are islands themselves in which law of the land should not apply. That attitude is a part of what the students themselves call the 'campus sub-culture.'

The frequent breakdown of student discipline in the form of organized actions such as violent clashes, ragging involving violence and defiance of university's

administrative authority, has forced the authorities to repeatedly find new solutions to violence. Yet, the culture of violence seem to have been built into the university undergraduate life so strongly that indiscipline and violence seem to continue to defy the well-intentioned efforts of policy makers to transform universities into spaces of social peace and tranquility.

### **Trends**

The following are some key contemporary trends in student discipline and violence in Sri Lanka's state universities.

- There has been a decline of student participation in violent political activism against the state in parallel with the decline of political violence in the country in general.
- The dominant tendency in violence among university students has had three strands. The first strand is clashes that take violent turns among student groups and sometimes gangs. The second is violence resorted to by senior students against freshmen students during the rituals of ragging. The third is gender-based violence which often happens during ragging as well as in everyday circumstances that mostly remain unacknowledged.
- The large majority of students do not condone violence in the university in any form. However, they make little effort to critique, desist or campaign against violence by their colleagues for fear of reprisals such as threats, violence, social boycott, and marginalization. In few instances where students have opposed or resisted ragging, they have been 'punished' severely by their senior colleagues, causing physical harm.
- University authorities have very little control over student violence. Student groups engaged in violence normally defy the authorities. Similarly, university authorities often find it difficult to implement laws and regulations introduced to curb indiscipline and violence.
- Even disciplinary action taken by university authorities against students who engage in violent acts is often ineffective, since organized student groups use disciplinary punishment for further politicization and mobilization of students against university authorities. Thus, the university

authorities tend to be cautious about implementing strict disciplinary procedures to avoid escalation of open confrontations with well-mobilized student groups.

### **Ragging**

Ragging is the most prevalent and widespread mode of violence by students in the state universities today. There are no reports of ragging among students of private higher educational institutions. In the state universities, ragging is a practice prevalent among undergraduate students, and not among Post-graduate or diploma students.

Those who engage in ragging justify it as a social and cultural necessity. Often, victims of ragging too share this perspective. In fact, there is a sense of perception as well as an ideology that fresh students who come to the university from diverse social and cultural backgrounds should be re-oriented into an 'egalitarian campus subculture.' This 're-orientation', which is meant to erase attitudes and behaviors of social difference usually takes place by means of a range of disciplinary and controlling practices such as physical and verbal abuse, threat, humiliation, shaming, and violence. Political indoctrination is also an integral part of this process.

Ragging has begun in Sri Lanka's universities during the early days of University of Ceylon as an induction or initiation ritual. At present, it is no longer a mere induction ritual. In its evolution, ragging has taken violent forms with political, institutional and cultural roots as well as characteristics. Political groups have been using it as a tool of indoctrination, control and domination.

In public perceptions, there are two main assumptions to explain the phenomenon of ragging. The first attributes the violent behavior through ragging to a sense of deprivation and injustice felt by male students from rural and economically poor and deprived social backgrounds. According to the second assumption, the sense of despair among Arts and Humanities students in the face of uncertainties about their future amidst lack of employment opportunities and prospects for upward social mobility has made them violent towards their own colleagues.

Nevertheless, these assumptions are not entirely correct. The culture of ragging began long before the universities opened their doors to students from non-elite social backgrounds. Ragging is also practiced in all Faculties at varying degrees of intensity and among students of all social backgrounds.

However, there is a major feature that is clearly visible in terms of the role of identity and social position of students. Ragging takes place within a clearly demarcated framework of class and ethnic boundaries. Students from affluent backgrounds would not subject to ragging their rural or less affluent counterparts to avoid social class-based backlashes. Similarly, students of one ethnic group would not subject students from another ethnic group to ragging due to the tacit codes of conduct that prevent transgressing of ethnic boundaries.

Among the small student communities from affluent social and family backgrounds, who have studied at elite or English medium schools, the picture is mixed. Many of them abhor ragging and openly voice their opposition to it. A few individual students from such backgrounds are likely to subject their counterparts to mild forms of ragging. However, these students tend to live as closely knit groups, maintaining clear cultural and social separation from the majority of fellow students who come from different social backgrounds.

The pattern of ragging taking place over many years in the Sri Lankan universities also indicates that it is a practice closely associated with the politics of male domination among undergraduate students. Ragging almost as a rule entails a series of ritualistic acts spread over three or more months designed to enabling the senior male students to establish their authority, hierarchy and domination primarily over junior and younger male student batches. The yearning to secure male power over female students can also be seen as a major impetus for, and an outcome of, this group dynamic.

Among the recent developments that seem to have occurred in the way ragging is organized in some universities is the control exercised by political activists who are senior students having close links with an outside political movement. Ragging is thus intertwined with the almost total control maintained by this outside political group as a mechanism for ideological indoctrination and maintaining control over the student community, both male and female.



## **Political Control**

Political control of ragging seems to have given a very complex character to university ragging, violence and student discipline.

One contribution made by the politicization of ragging is a pseudo-theoretical justification offered to explain the necessity of ragging through a concept of 'university sub-culture', to which reference has already been made. Those who advance this "theory" argue that re-socialization and acculturation of students coming from diverse social and cultural backgrounds requires inculcation among them egalitarian values, ethos and practices of university sub-culture. Imposition of codes of conduct in dress, hairstyles, and shoes, bans or restrictions on the use of library and sports facilities as well as interactions with teachers, administration and senior batches of students, taboos in the use of language in everyday communication, and bans on the display of family wealth or affluence in personal conduct are supposed to facilitate a specific culture of uniformity, homogeneity and 'equality' which is presented as a key dimension of that 'sub-culture.'

Thus, university students have two competing authorities that prescribe disciplinary frameworks - the university administration, and the political groups that operate both inside and outside the universities.

## **Students and University Governance**

The Universities Act No 16 of 1978 enables student participation in matters relating to student welfare and participation in the university life. However due to the ways in which university student politics have developed over the years the provisions of the Act need revision in order to make student representation more democratic and representative. At present, the winner-takes-all system of elections for student councils only ensures the monopoly of representation to the politically dominant student group. It also prevents diversity and pluralism in student representation.

Similarly, the exclusion of students from university governance at all levels needs immediate attention of the policy makers as well as university authorities. Student participation in governance is a two way process to which both authorities and student leaders should pay careful attention. Both sides

shun the responsibility of creating conditions for students to be stakeholders in university governance.

The role of student representatives at present is limited to their airing grievances at Faculty Board meetings. Present regulations are not designed to enable student representatives to take part in the Faculty decision-making process. Some Faculty members usually treat their students who already possess voting rights as adult citizens as mere 'children' (*lamayi* in Sinhalese). They are also not ready to welcome student participation in university governance. At the same time, student leaders also avoid the responsibility of taking part in university governance, preferring the efficacy of politics of pressure and agitation as a mechanism for political mobilization, and not for making policy and governance inputs.

## Policy Proposals for Student Welfare and Discipline

### Continuous Crisis in Student Welfare and Discipline

#### *Policy Issue 28 :*

Expanding the access to university education has led to a prolonged crisis of student welfare and discipline amidst intensified pressures on university spaces, infrastructure, resources and living conditions within the universities. This is also a hidden cause of much of the student unrest and agitations in the universities.

***Policy 28: Continue initiatives to improve living conditions and the quality of life of the student population.***

#### Strategies for Implementation

- The UGC appointing a committee to make recommendations on improving welfare, living conditions, and quality of life among undergraduate students.
- The recommendations of the committee are incorporated in a new scheme for upgrading the existing standards and mechanisms for student welfare.

## Ragging and Discipline

### *Policy Issue 29:*

Ragging creates an atmosphere of intimidation, tension, stress and fear among university students negatively impacting on their right to education, mental and emotional wellbeing, and welfare. From June 2017 to June 2019, 1989 students have left the universities due to ragging. Upto now, about 20 students are reported to have committed suicide due to ragging. Attempts at its eradication have not succeeded, while policies towards strict imposition of disciplinary controls have not worked either.

***Policy 29: Ragging should be totally condemned.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- University authorities in partnership with senior students should initiate a sustained campaign of education and creating consciousness among students on the harmful and injurious consequences of ragging.
- Universities through their student counselling and welfare units initiate a major campaign of education, dialogue and consciousness raising among university students on the destructive consequences of ragging, highlighting its denial of human rights, right to education, human dignity, and individual freedom.
- Government initiates a political dialogue with the leaders of political movements linked to student groups who control ragging in the universities seeking their cooperation to humanize relations among students.
- The Ministry of Higher Education and UGC begins a dialogue with the leaders of political groups whose representatives among university students manage and control ragging as a means of political indoctrination and mobilization.
- All academic staff should be totally committed to eradicate ragging.

## Need for Better Policy Responses

### *Policy Issue 30 :*

Steps taken by the universities as well as the government to eradicate violence and ragging have been largely unsuccessful, making it necessary to adopt new approaches and policy responses. This requires a comprehensive understanding of the nature, causes and reasons for the continuing breakdown of discipline in Sri Lanka's universities, focusing on its social, cultural, political, psychological and institutional dimensions. Such an understanding will provide fresh insights for better and more effective policies to build and sustain peaceful and violence-free learning environments in the state universities.

***Policy 30: New approaches should be initiated to eradicate ragging and violence based on research studies.***

### Strategy for Implementation

- Undertaking a comprehensive research study employing a multi-disciplinary approach on ragging and student discipline in the universities.

## Students and University Governance

### *Policy Issue 31:*

At present students are totally excluded from university governance. Even the student representation at Faculty Boards does not enable their participation in the decision-making process. The exclusion of students from the process of university governance effectively prevents them from being stakeholders in university life. It also promotes hostile attitudes to university authorities.

***Policy 31: Representation of students should be ensured at different levels of university governance, including the Faculty Boards, welfare institutions, cafeteria, hostels etc.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- Amending the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to allow student participation at Faculty Boards and other levels of university administration.

- A scheme of on-campus part-time employment for undergraduate students in the university libraries, offices, and research projects should be initiated.
- Setting up a Grievance Committee in each university.

### **Pluralism in Representation in Student Unions**

#### ***Policy Issue 32 :***

The present system of representation for student councils ensures the dominance of one group which has the majority support. It has effectively prevented pluralism in student representation.

***Policy 32 : A system of proportional representation for Student Union elections should be introduced.***

#### **Strategy for Implementation**

- Introducing appropriate amendments to Clause 6 of the Universities Act of 1978 to make Proportional Representation mandatory for student union elections.

### **Need for Closer Interaction between Staff and Students**

#### ***Policy Issue 33 :***

Considering the fact that the majority of students respect their teachers, closer teacher-student interaction could minimize indiscipline.

***Policy 33 : Encourage staff to engage extensively with student activities, both socially, professionally and academically.***

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Involving students in curriculum and course planning.
- Obtaining student feedback frequently and making use of it in decision making.

- Enhancing genuine social and political debate within the campus, with the participation of academic staff.
- Encouraging academics to actively involve themselves in extracurricular activities with students.
- Providing students with a stimulating academic environment with practical exposure, career orientation and professional guidance.
- Assigning academic staff members to small groups of students as their mentors.
- Encouraging staff to work together with students on activities that benefit the community and in enhancing the public image of the institution.

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **Post-graduate Education and Research**

Post-graduate education has over the past few years become integral to the university educational and training agenda in Sri Lanka. By the year 2000, the annual output of Post-graduates was around 2500. Since then, the courses being offered have been diversified and increased rapidly, particularly in the fields of Arts, Humanities, Management, and Commerce. The Post-graduate output in 2017 by Sri Lanka's state universities has been 7336.

Despite the expansion of programmes and rapid increase in enrolment and graduation, Sri Lanka's system of post-graduate education is still evolving. Almost all Post-graduate programmes operate on part-time basis. While the established Faculties offer post-graduate programmes, in addition to undergraduate programmes, there are 15 Post-graduate degree-awarding institutes established in different universities.

Universities in Sri Lanka initially carried out their Post-graduate education following the traditional model of students being guided by a supervisor in research. With the increased interest in Post-graduate degrees particularly among university teachers and public and private sector employees, Post Graduate Institutes (PGIs) and Faculties of Graduate Studies (FGSs) began to be established.

At present, all 15 State Universities and 13 private HEIs in Sri Lanka offer post-graduate training. The Post-graduate qualifications awarded by these 28 institutions include PG Certificates, PG Diplomas, MSc and MA, specialized Master programs including MBA and the two research degrees, MPhil and PhD. In addition, the Post-graduate Institute of Medicine awards a range of medical qualifications where the training consists of both clinical work and research.

#### **Post-graduate Education in State Universities: Overall Picture**

The annual Post-graduate output by state universities has exceeded the 7000 mark. Close to 90% of the Post-graduate degrees has been awarded by the older Universities, with the University of Colombo alone accounting for nearly

a third. It is clear that in the older universities, post-graduate education has now become a major part of the overall University academic programme. The newer universities such as Eastern, South Eastern, Rajarata, Sabaragamuwa, Wayamba and Uva-Wellassa have barely got their programmes started. They award MBA and a few research degrees. While the programmes offered by the PG Institutes have dramatically increased, they consist mainly of taught programs, most likely at level 9 of the SLQF.

### **Other Institutions of Higher Education**

Several other Institutions of higher education, outside the state university system, offer a range of Post-graduate degrees. They could be classified as shown below:

- State HEI under Ministries recognized by separate Acts or by UGC/Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE).
- Non-state HEI with degree-awarding status from UGC/MoHE.
- Non-State - cross-border HEIs without degree-awarding status.

### **Issues Related to Taught PG Programmes**

Most Post-graduate programmes offer students taught courses. This is a welcome departure from the traditional system in which post-graduate candidates did not enjoy the benefit of following regular course work. At present, Post-graduate classes, integrated into a course-work based semester system, are usually held on Friday evenings and on the weekends. Thus, post-graduate students are part-time scholars. This unsatisfactory state of affairs in the post-graduate education in Sri Lanka's state universities is due to two reasons. First, the vast majority of students enrolled in these programmes are working full-time, without enjoying the benefit of study leave from the employers for higher studies. The second reason is that in Sri Lanka's state universities, the mandated duty of the academic staff during normal office hours is to be involved exclusively in teaching, evaluation and student advice in undergraduate programmes.



Some issues related to the taught post-graduate courses are briefly described below:

**Standardization:** The Masters programmes are at two levels in the SLQF (levels 9 and 10) and most universities are still in the process of adjusting their programs to fall in line with one or the other. Only those who wish to acquire skills and knowledge for job placement or career development alone may be satisfied with a level 9 M.Sc. On the other hand, those who are planning further study or migration and employment abroad may need level 10 of SLQF.

**Quality Assurance:** To accommodate working students, most Universities and Institutes offer part time programs and evening and weekend classes which can lead to several undesirable consequences with respect to teaching and learning, student attendance, and quality assurance, as shown below:

- The distinction between full and part time students has disappeared and even full-time students are compelled to attend classes only on weekends. There is widespread concern that this has led to the erosion of quality, standards, and rigour in post-graduate training.
- In the part time Post-graduate programmes, teaching and skills training such as research and academic writing usually lack academic/scientific quality as required in internationally recognized Post-graduate education.
- In the absence of effective mechanisms for accreditation and quality assurance, the quality and standards of teaching, learning and research vary significantly across universities.
- Use of the library by students has become minimal and the level of students' exposure to relevant scholarly literature in their fields of studies is often poor. Lack of proficiency in the academic and scholarly use of the English language is an obvious reason for this persistent condition.
- There are difficulties with the teaching-learning process and skills development in practice-oriented training programmes. Most of the

Post-graduate programmes are oriented towards knowledge-acquisition by students, with little or no attention to building professional skills.

- Other aspects of quality assurance such as stakeholder feedback, curriculum development, lesson planning, performance monitoring and formative assessments still remain underdeveloped.
- Overseeing of teaching, training, and learning for Quality improvement is minimal.
- Long delays in writing Theses, Assignments as well as releasing results are frequently reported. There is concern that marking Post-graduate theses has not yet reached the required professional standards of rigour, probity, punctuality and accountability.
- Since university teachers tend to focus their attention primarily on undergraduate education, their investment of time, energy and intellectual resources on post-graduate training and supervision often fall below the required standards.

### **Post-graduate Studies and Research**

Post-graduate programmes have integrated research at different levels of rigour and depth. M. Phil and Ph.D programmes prepare students for advanced research. Masters and PG diploma programmes also contain basic research. The M. Phil and Ph.D candidates are required to write Theses/Dissertations based on independent research, and with substantive depth and length, demonstrating originality in scholarly contribution. Theses in Masters and PG Diploma programmes are less rigorous and the candidates are expected to demonstrate only satisfactory research and academic writing skills.

There is a widespread concern that Sri Lankan universities have failed to produce rich and self-sustaining cultures of research and knowledge production. Several structural and institutional factors have contributed to this situation. Sri Lanka's state universities have not been fully research-oriented since the establishment of University of Ceylon in 1942. The excessive emphasis on undergraduate education still prevents post-graduate teaching and research to be fulltime programmes thus preventing both students and teachers from engaging in sustained research. Even M. Phil and Ph.D

candidates are part-time scholars with limited time and opportunities to engage in research and knowledge production on a regular basis. Thus, unlike in countries where universities have developed strong cultures of research, Sri Lanka's system of part-time Post-graduate education continues to have weak and limited commitment to promote a culture of research aimed at creating new knowledge as a regular feature of university education.

Relative paucity of funding for research, the absence of regular forums for research with international collaboration and participation, and unsustainability of research journals and scholarly publications are both causes and consequences of the prevalence of a weak research culture in the Sri Lankan universities. International collaboration for research is still limited to a few medical and science faculties. The recent practice of holding annual 'international' research conferences in the state universities has not yet led to much international participation and collaboration in any substantial sense. They promote mostly presentation of Abstracts, rather than high-quality research, leading to a new culture of conferences dominated by writers of Abstracts, with the intention of securing points for promotion in academic jobs.

Most Faculties in Sri Lankan universities have not succeeded in sustaining high quality academic journals where scholars can publish their peer-reviewed research papers. The culture of peer reviewing of research and scholarly work is not yet a rigorous practice among Sri Lankan university academics. Many university teachers, including senior academics, have developed the unscholarly practice of getting their papers published in commercially run and exploitative predatory journals. There is growing concern at present that this practice of publishing in predatory journals has further weakened the already fragile culture of research in Sri Lankan universities.

## **Policy Proposals for Post-Graduate Education and Research**

### **Need of National Policy**

#### ***Policy Issue 34 :***

There are no national policies at present to give directions to Post-graduate education in state and non-state HEIs. As a result there are significant

variations in policies followed by individual entities as well as in quality, standards, rigour in assessment, training, management, fees, services offered, resources, capacities and sustainability.

**Policy 34:** *The UGC should develop a national framework for Post-graduate education and research, in both state and non-state Higher Education Institutes.*

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Preparing a national framework for Post-graduate Education and Research in consultation with stakeholders.
- The MoHE and UGC registering all HEIs offering Post-graduate programs and giving direction to Post-graduate education and research in Sri Lanka covering all state and non-state entities within a national framework.
- These directions should include new initiatives for (a) enabling full-time post-graduate programmes at state universities, (b) facilitating the academic staff to take part in Post-graduate education during regular hours, (c) engaging Post-graduate candidates as Teaching and Research Assistants, (d) offering Post-graduate scholarships and Fellowships, (e) collaboration between state and private universities in Post-graduate training and research.

### **A Common Legal Framework**

#### **Policy Issue 35 :**

PG programs are offered by all national universities, the PGIs, and the FGSs under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978. There are also several state HEIs under several ministries and separate Acts or by UGC/MOHE that offer PG programs. Many cross-border HEIs without degree awarding status also offer PG programs.

**Policy 35:** *Streamline the legislation and regulations that govern the institutional mandating of different post-graduate programmes.*

### Strategies for Implementation

- The MoHE develops a mechanism through the UGC to monitor all state HEIs offering Post-graduate education in Sri Lanka to ensure that they follow national policies on relevance, quality and standards of degree programmes and research.
- The MoHE establishes through the UGC a mechanism to monitor HEIs that come under other Ministries and the Non-State HEI offering PGE to ensure compliance with national policies, goals and standards.

### Quality and Standards

#### *Policy Issue 36 :*

There is lack of clarity about the maintenance of quality in different Post-graduate programmes offered by different state and non-state higher education institution.

***Policy 36: All Post-graduate programs should comply with Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF).***

### Strategies for Implementation

- The monitoring mechanism proposed under Policy Recommendation 36 above should be empowered to ensure compliance with appropriate powers.
- All programmes follow quality assurance guidelines and be accredited and ranked.
- The UGC develops a robust mechanism of monitoring to ensure quality and standards of all aspects of post-graduate education, training, and research, with provisions for accreditation, review of accreditation and suspension of accreditation to programmes.

## Promoting Full-Time PG Training and Research

### *Policy Issue 37:*

There are no real full-time post-graduate programmes even though some programmes are called full-time. Part time post-graduate training continues to hamper the quality and standards of post-graduate degree and research programmes.

***Policy 37: Universities should encourage full time post-graduate teaching and research programmes.***

### Strategy for Implementation

- Revising the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 enabling the UGC to setup mechanisms and designing broad policies for Post-graduate education.

### *Policy Issue 38:*

At present, the UGC or universities do not provide direct financial assistance to Post-graduate scholars to carry out their research projects. The only exception is for academics of the permanent cadre at state universities registered as Post-graduate students locally or abroad. Lack of research support for Post-graduate students at M.Phil and Ph.D levels is a major drawback in sustaining quality research as well as attracting promising research scholars.

***Policy 38: Initiate post-graduate research fellowships and research support schemes.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- The UGC setting up Post-graduate Research Fellowship schemes for Post-graduate scholars following Post-graduate degrees at local universities and HEIs.
- Individual universities and HEIs initiating their own Post-graduate research Fellowship, Scholarship and other appropriate support schemes for their Post-graduate scholars.

- The Universities and HEIs designing schemes to provide Teaching and Research Assistantships to M. Phil and Ph. D candidates using the earned funds to enable them to be full-time Post-graduate scholars.
- Universities and HEIs maintaining research support schemes, through income received from student fees and other sources, to make available financial support for Post-graduate research on the basis of need and merit.
- Establish Research Cell in each University or in a consortium of Universities which can function on commercial basis providing services such as data analysis, language editing and word processing.

### **Need for Internationalizing PG Education**

#### ***Policy Issue 39 :***

At present there are very few foreign Post-graduate students in Sri Lankan universities and HEIs. Encouraging through appropriate policy measures and incentives to foreign Post-graduate students to study at Sri Lankan institutions will help introduce the international character to the programmes of local universities while facilitating interaction between local and foreign students.

***Policy 39: Internationalize Post-graduate programmes offered by Sri Lankan HEIs.***

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- The UGC in its policy on Post-graduate education and research lays down principles and guidelines for foreign collaboration as well as internationalization of Post-graduate student participation in local universities and HEIs.
- Individual universities and HEIs initiate scholarship and financial support schemes for foreign students while internationalizing their Post-graduate courses and research programmes.

## Inter-Institutional Collaboration

### *Policy Issue 40 :*

At present there are no formal mechanisms at Sri Lankan universities and HEIs to facilitate inter-institutional or inter-Faculty collaboration in sustaining and improving the quality and standards of Post-graduate education through appropriate mechanisms such as programme reviews, sharing best practices and collaboration.

***Policy 40 : Inter-institutional collaborative and cooperative Post-graduate programs and research initiatives should be facilitated.***

### Strategy for Implementation

- All HEIs including non-state institutions offering Post-graduate programmes establishing a focal point at each institution to facilitate inter-institutional collaboration and cooperation.

## Excellence in Global Standards

### *Policy Issue 41 :*

Institutions engaged in Post-graduate education, training and research need to be constantly pursuing goals of excellence and global and regional standards. At present Sri Lanka does not have mechanisms for pursuing such standards of excellence in the Post-graduate field.

***Policy 41 : Within each HEI, the development of centers of excellence of national or international importance must be recognized, encourage and supported.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- To recognize centers of excellence, the MoHE/UGC lays down the requirements on the lines shown below:
  - (a) Conduct of sustained impact oriented research in a nationally/ internationally important area over a specific period of time.
  - (b) Development of expertise and experts on the subject.



- (c) Evidence of research outputs that translate into goods or services that have an economic impact.
- (d) Availability of core staff and up to date facilities for high quality research.

## Quality Staff

### *Policy Issue 42 :*

Not all universities and HEIs have well-qualified staff, with Ph.Ds and good records of research, to teach in Post-graduate programmes. The paucity of highly qualified academic staff is a particular challenge faced by newer universities outside the metropolis. This has resulted in uneven quality in Post-graduate education and training. Even in instances where there are teachers with higher qualifications, they are overburdened with responsibilities of undergraduate teaching, examinations and evaluation, with little quality time left for Post-graduate programmes.

*Policy 42 : The recruitment criteria for probationary, lecturers should be revised by giving more weightage to post-graduate qualifications and research.*

## Strategies for Implementation

- The UGC revises the scheme for recruitment of university teachers.
- Universities work out arrangements to enable teachers with doctoral degrees to devote more time on Post-graduate teaching and supervision by relieving them from excessive responsibilities in undergraduate teaching and examinations.
- Universities work out modalities to allow well-qualified and senior academics to devote more time for Post-graduate teaching and training.
- Sharing Senior Academics from local universities or foreign universities to develop post-graduate programmes.

## **CHAPTER 7.**

### **Quality Assurance and Accreditation of State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions**

Different stakeholders in higher education have different perspective on quality. The purpose of the quality is to conform to a set of standards defined by a regulatory body. Quality is assured by reaching the set standards. Accreditation is a type of quality assurance process under which services and operations of institutions and programmes are evaluated by an external body to determine whether applicable standards are met. If standards are met the accredited status is granted to the institution/programme by the external Agency.

Quality assurance processes are based on the experiences and higher education needs of a country. In Sri Lanka, the question of quality is connected with the qualitative expansion of university education at different levels. Unlike in the past, universities are not confined to undergraduate programmes alone. In addition to the increase of enrolment of undergraduate students in all disciplines, many new undergraduate degree programmes have also been introduced. Rapid increase in the enrolment of external candidates for undergraduate degrees in a number of fields has also been a salient feature of this quantitative expansion of university education. Moreover, there has been a major expansion of post-graduate and certificate programmes, that are conducted on the weekends. Similarly, new universities have been established in provinces, with limitations in infrastructure facilities and human resources, particularly qualified academic staff. The proliferation of PHEIs has also been a key feature in the Sri Lanka's higher educational landscape since 2013. All these developments constitute the backdrop against which the MoHE and the UGC have been vigorously pursuing an agenda of quality assurance and accreditation.

#### **Current Status**

The UGC has set up an institutional mechanism to implement and monitor quality assurance programmes in the entire university system. The Quality Assurance Unit, established in 2004 was renamed in 2005 as Quality Assurance

and Accreditation Council (QAAC), giving it a wider mandate and resources. The Unit had by then initiated the first cycle of Institutional and Subject Review process in the universities. This cycle has been completed in 2015. The QAAC subsequently received full membership of International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN).

As a part of the quality assurance process, the MoHE and the UGC jointly initiated the preparation and publication of Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework. Finalized in 2015, this Framework provides a structure within which all HEIs can place their degree programmes at an appropriate level. The SLQF combines descriptors of qualifications/awards at each level with credit measures that indicate the levels and volume of learning that a student is expected to achieve for each type of qualification. Qualification descriptors summarize the student learning outcomes of the qualification at each level.

Internal Quality Assurance units were introduced into all universities in 2005. The universities in turn established Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAU) to coordinate the quality assurance activities within their universities. In addition, the Faculties established Internal Quality Assurance Cells (IQAC) to coordinate the quality assurance activities within them in liaison with IQAUs. An IQAU Manual was published in 2013 by the QAAC.

To safeguard the sustainability and credibility of new and emerging Open and Distance Learning (ODL) systems, a QA system was developed at a national level, facilitated by Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO. Standards, performance indicators and evaluation criteria were developed and published as a Quality Assurance Toolkit for Distance Higher Education Institutions and Programmes.

The UGC has also begun discussions with universities on the necessity of a system of ranking based on performance within the universities. The discussions at present are on a new and flexible model of ranking among Universities, Faculties as well as Departments, in order to provide added incentives for improvements in quality and standards.

## **Issues**

The MoHE, the UGC and the universities have taken a series of significant steps in the direction of ensuring quality, standards and relevance of the programmes. However, the policies and goals set up have not yet been adequately internalized within the Sri Lankan culture of higher education. As a result, reforms have been slow in implementation as well producing innovative outcomes in some Faculties.

In Humanities and Social Science Faculties where student numbers are very large, progress in rapid improvement of quality is particularly challenging. In these Faculties, resource constraints and the need for the expansion of academic staff need to be addressed for such reforms to bear tangible results.

Combining knowledge with skills and attitudes in undergraduate programmes is a major requirement in contemporary agendas for improving quality and relevance of university education. Although the MoHE and the UGC have taken many steps in this direction, the universities are still slow to integrate skills development with the teaching and training programmes. The lack of clarity about the policies as well as the concept of skills development and non-institutionalization of skills development initiatives may contribute to eventual marginalization of such initiatives within the universities.

Improvements in quality and relevance also require reviews and revision of existing academic programmes and curriculum. The Subject Review mechanism has begun such an initiative. Yet, the progress has been uneven across the universities and Faculties.

## **Policy Proposals for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions.**

### **Quality Assurance and Accreditation.**

#### ***Policy Issue 43:***

Under the current system external quality assurance of state university is done by the UGC. Due to expansion in number of students, introduction of multi-disciplinary courses and entry of private sector in to higher education a need

has arrived to establish an independent authority outside the UGC to give directions, monitor quality assurance and accreditation process of all new and existing universities/institutes/programmes of both state and non-state higher education.

***Policy 43: An independent Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission should be established.***

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- Expediting the introduction of proposed Act of Parliament to establish an independent Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission.
- Appointing members of the Commission by the President of Sri Lanka based on the recommendation of the Minister of Higher Education.
- Appointing selected representatives from professional bodies as members of the Commission.
- Mapping the different qualifications in accordance with “SLQF” to facilitate the cross mobility.
- Making provisions in the Act to prosecute unregistered and/or non-accredited higher education institutions awarding degrees and qualifications.
- The Commission supervises, monitors and regulates the entirety of QA and Accreditation process.

**Ranking Universities**

***Policy Issue 44:***

The world ranking of a university is a valuable criterion for reference and comparison. Multi-ranking/Bench Marking/Programme Reviewing or Assessing are prerequisites for understanding disparities between universities and the socio-economic status of undergraduates in different universities and ways to overcome disparities.

**Policy 44:** *The QAAC, UGC and SCQAA (Standing Committee on Quality Assurance and Accreditation) should develop a framework with a set of national assessment criteria to rank the state and non-state HEIs.*

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- The UGC and State and Non-state Quality Assurance Standing Committees, with the guidance of the proposed QAAC formulate national assessment criteria to rank the local state and non-state Higher Education Institutions.
- Incorporating in the new criteria factors such as number of years of existence, infrastructure facilities, research outputs, relevance, quality and standards of degree programmes and employability of graduates.
- Conducting national level awareness sessions to educate the staff of both state and non-state institutions on the importance of ranking framework.

**Assessment of University Teaching**

**Policy Issue 45:**

The public and employers expect high quality graduates from universities. Academics have to play a vital role to produce such graduates as the quality of graduates depends on their contribution and commitment. Under the current system, academics have freedom to create an effective teaching-learning system in the classroom and promote learning among undergraduates. But there are no comprehensive guidelines and procedures to assess the performance of academics.

**Policy 45:** *The QAAC should develop a performance-based evaluation framework for academic staff of both state and non-state Higher Education Institutions.*

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- The QAAC develops a basic framework for performance-based evaluation of academic staff of both state and non-state higher education institutions.

- The evaluation framework incorporates factors such as staff workload, research contribution, national and international contribution, personal development plans, student feedback outputs, innovative teaching and assessment techniques and use of new technology.
- Giving the option to state and non-state higher education institutions to make changes to the basic performance evaluation framework of the academic staff, according to specific requirements of the institution.
- By using the performance-based evaluation system, state and non-state higher education institutions reward academics in accordance with the needs and priorities of each higher education institution.

### **Recruitment of Academics**

#### ***Policy Issue 46 :***

Non-state higher education institutions at present do not have a proper scheme for academic recruitment.

***Policy 46: The QAAC should set standards for academic recruitment in non-state higher education institutes.***

#### **Strategy for Implementation:**

- The QAAC with the participation of SCQAA develops a basic framework of academic recruitment process based on qualifications and performance required for each level for non-state HEIs.

### **Registration of HEIs with QAAC**

#### ***Policy Issue 47 :***

Although the academic autonomy and diversification are widely discussed under liberalization of higher education policy, it is necessary to maintain a balance between autonomy and state regulations in relation to state and non-state sectors.

***Policy 47: The QAAC should introduce a mandatory requirement for state and non-state higher education institutions to obtain institutional accreditation and programme approval in order to maintain minimum standards.***

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- Incorporating the following aspects in the criteria: governance, management, academic staff, student-staff ratio, financial viability, physical resources including land and building ownership, quality assurance practices, research publications etc.
- Each state and non-state higher education institution renews institutional accreditation every 5 years and programme accreditation every 3 to 5 years.

**Revision of Curricula**

***Policy Issue 48:***

Most of the teaching programmes in state universities overemphasize knowledge components with less emphasis on employability skills of graduates.

***Policy 48: The state universities should revise the existing curricula with adequate focus on economic and social relevance of graduate output.***

**Strategies for Implementation:**

- All state universities and non-state HEIs follow the manual for reviewing undergraduate programmes, already developed by the UGC and QAAC and revise their curricula every 3 to 5 years in compliance with SLQF.
- Internal Quality Assurance Units organize workshops and seminars, with representatives of industry where appropriate, for academics prior to designing and developing curricula.



- The Internal Quality Assurance Units ensure that their undergraduates receive proper industrial training to make them aware of the current needs of the industry.

### **Transformation in Teaching Methods**

#### ***Policy Issue 49:***

The traditional methods of teaching practiced in universities are drawing to close. Large size of classrooms due to increase in enrolment to universities, falling level of resources per student, increasing focus on teaching quality and publicity and development in technologies for communicating and disseminating information are raised question on current teaching and learning methods that are practiced in universities. In the meantime, universities are continuously criticized for the fact that that university graduates are unable to fit in with job market and face real- life challenges. These have been resulted from the failure of teachers in developing intellectual, life, and professional skills through teaching. Methods to teaching also change with the aims of teaching. Further, the ' Concept Education 4.0' that was introduced at the 2018 UK universities conference placed more emphasis on personalized adaptive learning in universities.

***Policy 49: A complex learning environment should be provided for students which incorporate authentic learning, assessment and personal development allowing learners to solve real-world problems.***

#### **Strategies for Implementation :**

- Giving learning tasks that are applicable and interest to students.
- Providing learning tasks that facilitate social negotiation and engagement.
- Establishing a curriculum developing center/teaching material center in every university/in consortia of universities for developing authentic learning materials.
- Using teaching learning resources from outside classroom.
- Introducing technology enhanced teaching.

- Providing necessary staff training on novel methods of teaching such as technology based teaching, developing print, audio and video materials and andragogy, and in innovative assessment methods.

### **Assessment in universities**

#### ***Policy Issue 50 :***

Assessment system in universities is one of the least addressed area in higher education in Sri Lanka. Assessment is valuable for the betterment of educational process and student learning. An effective assessment system to achieve expected learning outcomes will definitely have impact on quality assurance in higher education.

The present assessment system is heavily exam oriented, time limited and testing specified content areas. Under this system creative and critical thinking cannot be developed and lay foundation for life time learning. Now universities use assessment to ascertain knowledge, understanding and ability to use the knowledge gained in a particular subject and use it for the purpose of grading, but not provide feed back to students to correct themselves.

The traditional assessment practices have been unable to capture range and nature of diverse learning outcomes now sought from courses. The system involves students only in the teaching and learning process but not in the assessment process. Further, the society today demands more than passive graduates who have completed with a fixed assessment regime and wants persons who can plan and monitor their own learning and do so without continuous prompting from others. Standard Honors/ Grades communicate little to the employers/ those admitting students for further learning.

***Policy 50: An effective and innovative assessment system to improve students learning align with the expected learning outcomes should be adapted in higher education institutions***

#### ***Strategies for Implementation:***

- Giving greater emphasis on assessment for learning than assessment of learning.

- Ensuring opportunities for formal and informal feedback.
- Using an effective mix of formative and summative assessment.
- Devising authentic assessment in collaboration with students.
- Using technology enhanced assessments.
- Using online facilities to provide instantaneous and triggered feedback to remote learners.

### **Social Responsibility of HEIs**

#### ***Policy Issue 51 :***

Universities do not operate in a vacuum. Their activities will impact their surroundings, which include stakeholders and society. In general, universities as centres for generating knowledge, play a major role in solving problems in society. However, the universities/non-state HEIs in Sri Lanka do not display sufficient concern for social responsibility.

***Policy 51: Universities/HEIs should include subject content and practical learning experiences related to social responsibility in teaching, learning and research.***

#### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- The Internal Quality Assurance Units, in consultation with the relevant Faculties and Departments of study, include in the curricula subject content and practical learning experiences related to social responsibility.
- Each student maintains a portfolio for assessment/reward related to his/her community outreach activities.
- Universities develop mechanisms to facilitate staff and students' participation in social work.
- Universities should address regional disparities in planning curricula and research.

## Resource Sharing

### *Policy Issue 52 :*

There is a need for mechanisms to enable resource sharing among universities/HEIs that are confronted with resource scarcity.

***Policy 52: Resources available in universities should be pooled and shared among themselves to meet the scarcity of resources and reduce disparities existing in universities.***

### Strategies for Implementation

- A maximum of three or four universities at different levels, but in close geographical proximity function under a consortium or a cluster of universities.
- Member universities in a consortium develop mechanisms for the coordination of activities between universities.

## Equity in Educational Provisions

### *Policy Issue 53 :*

The rapid and continuous increase in the number of student enrolment, as well as the expansion of numbers of the staff, have placed huge demands on the available capacities of universities to maintain a physical and social environment that can sustain standards of life and quality of education expected from modern universities while minimizing disparities.

***Policy 53: The UGC should develop for the universities minimum standards, norms and physical requirements to ensure equity in quality.***

### Strategy for Implementation

- The UGC develops a set of criteria with minimum standards and norms of physical requirements for the universities based on student numbers while avoiding disparities among universities.

## **CHAPTER 8.**

### **Academic and Non-Academic Staff Development**

Recruitment to university academic staff begins with posts of probationary lecturer from candidates with first - degree qualifications. This is an archaic practice that has not helped the universities to sustain a cadre with high achievements in post-graduate training. Many teachers stagnate at the level of Masters' qualifications with no strong commitment or opportunities to obtain doctoral qualifications. Even with limited scope in research and relying on publications of low quality, many of them have also been able to secure promotions to professorship, and this has led to severe erosion of quality, standards and professionalism among the middle-level academic staff in state universities.

There are now relatively easy promotion possibilities for university academics. The UGC Circular of 916, which governs the promotion process to the posts of Associate Professor and Professor, has been subjected to manipulation with no UGC intervention to prevent the abuse of its marking scheme to enable unqualified academics to become professors with relative ease. This is particularly evident in the widespread practice of publishing non-refereed writings as articles in predatory journals and producing books in the self-publication mode.

Human resource development within the university system is one of the statutory responsibilities of the UGC. In executing its mandatory role, the UGC has established Staff Development Centers (SDC) in every university as per the Commission Circular No 820, 20/02/2003 and a circular issued on 10/12/2010. The Standing Committee for Staff Development of the UGC has developed a comprehensive programme aimed at human resource development in universities, covering academic and other staff. A Training Manual on induction for academic staff has also been developed by the UGC.

Staff development activities through SDCs are designed to achieve the following objectives: (a) supporting the university goals and objectives, (b) enhancing the performance of the staff, (c) provision of support for career advancement of the staff, (d) maintaining and increasing job satisfaction among the staff, (e) developing the ability of the staff to initiate and respond

constructively to changes, (f) maintaining and improving organizational effectiveness and efficiency, and (g) enriching the staff with human values, positive attitudes, team spirit and work culture.

The UGC has introduced a 'Certificate Programme in Teaching in Higher Education' and has declared that the successful completion of the certificate course is mandatory for all academic recruits to obtain confirmation.

Major focus of the current staff development programme is on newly recruited academic staff. The University of Colombo offers a course in Accreditation of Senior Teachers in Higher Education (ASTHE) in every two to three years. Duration of the programme is twelve days and it is offered over a period of six months.

Further, improving the efficiency of management and services of the university system are among key areas identified for improving quality of higher education. The effort to maintaining a working environment conducive to the administrative staff should be compulsory not only in terms of facilitation by resource rich environments but also for training and continuous professional development. Lack of orientation to the world of work and absence of induction training to all the university staff on rules, regulations, procedures etc., have been identified as causes of sluggish and ineffective working cultures observed among administrative, supportive and managerial staff.

Most of the officers of these staff categories learn required psychomotor skills through official routines experienced by trial and error method and following examples that previous officers have set which often result in bad habit formation. Administrative Officers sometimes do not take the right decisions within their purview, due to lack of knowledge and poor attitude. Although, the responsibilities and tasks of administrators and support staff have been decentralized by creating new administrative posts, the efficiency and quality of administrative staff have not reached the expected levels.

Most universities have Faculties of Management with Departments of Human Resource Development. Yet university administrations do not seem to have so far benefitted from the services of these Faculties to improve human resource aspects of staff development.

On the other hand, the number of non-academic staff serving in the university system has increased rapidly, while more services are outsourced. The ad-hoc recruitment of non-academic staff has been a practice in the past, disregarding the existing vacancies and ignoring required expertise. The new recruitments for some services are currently based on aptitude tests, but the recruits are well below the required levels of skill. Similarly, regular on - the - job training is very limited for most categories of non-academic staff. The lack of opportunity for creativity and for professional and personality development, and the absence of a system for appreciating good performance have possibly aggravated the shortcomings mentioned above.

It is a commonly held view among the public that academics attached to HEIs must turn out to be 'role models' for their colleagues and students. If they are to be a unique community of professionals, a type that is indispensable and irreplaceable, they need to maintain high standards of professional quality, commitment, excellence as well as scholarly achievements along with ethical conduct. Recent reports as well as anecdotal evidence have revealed that a negative academic culture marked by absenteeism, publishing in predatory journals, self-publishing of books, fake degrees, dishonesty in research and misusing the research allowance/funds, and resorting to deceptive and manipulatory practices for promotions are observable among the academic staff members.

Against this backdrop, the rapid decline of professionalism among the university academic and non-academic staff is an issue that still awaits acknowledgement. A key feature in the crisis of professionalism among the academic staff is the erosion of the traditional culture of academic and intellectual integrity. Excessive politicization of appointment to the key positions of VCs, Deans, Directors of institutes, members of University Councils' as well as academic promotions and the practice of dishonesty in research and publications have become normal in the academic culture in Sri Lanka.

## **Policy Proposals for Academic and Non-Academic Staff Development.**

### **Criteria for Recruitment**

#### ***Policy Issue 54 :***

Currently, many instances of recruitment, specifically, non-academic recruitment in HEIs, take place without proper guidelines. Eventhough the paper qualifications are laid down as criteria for selection, the other skills such as '21<sup>st</sup> century skills' are not taken into consideration at present. If the 'best selections' are done at the recruitment stage, the Staff Development Centers of HEIs can further develop the capacities of the recruits with ease.

***Policy 54 : The UGC should improve and lay down Recruitment Criteria for all categories of staff in Higher Education Institutions.***

#### **Strategy for Implementation:**

- UGC issues necessary directives to improve the existing scheme for recruitment applicable to all categories of staff, including the academic, administrative and non-academic, with well-set criteria for recruitment for each sector.

### **The Induction Programmes**

#### ***Policy Issue 55:***

The Training Manual developed in 2012 by the UGC for "Induction Programme for academic staff of universities in Sri Lanka" is the guideline followed by the state HEIs at present in training their probationary academic staff. This document has never undergone a revision since its inception.

***Policy 55 : UGC should develop novel and comprehensive staff development programmes for all Staff (probationary and senior academics, non-academic and managerial staff) in the university system.***



**Strategy for Implementation:**

- UGC nominating a panel comprising senior academics who have served or are serving as the administrators of Staff Development Centers in HIEs to develop a new and updated induction programme.

**Induction Programme for Non-Academics**

*Policy Issue 56 :*

Currently, the "Induction Programme for Academic Staff" is a mandatory requirement for probationary academic staff members of state HEIs to obtain confirmation in their positions. However, there is no such requirement for the non-academic staff members in HEIs.

*Policy 56: Induction Programme for Non-Academic Staff for their confirmation should be mandatory.*

**Strategy for Implementation:**

- The UGC selects a team of experts to design and develop a "Training Manual for the Induction Programme for Non-academic Staff of HEIs" consisting of experienced Directors of SDCs and senior non-academic members preferably those who have served as Registrars of universities.

**Staff Development and Coordination**

*Policy Issue 57 :*

All state universities have set up staff development centres for academic staff, but, there is no coordinating mechanism for staff development activities.

*Policy 57: The UGC should revive the Standing Committee for Staff Development.*

**Strategy for Implementation:**

- The UGC initiating action to revive the Standing Committee on Staff Development.

## Incentives for Academic Staff

### *Policy Issue 58 :*

There is a need to develop an appropriate mechanism to provide incentives for the academics for their contribution towards teaching and national/community development.

***Policy 58: The contributions of academics towards teaching and national/community development should be appreciated.***

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- Appointing a committee by the UGC to re-visit the present promotion scheme for university academics to incorporate sufficient weightage for quality of teaching, as will be judged through teacher evaluation by students and peers.
- Providing scholarships and other benefits to academic staff who display sufficient merit.

## Accrediting Staff Development Programme

### *Policy Issue 59 :*

Accreditation always yields better results in any profession. At present, the higher education system in Sri Lanka does not have any accreditation mechanism for the staff development programmes.

***Policy 59: Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission (QAAC) should accredit the Staff Development Programme and certification of Academic Staff Members.***

### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Promoting the programme accreditation and teacher certification process within the respective HEIs.

- HEIs will make members aware of the accreditation bodies and promote and assist their members to get the programmes accredited and members certified.

### **Streamlining and Promoting Academics**

#### ***Policy Issue 60 :***

Globally, HEIs recognize and reward staff for high performance and provide an identifiable career promotions pathway to all the staff. Fair opportunities of promotions to employees create work friendly environment resulting in a sustainable productive contribution.

***Policy 60 : UGC should streamline and revisit the present promotion scheme for academics.***

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- Appointing a separate “Assessment Committee” by the council of the respective university including a specified number of members depending on the level of applicants.
- The Assessment committee provides the Vice Chancellor with a list of its recommendations presenting each category separately according to the assessment on the merit of the applicants.
- The Academic Promotion panel evaluates applications after the feedback from the “Assessment Committee” for promotion and determine whether each applicant has demonstrated sustained academic performance and achievement commensurate with the level to which they are applying to be promoted.
- Give sufficient weightage for quality of teaching and national/community development in approving promotions.

## Academics and World of Work

### *Policy Issue 61 :*

There is continuous criticism from the industry that graduates are not readily employable, do not have essential skills, poor in positive attitudes, team skills and not fit for the needs of the industry. One of the main reasons for this situation is the lack of interaction of academic staff with the industry, as well as disinterest in gaining industry exposure. Exposure of academic staff to the world of work in industry is desirable in all disciplines. It is essential in some disciplines, in order to provide quality education leading to production of readily and highly employable graduates that they provide advisory services for national development and to have close industry-university collaborations that are of mutual benefit.

***Policy 61: Universities should encourage academics to work for short periods in a relevant industry to broaden their experience in the world of work.***

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- Introducing a scheme to provide sufficient incentives to academic staff to take up short-term work assignments in relevant industry for limited periods of time.
- Promoting involvement of academic staff in expert consultancy services and for national development programs while maintaining strict academic discipline with regard to workload and academic accountability.

## **CHAPTER 9.**

### **Private Higher Education Institutions and Public-Private Partnership**

The emergence and spread of private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) awarding undergraduate, Post-graduate, diploma and certificate courses on fee-levying basis has changed Sri Lanka's educational landscape. Although there has been an intense public debate on the prudence of opening the doors for PHEIs, there is at present a policy consensus among the main political parties that the private sector participation in the provision of education should be allowed and supported.

Arguments in favour of promoting the role of PHEIs in higher education for local students are usually justified by highlighting (a) the incapacity of the existing system of state-controlled higher education to meet the challenges arising from ever increasing demand for higher education, (b) the national need to create an educated and skilled labour force, (c) the long-felt need for modernizing degree programmes, and, (d) the importance of introducing reforms that are in line with current global trends in education.

Sri Lanka's state universities have only a limited capacity to accommodate large numbers of students who qualify for higher education after a highly competitive examination. Although approximately 300,000 students sat for the General Certificate of Examination (Advanced Level), only 27,600 received admissions in universities in 2016 (UGC 2016). Moreover, the enrolment capacity of public universities in science and technology-fields continues to be limited. This has been a concern among policy makers for decades.

With the highest youth literacy rate in South Asia at 98.77% and relatively high human development achievements, youth participation in higher education in Sri Lanka is exceptionally low for a middle-income country. The country's higher-education enrolment is about half the average for middle-income countries, and well below countries like Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, and Thailand. (World Bank Group, 2017).

This situation of higher educational bottleneck has led to two outcomes. The first is the outmigration of students seeking educational opportunities abroad.

The second is the entry of the private sector into the field of higher education. In 2013 about 12,000 students went abroad to pursue higher education. According to the UGC, almost 8% of Sri Lanka's students move abroad for higher education annually. Meanwhile, about 100,000 students have been seeking further studies annually through the private sector education system available locally.

According to UGC data, there are 21 institutions and 135 programs registered under the MoHE/UGC as degree awarding private higher education institutions. The highest number of programmes was registered in 2016 with 33 programs getting approval.

The flexibility of present MoHE's policy on private sector participation in higher education is seen in the increase in approvals since 2013 after it took over the powers assigned previously to the UGC.

### **Current Status**

The Ministry of Higher Education is empowered to accredit the PHEIs. However, the Ministry has not yet established a state body to effectively supervise the private higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

The education programmes at the PHEIs seem to disproportionately concentrate on undergraduate, diploma and certificate programmes. The highest density of study programmes is in the first-degree programmes with 26% and then Post-graduate programmes with 17%. Advanced Diplomas such as Higher National Diploma constitute 14% while Diplomas 16%. Certificate level programmes have a share of 15% while NVQ programmes represent 6%. The PHEIs take interest in developing students at foundation and pre-foundation levels and such programmes constitute 3%. The PhD. programmes have the lowest share with 2%.

Hospitality, Management and Business are the main Faculties with about 59% of students. Of this number, Management and Business studies constitute 36%. IT, Science, Engineering, Chemistry, Software, and Technology disciplines have only 27% of students.

The largest segment of student population, representing 59%, follow their First Degree. The share of the number of students who follow Higher National Diplomas, Higher Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas, and Diplomas is 30%. Post-graduate students are still very small, with 3%. Professional courses have still a lower share with a share of 1%. Meanwhile, 8% of students follow certificate courses.

The PHEIs have not yet begun to develop their own bases of academic human resources. Most of the lecturers of PHEIs are from the state universities and they work on visiting or part time basis in the evenings and on the weekends as well as holidays. The majority of the teaching staff belongs to temporary, advisory, probationary, visiting, and part time categories, with a very small number belonging to the permanent staff category.

Since these institutions are profit-oriented business ventures, they seem to be reluctant to recruit new academic staff on a permanent basis or from overseas.

With regard to Staff-Student Ratio, nearly half of the PHEIs maintain a figure of 20 or less students per staff member. However, in some instances, the ratio ranges from 20 to 50.

There is no dearth of non-academic staff members at PHEIs. The categories of non-academic staff each institute include the CEO, Directors, Bursar, financial staff and other Managers. All PHEIs also have marketing staff to recruit students.

## **Issues**

Although the case for private universities and private vocational training institutions is made on the premise that they open up different doors for qualified students to find ways to industry and secure better employment opportunities nationally and globally, the opportunities opened up by the PHEIs still remain restricted. The main reason is the fact that they are fee-levying ventures operating on business models.

Thus the argument has also arisen in the public debate that the provision of higher education through the private sector would run the risk of undermining

the social goal of equity in education and in turn introduce a new source of social disparities in the higher education sector.

There is also concern about the quality of education provided by the PHEIs. The government attempted to introduce new legislation under the Bill on Quality Assurance, Equalization, Qualification and Framework with the aim of uplifting the quality of the diplomas and degrees which were being offered by private sector degree-awarding institutions. Under the proposed framework, degrees and diplomas awarded by the non-state sector were to be regulated to ensure quality. However, the government had to withdraw the proposed Bill owing to the escalating protests from student groups and academics opposed to PHEIs.

The government's ambivalent policy towards formalizing Quality Assurance, Equalization, Qualification and Framework for higher education has also led to uncertainty about quality and standards of educational programmes maintained by PHEIs.

The need for a proper regulatory framework of PHEIs is an issue that needs immediate government attention. Evidence from other countries shows that it is important to set clear, objective, and streamlined criteria and processes for establishing and regulating HEIs, which would include incentives for private providers to invest and independent mechanisms to ensure the quality of the outcomes of both private and public higher education.

Lack of clarity about the legal framework of registration of PHEIs is continuing. As a result, there is a great variation in legal forms in which the PHEIs have been registered. Sixty percent of the accredited degrees of institutions under the MoHE/UGC are conducted by companies registered under the Companies Act No 07 of 2007. The annual reporting process has also been weak, with no consistency in the frequency of reporting.

Eighty eight percent of PHEIs are located in Colombo District while 5% are located in Gampaha. The remaining few PHEIs are in Kandy, Kalutara and Negombo. This indicates a heavy regional and urban bias in the operation of PHEIs in Sri Lanka.



The limited foreign student enrolment can be observed in all PHEIs. In 2018 only twenty-two of them had foreign students. In fact the number of foreign applicants is low and they are mostly from the Maldives. The PHEIs attribute the low enrolment of foreign students to difficulties in obtaining visa.

There is also lack of clarity about the processes and mechanisms for managing quality of education, governance and transparency of administration in PHEIs. Support from external sources still remains low in pedagogical development, research and research strategy, student research, resource development, study structure, curriculum/ syllabus development, management, and organization. This is an area where comparisons are made with state universities in which there are strict rules in governance and quality control. There does not seem to be much external collaboration available to these institutions, although such support is theoretically possible

A general tendency can be observed among the PHEIs which make exaggerated and even misleading claims about the quality and standards about their programmes and facilities available as well as student achievements. Making such claims is a widespread practice in the marketing campaigns and advertising for student recruitment. Such advertising campaigns also make higher education a commodity on offer to be purchased.

### **Public-Private Partnership**

Public-private partnership in higher education has two aspects. The first is the collaboration that the state universities maintain with the private industry, particularly in research, industrial training, career guidance and employment. Links with the private industry for collaborative initiatives have been in existence mainly in science, medical, engineering, commerce and management Faculties. The second level of partnership is between state universities and recently established PHEIs. That has not yet emerged. This is a form of institutional partnership that awaits a government policy intervention.

With regard to the first level of public-private partnership, the state universities have shown a policy of openness. Among the policy communities too, there is a consensus that it benefits the state universities in a variety of ways. The point is often made that in addition to teaching, the private sector can also greatly contribute to the relevance of the higher education sector as a

whole, and of public HEIs in particular, through many other channels (Aturupane *et.al.*, 2017). Among the highlighted benefits are:

- Representatives of industry can help update curricula by making them more relevant to rapidly changing needs of the economy.
- Public universities can benefit from the recruitment of adjunct professors from industry.
- Research and the commercialization of its results can be significantly enhanced through partnerships with private firms.
- Internships in private companies are invaluable for introducing students to the world of work and they are often a step to their employment.

Despite the expansion of PHEIs in Sri Lanka, no initiatives have been taken so far to promote partnerships between them and the public universities. Even the very idea of public-private partnership in education still remains unarticulated. The fact that there are no government initiatives in this direction suggests the continuation of ambiguous attitude of government with regard to the national role of private providers as well as lack of clarity about conditions for their establishment and operation. As a result, the PHEIs have been evolving without formal and institutionalized linkages or collaboration without any governmental support, either technical or financial. This provides the backdrop for the absence of public-private partnership in Sri Lanka's higher education.

Nonetheless, there are good reasons for a regime of PPP between Sri Lanka's state and private higher educational providers at the level of sectoral and institutional collaboration with government guidance. At present, even without a formal framework of collaboration, the PHEIs are heavily dependent on the academic staff of the state universities and that relationship can be utilized as the basis of collaboration between the two sectors.

One important area where a PPP framework can evolve is the extension of PHEI services available to districts outside the Western province through government support and with the participation of the academic staff of state universities that are already established in the provinces. Government support

can also be effectively utilized to offer a scheme of scholarships and bursaries for local students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Similarly, the reliance on non-state training institutions to deliver External Degree Programmes is minimal, and only a very few partnerships have yet been recorded.

Resource sharing for teaching, research, and curriculum development with a framework of public-private partnership has not yet been explored. Such collaboration awaits government's policy guidance.

## **Policy Proposals for Private Higher Education Institutions and Public Private Partnership**

### **Regulatory Framework for Private Higher Education Institutions**

#### ***Policy Issue 62:***

At present Private Higher Education Institutions are not properly monitored or regulated by the Government. As a result sub-standard Private Higher Education Institution too have come into operation.

***Policy 62 : All transnational and Private Higher Education Institutions should be registered under the MoHE.***

#### **Strategy for implementation**

- Registrar General Companies obtain the recommendation and concurrence from the MoHE prior to registering a Private Higher Education Institution under the Companies Act.

### **Expansion of PHEIs to Provinces**

#### ***Policy Issue 63 :***

The PHEIs are at present concentrated overwhelmingly in the Western province serving primarily to the urban student populations. This discriminates children of the rural middle class who have been excluded from admission to state universities, although qualified for university education.

**Policy 63:** *Make education provided by PHEIs accessible to more students outside the Western Province by providing concessionary loan facilities to enable greater access to higher educational opportunities for rural students.*

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- The MoHE designs appropriate strategy to facilitate the location of PHEIs in provincial towns.
- The MoHE ensures that in such a scheme, needy students from disadvantaged backgrounds are provided with subsidized tuition fees and scholarships.

#### **Single Window Platform for Data Gathering**

##### **Policy Issue 64:**

At present, there are multiple points that collect information from PHEIs. The absence of a single window platform for data gathering of all PHEIs makes government's task of monitoring, regulation, and reporting cumbersome.

**Policy 64:** *A centralized information system should be established through a single window Integrated Platform (SWIP) for all data submissions from PHEIs.*

#### **Strategies for Implementation**

- SWIP should be located at the Ministry of Higher Education. MoHE should enact legislation for this purpose.
- Information on students of all categories of PHEIs should be included in the centralized information system.
- Local students going abroad for Higher Education and Foreign students coming to Sri Lanka should be registered in the centralized information system.

## **Quality Assurance**

### ***Policy Issue 65 :***

While quality assurance is now integrated into the academic programmes of the state universities, practices of quality assurance in PHEIs have not yet been institutionalized and formalized.

***Policy 65 : Quality Assurance, Regulation and Programme Review, in line with standards prescribed for state universities, should be made mandatory for the PHEIs including on line service providers.***

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- Action to be taken by the MoHE/QAAC to bring PHEIs under the SLQF.
- The PHEIs submit the list of programs conducted by them to the SWIP with the details as needed.
- All Transnational Higher Educations are required to be registered under MoHE.
- Registrar General of Companies should obtain the recommendation and concurrence from the MoHE prior to registering PHEI's under the Companies Act No. 7 of 2000.

## **Collaboration**

### ***Policy Issue 66 :***

The absence of collaboration and partnerships between State Universities and PHEIs has led to a situation where the PHEIs have been evolving in isolation from Sri Lanka's premier institutions of higher education. It has also prevented opportunities for them to enter into mutually rewarding partnerships which will ultimately benefit students.

***Policy 66 : PHEIs should initiate collaboration, interaction and engagement with public sector universities in teaching, research, and training in order to achieve mutually beneficial goals.***

### Strategies for Implementation:

- The MoHE and UGC design a framework that regulates and facilitates partnerships and collaboration between state and private higher educational institutions.
- Academic staff income caps are established on a staggered basis for tax purposes.
- Annual events are organized to highlight the gains made through partnerships and to share their best practices for mutual benefit.

### External Quality Support

#### *Policy Issue 67:*

There is no clarity about the support available for PHEIs that are branches of universities abroad to maintain quality and standards on par with their external collaborating institutions.

***Policy 67: External quality support from the collaborating institutes abroad should be made compulsory for all those institutions seeking accreditation from the state regulators.***

### Strategies for Implementation:

- The MoHE/UGC include external quality support in the proposed national policy framework on PHEIs.
- Every PHEI provide information on external collaborators' involvement on QA and provide self-assessment of the level of engagement.
- The degree awarding institution provide necessary information through declaration.

## PPP on Science & Technology

### *Policy Issue 68 :*

The STEM fields have immediate promise for public-private partnership in the higher education sector. There are at present industry parks and a few technology and innovation parks. They are in need of more powerfully driven system to attract PPPs from many other countries.

*Policy 68: Government should encourage solicited as well as unsolicited proposals on partnerships with recognized institutes overseas or locally to set up industry, technology and innovation parks connected with higher education.*

### **Strategy for Implementation:**

- The GoSL, through the participation of relevant ministries such as Higher Education, and Science and Technology takes appropriate policy measures to promote PPP in scientific and technology research and innovation.

## Visas for Foreign Students

### *Policy Issue 69 :*

The PHEIs complain that their foreign students face difficulties in obtaining and extending their visas. This is an impediment for foreign student intake.

*Policy 69: Immigration policy should allow paying students and scholarship holders to obtain visas without delay.*

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- Work permits during training and on completion of internships to be kept under the control of MoHE/professional bodies.
- A system for visa for foreign students to be evolved by consultation between MoHE and the immigration authorities.
- A system of temporary work permits/internships is evolved for students who find placement in Sri Lanka for industrial training.

## Need of Ethical Marketing

### *Policy Issue 70 :*

There is lack of ethical marketing by PHEIs in their student recruitment. Their advertising campaigns often carry exaggerated and unsupported claims that result in parents and students being misled.

***Policy 70 :*** *The PHEIs in their advertising for student recruitment should necessarily state their parallel qualification level of programs within the revised SLQE/NVQ or international standard in their government submissions and advertising.*

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- The MoHE and UGC lay down ethical standards and guidelines in the campaigns for student recruitment.
- The MoHE lays down and monitor the compliance with ethical guidelines for advertising and marketing campaigns of PHEIs.

## Public-Private Partnership

### *Policy Issue 71 :*

The state HEIs and PHEIs at present function as separate spheres and in isolation with no formal institutional collaboration. There is no government policy to encourage public-private partnership in higher education.

***Policy 71 :*** *Government should be open to accept proposals on partnerships with recognized higher education institutes overseas or from those locally promising institutes capable of contributing to the scientific and technological development.*

### **Strategies for Implementation:**

- The MoHE provides for a new policy on establishment of private universities bringing necessary legislations.
- The UGC implements the new policy framework for public-private partnerships in the university sector.



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## **The Process of Higher Education Policy Formulation.**

1. 2017.10.11 : Advertisements were published in National Papers in all three languages inviting written submissions from the public on Higher Education mainly under the following themes (1) Governance and Financial and Resource Management (2) Access to Higher Education, Student Admissions and Identification of Demand for New Subjects/Disciplines (3) Career Guidance and Counselling (4) Student Welfare and Discipline (5) Post Graduate Education and Research (6) Quality Assurance and Accreditation of State and Non State Higher Education Institutes. (7) Academic and Non Academic Staff Development (8) Private Higher Education Institutions and Public Private Partnership
2. 2017.11.01 : Letters were sent to Secretaries of Political Parties including Akila Ilankai Tamil United Front, All Ceylon Muslim Congress, Democratic Tamil National Alliance, Eelam People's Democratic Party, Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front, Ilankai Tamil Arasu Katchi, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, Jathika Hela Urumaya, Lanka Samasamaja Party, National Congress, New Samasamaja Party, Podujana Eksath Peramuna, Sri Lanka Freedom Party, Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization, Tamil United Liberation Front, Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal, United National Party.
3. 2017.11.02 : Communications were addressed to Vice Chancellors of all State Universities inviting suggestions for a Higher Education Policy Framework.  
  
2017.11.07 : Deans of Faculties, Directors of Post-graduate Institutions and about 3000 university academics were requested to E-mail their policy proposals on Higher Education.  
  
2017.11.18 : The General Public were again informed through a strip in the Rupavahini News columns about the possibility of submitting Higher Education Policy Proposals.
4. November and December 2017: Terms of Reference for research studies (TOR) were prepared and the Standing Committee Meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2018 approved the TORs. It also approved the Research

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Teams and Team Leaders. 2018.03.04: The National Education Commission ratified the Standing Committee decisions at its 278th Meeting and also appointed an Evaluation Panel to scrutinize Research Studies on Higher Education.

5. 2017 December to 2018 June : A NEC team led by the Chairman and Vice Chairman (Policy) visited the Ruhuna University and obtained proposals from the Vice Chancellor, Deans, Heads of Departments, Members of the Alumni Associations and representatives of the Non Academic Staff. A separate meeting was conducted with students.

Similar meetings were conducted at the Sabaragamuwa University, Uva Wellassa University, the School of Computing of the Colombo University, Wayamba University, and the Rajarata University.

6. 2018.04.27: Preliminary reports of Research Teams were reviewed by the Review Panel.

Interim reports of Research Teams were reviewed by the Review Panel on 03.8.2018 and 13.08.2018.

Review panel assessed the Final Reports of the Research Teams on 02.11.2018, 26.11.2018 and 17.12.2018.

7. 2019.01.07: Editorial Committee of two members; Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda and Prof. Hussain Ismail was appointed by the National Education Commission to prepare a summarized document on Policy Proposals.
8. 2019.03.27, 2019.04.09, 2019.04.26 : The draft report of the editors was placed before the Standing Committee on Higher Education for approval.
9. 2019.06.10 : The revised draft report incorporating suggestions of the Standing Committee was discussed at a meeting with the participation of UGC Chairman and Members, Vice Chancellors and Deans of Faculties of State Universities and Directors of Post-Graduates Institutes.
10. 2019.07.01 : The revised draft report was discussed at a Workshop with the Heads of Private Higher Education Institutions and Committee

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Members of Federation of University Teachers, representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education and Private Companies.

11. 2019.07.29 : A meeting with the Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education and other officers was held and their views were obtained. Later, the Secretary submitted some of the proposals in writing.
12. 2019.08.20 : Edited versions of the Draft report were placed before the Special Meeting of the National Education Commission to obtain views of the Commission Members.
13. 2019.09.12 : The Commission again discussed the draft report and approved the translation of the Policy document into Sinhala and Tamil Languages.

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## Members of Research Teams

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| 1. <b>Dr. T. B. Andarawewa - Team Leader</b><br>Mr. D. Gamini Jayasuriya<br>Mr. S. A. Dharmapriya Senanayaka  | <b>Governance, Finance Resource Management.</b>  |
| 2. <b>Prof. S. Amarasena -Team Leader</b><br>Dr. Himan K. G. Punchihewa<br>Prof. Bilesa Perera  | <b>Access to Higher Education, Student Admissions and Identification of Demand for New Subjects / Disciplines.</b> |
| 3. <b>Prof. J. Uyangoda - Team Leader</b><br>Mr. Mark Schubert<br>Ms. Rebecca Surenthiraraj   | <b>Career Guidance and Counselling.</b>  |
| 4. <b>Prof G.T.F. de Silva - Team Leader</b><br>Prof. Subhangi M. K. Herath<br>Mr. Danasiri Kandaudahewa<br>(Only for a limited period)   | <b>Student Welfare and Discipline.</b>   |
| 5. <b>Prof. H. P. M. Gunasena - Team Leader</b><br>Prof. Sivali Ranawana<br>Mr. A. N. Siriwardana<br>Ms. V. Y. Waisundara   | <b>Post Graduate Education and Research.</b>   |
| 6. <b>Prof. Colin N. Peiris - Team Leader</b> Dr. Jayath Peter Kirthisinghe<br>Prof. Nimal K. Dangalle  | <b>Quality Assurance and Accreditation of State and Non-State Higher Education Institutions.</b>                   |
| 7. <b>Prof. U. K J. Mudalige - Team Leader</b><br>Prof. B. P. Ajith Jayaweera<br>Dr. Chalinda K. Beneragama   | <b>Academic and Non-Academic Staff Development.</b>  |
| 8. <b>Dr. C. Embuldeniya - Team Leader</b> Ms. Sachini Pannilage<br>Ms. R D P D Ranasinghe<br>Ms. Kirishanthi Sivasubramaniam<br>Ms. Amadi Supun Deshani<br>Ms. H.M.G.Y. J. Hennayake | <b>Private Higher Education Institutions and Public-Private Partnership</b>  |

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## Research Evaluation Panel

1. **Dr. Upali M. Sedere**  
Rector, Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy
2. **Dr. H. S. Rambukwella**  
Director, Post-graduate Institute of English
3. **Dr. Harini Amarasuriya**  
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, OUSL
4. **Prof. Narada Warnasuriya,**  
Professor of Medicine - KDU, Former Vice Chancellor- University of Sri Jayawardenepuara, Member : Ceylon Medical Council
5. **Prof. Uma Coomaraswamy**  
Director- Gender Centre: UGC, Former Vice Chancellor, Open University
6. **Prof. J.C.N. Rajendra**  
Professor of Physics and Director, International Relations, OUSL

## Editors :

1. **Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda**  
Emeritus Professor of Political Science, University of Colombo
2. **Prof. Hussain Ismail**  
Former Vice Chancellor South Eastern University, Distinguish Fellow, University of Malaya and University Science Islam Malaysia

## Coordination :

1. **Mr. S A D De Silva**  
Senior Policy Research Officer
2. **Mr. Rasike Karunarathne**  
Policy Research Officer
3. **Ms. Hiranthi Kathriarachchi**  
Management Assistant

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## **Members of the National Education Commission**

1. **Prof. W I Siriweera**, Chairman
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3. **Dr. T A Piyasiri**, Vice Chairman (Planning)
4. **Ven. Dr. Akuratiye Nanda Nayaka Thero**
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9. **Mrs. Nayana Nathawithana**
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11. **Prof. K. Kandasamy**
12. **Dr. Mallika Karunaratne**
13. **Prof. M.A. Nuhman**
14. **Prof. D. A. Tantrigoda**
15. **Mrs. V.B.P.K. Weerasinghe**
16. **Ms. Apasara Caldera**, Secretary of the Commission

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## Members of the Standing Committee on Higher Education

1. Prof. W. I. Siriweera	Chairman, Standing Committee on Higher Education Chairman, National Education Commission
2. Dr. G. B. Gunawardena	Vice Chairman (Policy), National Education Commission
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8. Prof. J. Jayawardene	Emeritus Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology, University of SJP, Director, Post-Graduate Institute of Indigenous Medicine
9. Prof. Sujeewa Amarasena	Vice Chancellor, University of Ruhuna
10. Prof. M. A. Careem	Emeritus Professor of Physics, University of Peradeniya
11. Prof. Marie Perera	Director, National Education Research and Evaluation Center
12. Prof. G. Bandarage	Professor in Chemistry, Open University of Sri Lanka
13. Prof. S. Sandarasegaram	Chairman, National Language Commission
14. Prof. Colin N. Peiris	Director, Academic Development and Quality Assurance, Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology
15. Prof. S. Karunanayaka	Dean, Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka
16. Prof. Kapila Perera	Vice Chancellor, University of Moratuwa
17. Prof. D.A. Tantirigoda	Former Chairman, Arthur C Clark Centre, Moratuwa
18. Prof. S. R. D. Rosa	Prof. in Physics, Dept. of Physics, University of Colombo
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