

Why the Old Model of University Education is Archaic: Challenges to Policy Planners and the University Academia

Janaka Liyanagama¹ Upali Vidanapathirana¹
Harsha Balasuriya¹

In knowledge economies the old model meant for dissemination of received knowledge fails to achieve the twin expectations of the generation of new knowledge and development of knowledge workers. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of pressure internally within universities to maintain the old model without modification. However, the socio-economic and technological imperatives argue for changing the concept, design, development, and the mode of delivery of knowledge for the survival of university education in Sri Lanka. This paper attempts to synthesize seven key reasons why the old model of higher education that is practiced in Sri Lanka is destined to fail in the 21st century. The paper is based on case data, published materials and observations made on how knowledge is customarily developed, packaged and disseminated by the University System in Sri Lanka. For logistical reasons of space this abstract outlines the seven issues the underlying principles. The first issue deals with the inability of the system to manage the increased demand for access for and success in higher education. About 21000 students are accommodated annually by the conventional universities while another 230,000 who sit for the GCE (A/L) remains overlooked. More than 70 percent of the 21000 belong to the streams of liberal arts, commerce and basic sciences and after three to four years studying, the system labels them unemployable. Secondly, in universities students are taught 'yesterday's knowledge' as knowledge upgradation is not encouraged by the authorities. Thirdly, the current role of teachers and students as passive recipients too is redundant in the 21st century. The new role demands a collective enterprise where both parties work as observers, learners, and generators of knowledge for value creation. This would shift the current teacher or institution centeredness towards, student or community centeredness. Fourthly, emphasis of learning changes from its exclusive dependence on physical space to cyber space techniques which, will take over the lecture theater. Fifth the role of the library changes from its current repository status to a 'traffic-cope' to help access electronically available new knowledge. Sixth the current university format of fixed learning for qualification has lost its value. It will be taken over by life-

¹ Office of the Vice Chancellor, The Open University of Sri Lanka, Nawala, Nugegoda
Email: vc@ou.ac.lk

long learning where learners would seek knowledge rather than certificates. Seventh, learning fixed to one institution or country would be outmoded when learners start searching for better quality options and lateral entry.

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