

¹ Passing the Crossroad: An Overview on Issues and Challenges of ² the University Education in Sri Lanka

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⁷ **Abstract**

⁸ In spite of recent developments in the higher education in Sri Lanka, it has undergone a
⁹ tremendous transition that somehow resulted in a crisis. The review of this issue through a
¹⁰ critical narrative analysis shows that some of the issues hidden behind more conspicuous ones
¹¹ like increasing gender-based violence and ragging are more detrimental. The hardening
¹² challenge is that many students in public-funded universities have lost enthusiasm to learn, as
¹³ there is no conducive environment, and further this is crystallized due to lack of quality in
¹⁴ pedagogy, narrow and shortsighted perspectives of the contribution of universities to the
¹⁵ contemporary world. These issues would challenge the existing higher education process in Sri
¹⁶ Lanka, which in turn signals the policymakers including academics to work fast with care and
¹⁷ to search for innovative strategies to tackle with them while minimizing the severe impact of
¹⁸ existing issues on higher education.

¹⁹

²⁰ **Index terms**— emancipatory education, globalization, higher education, issues and crises, quality of
²¹ pedagogy.

²² **1 Introduction**

²³ igher education is one of the pillars in sustainable development, the ultimate goal of modern nation states.
²⁴ It creates new knowledge, challenges existing but non-suitable paradigms, teaches specific skills and promotes
²⁵ core values such as freedom, tolerance, and dignity, which are essential ingredients of a successful and complete
²⁶ life (Iiep, 2017). Enabling graduates to be competent in regional and global social, economic, research and
²⁷ development has been the expectation of higher education for many decades, though that aim has been challenged
²⁸ recently. The higher education is diverse that of other sectors of the education continuum (Astin, 1999; Sagiv,
²⁹ Kali, Tsaushu, & Tal, 2018). In addition to wide-ranging traditional degree and advanced degree programmes,
³⁰ there are some other programmes, which are recently introduced focusing on career, vocational or technical
³¹ needs. In fact, university education has been challenged because the current needs and societal requirements
³² more often focus on higher education catering for vocational purposes (Hippach-Schneider, Schneider, Ménard,
³³ & Tritscher-Archan, 2017). Furthermore, as the globalization prevails many dimensions of higher education can
³⁴ change that will result in several challenges (Giddens, 2003). Economic globalization solely can affect higher
³⁵ education, though cultural globalization too affects higher education, particularly in the south Asian region, as
³⁶ we adopt many policies relevant to higher education from developed or western countries.

³⁷ Globalization has resulted in an increased demand for the internationalization of education (Jibeen & Khan,
³⁸ 2015). In the higher education system, this will encourage internationally recognized universities to establish
³⁹ regional campuses all over the world, though it challenges government funded local universities severely. Moreover,
⁴⁰ internationalization of higher education affects both structural and process dimension of higher education¹, which
⁴¹ sometimes may result in unexpected challenges especially in developing countries like Sri Lanka (Seckinger, 1982).
⁴² On the other hand, developing countries strive to attract international universities to implement regional campuses
⁴³ in their countries.

44 Furthermore, international research collaborations between institutions and scholars, developing curriculum
45 and establishing a memorandum of understanding with universities for different purposes have become top
46 priorities of recent universities, and without having a greater conscious on international collaborations, it has
47 bespoken a stagnant progress of the higher education (Boekholt, Edler, Cunningham, & Flanagan, 2009).

48 Globalization has brought about a tremendous change in the function of higher education, as universities
49 have asked to equip their graduates not just with subject skills and knowledge, but also with capabilities to
50 function effectively in the modern world facing constant chaos. Therefore, university teachers must prepare for
51 the challenges emanating from changes in the education that will influence the students. To become competitive in
52 this new global context, students are required to graduate with a global mindset that would probably be a result
53 of university education supported by good-quality university teachers (Masser & Moffat, 2006; Veniger, 2016).
54 Furthermore, graduates are expected to work in and communicate across different cultures without constricting
55 to so-called their own culture, and with an all-important plethora of twenty-first-century skills (Myles & Cheng,
56 2003). Universities should readjust their structural and process dimensions in line with ever-changing social
57 needs, and universities are expected to take part as key-institutions in the process toward societal progress as
58 they would contribute more effectively and appropriately, but this is more challenging since existential structure
59 might hinder the novel readjustments within universities. This paper, therefore, strives to delineate as to how
60 appropriately a university teacher/academic can prepare to face the recent challenges of higher education that
61 would benefit themselves and the students.

62 2 II.

63 3 Objective and Methods

64 The university education in Sri Lanka undergoes a perilous crisis hardening the advancement of higher education
65 in the country, which in turn affect the quality of graduates who completed their degrees, particularly in public-
66 funded universities. Furthermore, the globalization tremendously impacts on every aspect of Sri Lankan society,
67 so that the higher education too began to restructure, this would perhaps result in unexpected catastrophes within
68 higher education. The catastrophic situation of Sri Lankan higher education has undergone a keen investigation
69 by the government and some other responsible authorities, but the strategies they make are unclear and fragile.
70 Moreover, that emanating crisis has many dimensions, and most of them have been identified and understood,
71 though it seems that the comprehension of that crisis by many stakeholders is not clear and precise. This paper,
72 therefore, will strive to outline the nature of the crisis regarding the apparent crisis in the higher education
73 in Sri Lanka. Moreover, different perspectives of this crisis will also be described in detail. Lastly, some of the
74 possible strategies proposed by highly experienced university professors and pedagogists, to deal with the erupted
75 crisis in the higher education will be presented. The main intention of the article is, therefore, to investigate
76 the prevailing issues conducive to a perilous crisis in the higher education in contemporary Sri Lanka. For
77 that purpose, selected studies are compared and summarized on the basis of author's reflections as a university
78 academic, existing theories and models. The information, thus critically analyzed and reflections were taken to
79 a keen consideration.

80 4 III.

81 5 Analysis a) Paradigm shift in higher education

82 The higher education is substantially different from secondary or primary education, though all of them contribute
83 in diverse ways throughout the lifelong learning process (UIL, 2016). Unlike school education or other formal
84 or informal education systems, higher education is systematized and provides considerable value to individuals,
85 the economies where educated individuals work and live, and society in general (Hill, Hoffman, & Rex, 2005).
86 The higher education is now identified as a way toward economic gains, though at early ages the philosophy
87 behind higher education was dissimilar to modern thoughts (White, 1997). Some viewed "Emancipation" as the
88 expected outcome of higher education (Barnett, 1988), that would liberate the individual from narrow intellectual
89 perspectives about the world they suppose to live, and further their ability to think critically. Individuals'
90 emancipation was perceived as a result of proper knowledge gaining, and hence the main focus of higher education
91 was on knowledge, on the other hand, society did not expect universities to produce job experts as needs of
92 society were quite different that of the modern society. Early universities, therefore, focused more on knowledge
93 transfer, so that students can learn and liberate themselves from narrow views of the world, this, in turn,
94 has resulted in knowledge-based stratification in societies, however (Noltemeyer, Mujic, & McLoughlin, 2012).
95 Through 'emancipation', Barnett (1988) believed that the individual would adapt to the society accordingly, so
96 that the person is not required to have a specific set of skills to go along with contemporary needs of a society,
97 since the person has emancipated, in the sense the individual gained a self-understanding.

98 Once the neo-liberal policies were adopted and prevailed over many countries including some developing
99 countries (Harvey, 2007), the expectations and the objectives of higher education have changed, as universities
100 then viewed as places where employees produce. Then, the globalization affected many aspects of society including
101 the higher education, which is particularly prominent in developing countries since they adopted the policies made
102 in developed countries in the process of their higher education. Some of the subjects perceived as having more

103 economic value were introduced to university systems and researches have extensively been taken place (Olssen
104 & Peters, 2005), this was mainly supported even by industries, as they need researches to further their industrial
105 capacities. This was where humanities and social sciences left their dominance and prominence in the higher
106 education. Today the market focus that creates students as consumers and employees/potential employers, and
107 specifically faculty as service providers have become a global practice (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

108 Although the old paradigm on expected qualities of a graduate remains, the market focus on higher education
109 is given prominence since emancipation is no longer valid if it has no ties with the market economy. The
110 industrialized countries have already prepared necessary policies for producing graduates who are capable enough
111 to perform in that market economy, but surprisingly on toward this goal, the older vision on 'emancipation' has
112 not compromised, though the case is different in the developing world, particularly in South Asia.

113 The higher education in South Asia is at a crossroad where the crisis is apparent. This is because of the
114 mismatch between education policies and economic policies of many countries in South Asia (Tilak, 2015). The
115 economic capacity or the gross domestic production of many countries in South Asia cannot allocate sufficient
116 amount of budget for public funded universities. Moreover, the internal resistance erupt within universities due to
117 multifaceted causes toward innovative rearrangements in the higher education harm the advancement of higher
118 education, which ultimately affect the graduates who complete their degrees in universities with poor academic
119 reputation and qualities (Tilak, 2015). In comparison with other high ranking universities in South Asia, much
120 of the public funded universities in Sri Lanka could preserve their academic qualities, even though some certain
121 calamities are apparent. Since Sri Lanka, a developing nation in South Asia has no choice except adhering to the
122 global economic governance; it strives to go along with international guidance to readjust the university education
123 for coming years of the twentieth century. It, however, faces several different challenges due to changes that take
124 place in the modern day.

125 **6 b) Higher education in Sri Lanka**

126 Sri Lankan university education is at a point in time where a perilous crisis has developed during the past
127 few decades. It is more apparent that the higher education in the country has encountered multifaceted crises
128 that hindered its advancement, taken into keen consideration particularly due to tremendous attention toward
129 knowledge economy that can be integrated with the nations' current development agenda. Moreover, challenges
130 emanating from changes of the higher education influenced by globalization is more common, though the impact
131 on developing countries is perilous that of developed countries. The real challenge, however, lies beneath the most
132 apparent problems such as rising of students violence, decreasing quality of curricular and university academics,
133 and the kind. The crisis that the society is more conscious on relies on mostly apparent challenges such as
134 increasing student violence and decreeing quality of education, as that is more visible to the society even though
135 some of the severe crises are not apparent to the society. This paper hence would delineate some severe issues and
136 challenges, which are unknown to the public, but Sri Lankan universities frequently encounter, which influence
137 the quality of graduates expected to produce.

138 Though the higher education in Sri Lanka has a long history, which is perhaps believed to be started as early
139 as Anuradhapura period 1 (De Silva, 1981), the modern higher education system was introduced by the British
140 administrators (they were pressured to do so by local intellectuals though), and OXBRIDGE 2 model was used as
141 the blueprint for establishing the University of Ceylon, the first government-funded and full-fledged university in
142 Sri Lanka. However, some British government driven university colleges were there even before 1942 at which the
143 University of Ceylon established. Consequently, the higher education system in Sri Lanka has been developed in
144 accordance with the British Higher Education model, though it has changed later. The 'OXBRIDGE' model had
145 several positive aspects such as ensuring the autonomy of university education, minimum political intervention;
146 however, this has changed since education-policies revised after the monumental constitutional change in 1972.

147 The University of Ceylon was considered a high ranked university, as the quality of graduates were ensured
148 which supported by the structural arrangements of the university and proper academic functioning, and especially
149 the students who were selected demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm toward learning which brought up worldly
150 renowned academics. Sri Lankan government, later on, understood the high demand for higher education and
151 established some other universities, but the quality of the graduates expected to produce has declined to a certain
152 extent unexpectedly, due to different reasons of which youth uprising ranked the first. Low level of economic
153 development and unemployment of the country did not absorb newly emerged graduates from rural areas and
154 poor or middle-class families that in turn, resulted in youth uprising. At the inception of higher education
155 institutions in Sri Lanka, there was a foreseen philosophy, but the initial error of that was the unconsciousness
156 about the non-parallel position of prevailing higher education and the economic development.

157 A letter from Prof. Marrs, Head of the University College received by Sir James Peiris, one of the outstanding
158 pioneers of the university project in colonial Sri Lanka, demonstrates the initial enthusiasm to establish a
159 university in Sri Lanka, and it specifies the intention behind founding a university in the country.

160 As Sir James Peiris wished, the purpose of university education is to provide necessary opportunities to the
161 people so that they can inculcate qualities of a universal person having intellectual ability together with morality,
162 for the purpose of individual and social development, to their fullest potential. The expectation, however, was
163 difficult in the sense giving an "He was far from advocating a University as a political weapon. He knew his
164 Cambridge, and the paradox of the inadvertence of its national importance, too well for that. He desired a

165 University for its intellectual and moral fruits, for the development, of all the latent talent in his people, knowing
166 that the rest of his ambition would follow as an inevitable consequence of their proved capacity" (Cooray, 1990).
167 opportunity to be intellectuals was a success, on the contrary the utilization of knowledge and skills acquired
168 in the real world, at least for economic gains were difficult to be achieved as the country's economic growth
169 fallen behind the gradual development of the higher education system. This imbalance, in turn, fired the young
170 generation as the expectation of them could not be achieved. The Ceylon insurrection of 1971 has supported
171 by the JVP (a leftist party in Sri Lanka: Peoples Liberation Front), severely damaged the higher education
172 system in Sri Lanka, as they got the students of universities involved in the revolt (Kearney & Jiggins, 1975). In
173 April 1971 the insurrection erupted producing a convulsion of political violence on a wide scale previously never
174 encountered by the people. As Jiggins et al. ??1975) clearly understood, one of the distinctive features of the
175 revolt was that almost exclusive engagement of young intellectuals of the universities. This has largely changed
176 the landscape of the Sri Lankan higher education system. In addition, the 1989 insurrection further damaged
177 the higher education, not particularly the structure but the philosophy of the higher education too (Venugopal,
178 2011). Many notable academics flee from the country with fear, as many who reluctant to accept the ideology
179 of that Peoples' Liberation Front were murdered brutally (Kearney & Jiggins, 1975). As a result, universities of
180 the country closed down or they did not function for about a decade. The remnants of the severe consequences
181 of those insurrections still have an impact on the higher education; for example, the prevalence of ragging and
182 student unions that control students and sometimes badly harden the university administration.

183 In spite of the vice chancellor's authority on the university administration, mislead political leaders got the
184 students involved in the insurrection, this in turn, severely damaged the autonomy of Sri Lankan universities.
185 Ceylon University Ordinance (1942) granted the autonomy to every university specifying that the responsibility
186 of a university is to ensure universal free higher education for all without any discrimination (Ceylon University
187 Ordinance, 1942). This has redefined in 1971, which abolished the autonomy of universities by asserting
188 the government's authority on higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. Consequently, political influence
189 and intervention came into higher education system too. Moreover, due to youth insurrections and political
190 interventions, the autonomy of Sri Lankan universities had gradually decreased; on the contrary, political
191 authorities gained the control over universities as well as students' university life, which largely affected the
192 expected outcomes of higher education and the process within universities, Sri Lanka. For several decades, the
193 higher education system in the country has functioned facing different crises, but most of them were academic
194 related issues. Once two insurrections erupted, the ideology and the perception regarding the university education
195 have completely changed, for the worst, as the changed ideology by no mean supported its advancement. As
196 many argue, academic freedom alongside university autonomy is seen as an essential value in higher education
197 and has become a focus of attention in the twenty-first-century education (Estermann, Nokkala, & Steinel,
198 2011;Ren & Li, 2013). Students who pursue degrees in universities must have the freedom to learn without fear,
199 as freedom drives them toward appropriate learning. However, the individuals' freedom and university autonomy
200 were seriously damaged and taken control over by completely politicized student unions, that was not taking
201 control over only on university administration, but that by and large hinders those students' right to education
202 by different interventions such as ragging, collecting money unnecessarily, limiting class participation and the
203 kind. Consequently, the public funded universities in Sri Lanka positioned at a place in time where some certain
204 events can be called crises are taking place. Moreover, the after-effects of severe challenges have emerged after
205 two insurrections in Sri Lanka still reverberate, and hence, the outcomes of them are larger than the effects that
206 could have emerged some several decades back.

207 Even though it is difficult to point at one person, group or an organization in regard to the issues erupted in
208 the modern day higher education, despite being identified those issues which contribute to a crisis in the higher
209 education, the case still thrives uninterrupted. So that victims would be the so-called cream of the cream or highly
210 intellectual students in Sri Lanka, particularly those who come from middle or poor classes, or remote areas of
211 the country that of (urban) high-class students 3 . This is a more perilous issue, as again the students from poor
212 or middle-class families would be troubled in the market economy since there will not be a sufficient number of
213 employment opportunities, in spite of having a degree level qualification (Aggestam & Hallberg, 2004;Singam,
214 2017).

215 Furthermore, there are some other multifaceted issues, such as lax recruitment and promotional criterion of
216 academic staff and their lack of commitment to improving quality of university education to meet the demands
217 of the expanding economy (Mendis, 2012). Moreover, orienting university courses to meet the contemporary
218 demands of employers, assessing quality of human resources, focusing on English language and IT competence,
219 changing the philosophy of university education, losing the enthusiasm by students toward education, emerging
220 private education competing with public funded universities are some of the challenges among myriad of other
221 issues which bring about a crisis at state universities in Sri Lanka (Amarasooriya, 2015;Weerasooriya, 2013).
222 However, the real-challenge is hidden, but that severely causes the quality of graduates who complete their
223 degree programmes later on. It always seems that issues and emanating challenges of contemporary higher
224 education directed at the structural dimension of education, which particularly focuses on the out layer of the
225 higher education process. This does not guarantee a good-quality higher education nor go along with the recently
226 introduced sustainable development agenda (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2015).

227 **7 c) Challenges of the higher education: The hidden side**

228 On the one hand, unlike in developed countries, local realities of the higher education in Sri Lanka like developing
229 countries are shaped by integrated world economy, new information and communication technology, the emergence
230 of an international knowledge network, the role of English language, and some of the other forces beyond the
231 control of local academic institutions. On the other hand, some inappropriate practices at the local level too
232 affected the higher education severely. The real-challenge, therefore, does not solely lie on structural issues.
233 The foremost crisis in the university education is that, except for a few cases, many students have lost their
234 enthusiasm and hope for learning. This is particularly seen in the students of social science faculties, in the
235 sense owing to structural and process related issues, the students just strive to graduate but not to acquire an
236 essential set of skills, knowledge, and attitudes that devastates the expected quality of graduates. Since there
237 is no or less enthusiasm, a driving force of education, the students will try to graduate somehow, this may
238 even include completing degrees with minimum requirements, but without having important abilities related to
239 emotional intelligence or even without the knowledge on essentials of the subjects they learn. This has been
240 a consequence of hidden problems regarding structural issues such as lack of infrastructural facilities or human
241 resources, and furthermore, the students even do not have any conscious on 'hope for education' so that public-
242 funded universities in Sri Lanka perhaps would undergo an instability in the years to come. This will again
243 hinder the development of the lower layers of the social hierarchy, as people at the top would find alternatives
244 that of public-funded higher education institutions that they are likely to provide low-quality education in the
245 perception of the general-public (this perception may be varied from one discipline to another, however).

246 The landscape of the higher education has been changing due to mushrooming private educational institutes
247 including branches of foreign universities, one that highly in demand owing to the increasing demand for higher
248 education, especially oriented towards market-oriented subjects that can be marketed in the globalized market
249 economy. On the contrary, this makes a challenge for public-funded universities as they could not orient their
250 education process and structure according to the global needs, quickly due to internal pressure from deep-rooted
251 cultural barriers that include resistance from student unions and even university academics. Privatization or
252 integrating private universities with the public universities has been one of the top priorities of recent policymakers,
253 though several times it failed as politicized civil organizations protested against it.

254 One of the other telling issues is that collapsed interrelationship between the society and the university system.
255 The society more often looks for a contribution by universities, but it seems that the society has lost its hope, as
256 universities in the country are likely to have deviated from the outside society. University academics also stick
257 to teaching and research but the possible contribution to the society is minimal to a greater extent.

258 **8 d) Emanating challenges of the higher education**

259 Recently a sentiment prevails regarding the university education that it is in a state of constant crisis due to
260 different reasons. Many explanations presented in support of this sentiment, in that, graduates particularly
261 in public universities, are considered unemployable (this is more relevant to humanities and social sciences
262 faculties) and of low quality; universities as center-places for student violence and conflicting political ideologies.
263 Furthermore, there is a strong criticism about the pedagogy as the quality of teaching is deplorable with outdated
264 curricular compared to global trends and private sector innovations within the higher education sector. Even
265 quality of researches and academic innovations, public contribution by universities in the country too have been
266 disparaged, this in turn, resulted in deterioration of academic freedom, university autonomy and especially
267 politicization of university administration.

268 Challenges emanate from changes in the higher education is multidimensional and wide variant, so that
269 tackling those issues would not be an easy task. The different challenges pertinent to higher education sector can
270 be classified into four categories. All those challenges somehow hinder the proper functioning of the university
271 education in Sri Lanka.

272 **9 Maintaining and improving education quality, even**

273 in the face of severing financial constraints. Public funded universities are more often depended upon public
274 funds, though they try to find funds from different sources, and hence this leads to constant political interventions.
275 Increasing and better utilizing the financial resources available to higher education would be another challenge.
276 Globally many developing countries allocate a substantial portion of the Gross Domestic Production to the higher
277 education, as they are in a capable state, though this is quite difficult in developing countries so that available
278 financial resources must be managed with conscious comprehension.

279 2. Improving the relevance of curricula and instructions at a time of rapid change in the labor market need
280 can be identified as the main challenge associated with higher education. The need for higher education has been
281 redefined alongside changing contemporary social needs. Although university education is for preparing scholars
282 that they can adjust themselves to the dynamism of society, recently higher education has been expected to
283 contribute tremendously to the market needs, in the sense universities are expected to provide employees, but
284 not just scholars. This ideological change challenges the existing norms of higher education. For profit-oriented
285 higher education institutions, including regional campuses implemented in the peripheral countries by universities
286 in developed countries constantly seek profit increasing, so that traditional ideologies regarding higher education

10 E) APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES TO FACE THE CHALLENGE

287 has been neglected. Private institutions offer courses valued at the market and graduates of those universities
288 are more employable than graduates from public universities. On the other hand, quality of pedagogy including
289 teaching and learning are believed to be higher in private universities except for a few cases, so that academics and
290 students of public universities are in a state of crisis, since the transformed ideology of the whole society demean
291 the value of the contribution of public universities despite their contribution might be essential. 3. Changes in
292 pedagogy have engendered some challenges. The ideological transformation of society that evolves constantly
293 adopting new values and norms always affect the higher education system of a country. As global values prevail,
294 innovative and more effective pedagogies are introduced, and universities are asked to adopt them in their teaching
295 and learning environments. In spite of the positive outcomes of pedagogical changes, this is more challenging
296 to implement particularly in developing countries like Sri Lanka, as the existing structure quite often does not
297 support it. The reluctant mindset to change would be another cause which hinders adopting and implementing
298 effective pedagogies, and this would sometimes be intensified due to incompetence communication and collusion
299 among management personnel, academic staff, and students. Both students and academic staff members shall be
300 ready to go along with contemporary pedagogies (this might include new teaching and learning methods, use of
301 IT, new examinations methods and the kind). However, this would be quite challenging as the nature of different
302 disciplines contrasts each other. For example, institutions (or faculties) teaching and researching science-related
303 areas perhaps more forward welcoming novel pedagogies, while institutes who teaches humanities and social
304 sciences or artsrelated subjects are less likely to go along with transformed and changed pedagogies due to the
305 specificity of their disciplines. While the traditional face to face mode of delivery and exam based assessments
306 were still dominant, there is now an increasing trend toward distance-learning, and blended programmes can be
307 assessed using innovative methods, though it again a challenge to integrate into the existing system. In addition
308 to those challenges, poor motivation concerning academic curiosity and scholarly achievement can be identified
309 as another perilous challenge academics would encounter. 4. Even though this can be considered under the
310 second category above, reinterpreting the relationship between university teachers and students in market terms
311 would be a hidden but more influential problem that challenges the existing role of both students and university
312 teachers. There are situations where university academics have no control so that they are abided by imposed
313 rules and regulations, and hence interventions in addressing challenges would be quite complicated.

314 Recently several issues regarding students' mindset and learning have been bespoken, though academic staff's
315 intervention to them was not sufficient. Gender-related issues, psychological turbulences due to many different
316 causes must be addressed within the university system since students are residentially engaged in academic
317 activities, and lecturers are expected to attend to those matters, but the challenge is the extent to which those
318 academic staff members shall intervene is not clear and might reinterpret more subjectively.

319 In spite of having a code of conduct, there seemed to have some inappropriate cases between and among
320 students and lectures in regard to balancing their both private and professional life. If this is not taken into keen
321 consideration, the expected outcome of the higher education will be seriously affected. Challenges regarding the
322 subjective life of both academic staff members and students, therefore, shall be scrutinized in the achievement
323 of a better outcome of the university life. Academics of universities, therefore, meet those challenges, though
324 the preventative mechanisms that they would carry out might be obscure to a greater extent. Moreover, both
325 identification of those challenges and preventative mechanisms have been identified as ideologically neutral options
326 for a long time, though on close examination, it is clearer that the identification of those challenges and how
327 academics would prepare to encounter them emerges from a specific view of society and of education. Overall,
328 the challenges emanating from recent changes in the higher education are often

329 10 e) Approaches and Strategies to face the challenge

330 A university teacher's role does not constrict into to teaching, but alongside it involves generating knowledge,
331 identifying possibilities of society toward opulence, innovations, and hence it comprises multiple roles; society too
332 expects university teachers to be more dynamic in the sense they are expected to contribute to the greater success
333 of a society. As Sampson (2007) clearly understood "universities are anchor institutions for innovation, economic
334 competitiveness and property of a region". In spite of having emanating challenges every time, even in different
335 faces, universities must be continued to function since the sustainability of society substantially depended upon
336 them as the readiness and the agility of a society make a reality by competent people having an adequate and
337 relevant knowledge and a skill set, probably that has been given by universities. University teachers, therefore,
338 must prepare adequately to face the challenges of changes in the contemporary higher education locally and
339 globally.

340 The changing educational landscape in the global and local contexts have placed unprecedented attention
341 on teachers' preparedness to education for Twenty-first century global needs. As described earlier, producing
342 a competent and a holistic graduate who can confront global problems in the 21st century has even been
343 widely prospected by higher education institutions, though this would be more challenging, and university
344 teachers are considered to be responsible more on this matter. University teachers' world vision or how they
345 comprehend their disposition in relation to other stakeholders within the higher education process, therefore,
346 shall be changed accordingly. Mindset must be rearranged in line with changing global norms, though it might
347 require a considerable phase of time. The challenges emanating from both structural and process dimensions of

348 higher education can best be confronted if university teachers are ready to comprehend their exact disposition
349 at the academia.

350 Students are graduating today into a world that is interconnected as never before, and all the global level
351 challenges that somehow impact on local levels, whether in health, environment, poverty, or peace and security
352 require cooperation across different cultures and regions. University teachers are, therefore, required tremendously
353 attend to those needs, this, in turn, might look for competent and timely adjusted mindset of university teachers,
354 and hence they must learn to respect the holistic nature of the world in the sense respect for fellow humans,
355 regardless of different stratification factors like caste, race, gender, religion or even political ideologies. University
356 teachers should be responsible for solving pressing global challenges in whichever they can, as they are believed
357 to be more competent in understanding the dynamics of the modern world than of other professionals. As global
358 forces always influence local realities, academics should be conscious of about challenges might cause and shall show
359 the correct path that the society would go on.

360 Though there are several counter-arguments, globally accepted norms concerning higher education are
361 considered universal, so that those global paradigms might realize in local levels in the achievement of local
362 expectations that might ultimately contribute to the realization of global expectations. Since this is a task that
363 requires a systematic and more conscious intervention, university teachers must take the lead as they have a
364 necessary and relevant knowledge. This makes it clearer that an approach to teaching and learning that provides
365 students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential to understand how the world around them works and
366 prepares them to participate in an interconnected society is highly important. Therefore, university teachers may
367 work first on developing and improving their competence concordance with the global expectations. Some of the
368 endeavors toward that end might include, 1. Understanding the direction and where the world drives, and the
369 place of our country in relation to it. 2. Learning about other regions, cultures that can have tremendous impacts
370 on local level initiatives. 3. Reflect own disposition within the wide terrain of global education. 4. Applying
371 learned theories to achieve sustainable development.

372 As recent researches pointed out, a globally competent teacher should have the following characteristics.
373 Knowledge of the interdependency of world events and issues is one of the major competencies that a university
374 teacher should possess, as several telling issues of the country are somewhat related to global events, and more
375 often the global forces might reshape the face of local events thereby it would reconfigure the existing expectations
376 of the country. The modern higher education is, moreover, expected to prepare proper and more-timely learning
377 experiences for students that clearly distinguished from the traditional student-centered learning, and this requires
378 competent teachers who would be able to understand the existing situation of the country in relation to what
379 the world is thinking on today. Secondly, in order to transfer the knowledge university teachers are required to
380 have necessary pedagogical skills, this would further help students to analyze their true place in the society and
381 comprehend their contribution to the society. Though different governmental regulations can be implemented, the
382 university teachers in the twenty-first century are believed to be a person having a high morality in the academic
383 field, in the sense they must adhere to the good practices in the academia, that would soften the learning and
384 teaching endeavor in higher education institutions. The commitment to assist students would be a result of it.

385 One of the main problems in the modern higher education process is to prepare students who are more
386 qualified in the job market. Earlier, the philosophy behind the university education was to transfer content
387 knowledge to students, and to debate existing knowledge, in the sense they dealt with epistemology, but did
388 not focus on preparing students to work with the market-oriented society, sometimes it was because of the
389 earlier societal expectations were not oriented toward a capitalist market economy. Quite contrarily, the modern
390 society is directed at a capitalist market economy and that is believed to be a place where people can enjoy
391 their lives ultimately stepping on selfactualization. The higher education has also been gradually changing its
392 structure and process adapting into the modern society, though some certain different arguments too prevailed.
393 However, the modern society expects higher education institutions to contribute to the advancement of society
394 so that university teachers must take the responsibility. This is particularly a challenging task in faculties like
395 humanities and social sciences because there is a vast mystic that the subjects taught are not suitable or relevant
396 to the capitalist economy. On the other hand, though university teachers those who teach in those faculties
397 are conscious of this matter largely, the actions taken have not been quite effective. Therefore, making learning
398 experiences for students, which can be utilized in their upcoming life events, is a greater responsibility of those
399 academic members, and they should strive to find out how to link students with the job world. For example,
400 ethics and philosophy, a core philosophic humanity can best be taught to students, if the principles and learned
401 experiences of that course can link with analyzing the contemporary social situations.

402 An impressive and most relevant strategy in order to prepare for the global and local level challenges would be
403 identifying different aspects of knowledge and acquiring it. As pedagogic experts suggest, there are five domains
404 of knowledge one must acquire (Goodwin, 2010). The personal knowledge is the knowledge of the teacher
405 him/herself, which is related to the philosophy of teaching, the way in which conceptualize teacher's active
406 engagement in the learning process. The university teacher should have a well planned and proper provident
407 philosophy, is the one that guides the person to what direction s/he must go on, otherwise, s/he cannot face the
408 emanating challenges in higher education institutions as there is no proper vision and proper path. The contextual
409 knowledge is, on the contrary, explains the ability to understand the place or the context where teaching and
410 learning take place. Understanding different types of learners is one of the main features here. The pedagogical

12 CONCLUSION

411 knowledge includes content knowledge, methods of teaching, which is by no means can be compromised. The
412 sociological knowledge is the other domain that is also essential as it includes knowledge of living cultures, how
413 learners and other stakeholders work in a society and the kind. This is more important, as without having a
414 proper understanding of the society, university academics cannot make effective decisions and proper learning
415 experiences for students. The last, social knowledge implies the emotional intelligence that an academic must
416 acquire, which is inviolable as that is a governing aspect of learning and teaching process within higher education
417 institutions. The public-funded higher education institutions in Sri Lanka, most of the time fail due to lack of
418 human resources with emotional intelligence that is the one, which facilitates every aspect of knowledge to fit
419 better in the society with many different people.

420 Go along with recent trends while preserving effective local realities has been one of the challenges academics
421 face, this signals that effective measures are indeed required. The world runs very fast with the contribution of
422 modern science, and even social scientists too contributed it tremendously (Cernea, 1994). The world, therefore,
423 multidisciplinary nature has been always appreciated, as the expected results would be more sustainable. Trends
424 in the higher education are multidimensional, in the sense, there are areas where university lecturers can intervene,
425 while some of them cannot be addressed as they are out of their gaze. Students are, now more likely to shift for job
426 oriented subjects, if they have the choice to do so, while some of the students were forced to do non-job oriented
427 subjects, is one of the trends. Therefore, some of the trivial problems have been emerged due to maladjustment
428 of the structure in higher education, particularly in developing countries. University lecturers, therefore, should
429 prepare themselves more to deal with the agile nature of this society, and this could be furthered if their researches
430 are more focused on the society they work. Especially, they should more aware of the local realities like how
431 students behave within universities and adopt globally developed strategies to deal with students at the local
432 level very carefully.

433 The biggest challenge in the past recent decades of university education in Sri Lanka that universities were taken
434 as hosts for political endeavors. Students though engaged in student-politics, ultimately they are related to party
435 politics, which is most of the time hardening the internal learning and teaching process, as student-community
436 organizing do not quite supportive for formal education system, and might collide with the administration, so
437 that ultimately the education of the majority of students will be disturbed, for the sake of tiny but severe issues
438 that they make. Student counselors, which is a major role of every academic member, therefore, sometimes might
439 face difficult problems in dealing with students. Dealing with students in the modern day must be more humane
440 and strategic.

441 Issues regarding the relationship between students and lecturers must be carefully attended, in front of the
442 face of globalization (Altbach, 2011). Students are no longer considered to be listeners or passive learners but
443 are considered more active and having different capabilities, so that university teachers should first understand
444 different abilities of them and should prepare lecture series and other pedagogies which are more suitable to those
445 students, that then everyone can go on with their own phase toward their expected goals (Felder & Brent, 2005).

446 11 IV.

447 Notes Referred in the Text 1. The era from 377 BC to 1017 AD of Sri Lanka is known as Anuradhapura period, as
448 the capital of the country located in Anuradhapura. Several Buddhist monasteries administered higher education
449 institutions, and they conducted internationally accepted curricular to those who registered in their institutions
450 (De Silva, 1981). Historical evidence proves that some international scholars too came here to master several
451 subject areas as many subjects expire were there at that time. "Mahavihara", "Abhayagiriya", "Jethwanaya"
452 were three main higher education institutions, were more famous internationally for comparative Buddhist studies
453 and Theravada Buddhist studies.

454 2. OXBRIDGE Model: This is a way of constructing universities, which comprises methods Oxford and
455 Cambridge universities used ??Tapper & Palfreyman, 2002). Policies, regulations, management regarding
456 university system in Ceylon were based on the procedures similar to Oxford and Cambridge. This particularly
457 because of, pioneers including Sir Ivor Jennings were remarkably influenced by the British higher education, and
458 they were strived to adopt those models to establish a university in Sri Lanka.

459 V.

460 12 Conclusion

461 Higher education is one of the essential ways toward sustainable development, as it makes the knowledge economy
462 a reality. However, recently there seems to have emerged several issues within the higher education sector
463 in terms of process dimension and structural dimension, both of them hinder the advancement of the higher
464 education. Particularly, Sri Lanka like developing countries face severe problems regarding the development of
465 higher education, or to be more precise, to go along with contemporary world needs would be more challenging.
466 The paper has discussed some of the issues prevailed in the higher education sector while giving some of the
467 possible strategies to deal with them. University academic members as the driving force of higher education in
468 the country should prepare to face those challenges ahead. Higher education and class status are closely related
469 in Sri Lanka, as many students got a secondary level education through government-funded schools, they would
470 largely be able to get the entrants to universities. On the other hand, due to the quota system, that restricts

471 the university entrants by the dedicated number of students per district will encourage more students from rural
472 areas to get the placement in a particular university. There is a limited number of seats in the government-funded
473 universities in the country so that those who ranked at the top would secure the placement. This further classified
474 by the district levels. Consequently, many students from rural areas would enter universities.

475 The higher education in Sri Lanka has undergone a considerable transition during the past few decades,
476 particularly in its philosophy in which ways and expected results were included. The higher education, hence no
477 longer considered to be a process of liberating people which ensures that the people are set aside from narrow
478 views of the world, though the quality of expected graduates in the modern day is still depended upon the
479 'emancipation perspective' to a greater extent. However, a graduate with qualities useful in the market economy
480 is more appreciated, today. With this transition, as the traditional view of universities changes, some unexpected
481 challenges might emerge, and the existing crises are likely to increase in the years to come. Some of the structural
482 and process-related issues in the higher education in Sri Lanka have been critically reviewed, in that decreasing
483 students' enthusiasm to learn would be a serious issue that gives rise to several other challenges. In addition,
484 increasing harmful student politics, ragging, and gender-based violence, decreasing the quality of education are
485 some certain issues that conducive to a fragile environment within public-funded higher education institutions in
486 Sri

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488 Lanka. Moreover, a telling challenge of contemporary higher education is to strengthen the relationship between
489 universities and the public, private and civil sectors of the society. Though it was identified as a potential toward
490 a better higher education, searching for appropriate strategies is challenging, as many times universities of the
491 country are reluctant to or have no conscious on strengthening the bond among themselves and with the society.
492 All those problems would challenge the existing higher education process in Sri Lanka that in turn, signals the
493 policymakers including academics to work more quickly and to search for innovative strategies to tackle with
494 while minimizing the severe impact of the existing issues on higher education. The ripple effects of that impact
495 would otherwise remain for several years to come. ¹

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