

Innovation and Good Practices of Management Studies in Open Distance Learning in Sri Lanka

Sivalogathan, V¹ and Nalin Abeysekara²

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of Management Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka
Nalawa, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

²Senior Lecturer, Department of Management Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka
Nalawa, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Abstract:

Universities need to have new strategies be considered as core competency in Education sector. In the face of enormous socio-economic and demographic challenges, Sri Lankan Universities require a more advanced educational performance, providing a better contribution to innovation, competitiveness and economic growth. Universities are currently facing an increasing demand for management graduates, especially in the Open Distance Learning in Sri Lanka. To be ready for the next decade these universities must search to create added value and innovate their institutional models accordingly.

In this paper, the open and distance learning providing universities are assessed on their potential to innovate beyond flexible education towards generating new ways of academic and commercial entrepreneurship, including networked initiatives of educational and enterprise incubation. It is evident that universities cannot do without creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship: this is the engine of prosperity not only for universities, but for enterprises, economy and society as a whole.

Keywords: educational innovation, institutional scenarios, academic entrepreneurship.

1. Introduction

New innovations in distance and open learning are ever taking place. However, the pace has intensified in this direction as a result of the advances in information and communication technology. The innovators and early adopters in all the ages have these innovations take place and new ideas flourish. Distance Education and Open Learning associated with related ideas to the related attributes of Flexible and Multimedia Learning have developed by leaps and bounds over the last three decades. The Open University model of the leading open universities in the world with several modifications to suit local cultural, social & economic needs have been adopted in a number of countries. The age old concept of the grant of degrees in universities has been extended to the award of Diplomas & Certificates at lower levels in both conventional and non conventional universities; this has been largely due to the momentum generated by Distance and Open Learning directed towards further and continuing education of adults and the employed. Concurrently the concept of giving mature students a

second chance or even a delayed chance through Distance and Open Learning has continuously progressed. The establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning with its headquarters in Vancouver, Canada, has over the past 30 years presented a much welcome catalytic effect for speedier developments in the enhancement of tertiary and higher education through Distance Education and Open Learning. (Olabisi, K. et.al, 2006).

Open and Distance Learning in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's burst into Open and Distance Learning commenced more than 40 years ago with the establishment of the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education in the late seventies for the grant of diplomas. However, the establishment of the Open University of Sri Lanka was initiated in 1980 with the absorption of the Sri Lanka Institute of Distance Education. Sri Lanka was also the first country in the South Asian Region and seventh in the world to establish an Open University. 'University All', the Open University provides a ladder of opportunity to

40000 students representing varied social classes, age groups, ethnic groups, religions and languages.

The vision of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is "To be the premier Open and Distance Learning institution in Asia through excellence, efficiency and equity in lifelong learning." OUSL enables students to enroll at Foundation Level and then obtain higher credentials even up to the PhD level.

University education become more & more severely competitive and the government resorted to standardization mechanisms in an attempt to facilitate the admission of students from rural and underprivileged areas. Nevertheless, the number of students admitted to conventional university free education was less than 6% of the relevant student cohort. However, the important difference between theory and practice as far as the concept of Distance Education and Open Learning was concerned in Sri Lanka was the fact that Sri Lanka had a huge number of school leavers who had not had the practical opportunity to read for a Sri Lankan University Degree in any field, even if they had the money, unless they went abroad. The demand for higher education provision continues to grow annually and supply cannot meet demand. In 2015 only 17.14 percent out of the 60.46 percent students satisfying minimum entry were selected for university in Sri Lanka.

There are approximately more than 10,000 Sri Lankans going abroad on annual basis. Demand for international education and qualifications continue to grow. An increasing number of foreign and private institutions see Sri Lanka as a significant market, as they seek to diversify. They are also establishing more courses run jointly with Sri Lankan institutions in-country, and / or promoting distance or open learning methods.

There is also demand for postgraduate studies in the research fields. Graduate output from Sri Lankan universities for the year 2005 were 12,545 (first degree) and 4,589 (postgraduate) and these were increased for the year 2015 as 29,545 first degree and 7,513 postgraduate. Out of these, a considerable percentage of graduates preferring research programmes have also increased in the fields of management studies and ICT. In addition, some of other Universities have introduced new undergraduate courses in online system. However, there are no postgraduate courses in these fields and, as a result there is further demand for research

programmes abroad. MBAs have become very popular with professionals, but they generally demand for distance learning / affiliated courses, due to the high cost and employed people.

Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka

The degree programme in Management Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka received thousands of applicants, a considerable number of whom were raw school leavers and young students, many of whom were employed, mature adults. While an admission test had to be held for Management in view of the gross inability of the available human resources to accommodate more than about 1500 students annually, all the applicants for Management Studies were admitted disregarding severe constraints coupled with the need for conduct of Day schools. Sri Lanka also had the added difficulty that self-studies in Sri Lankan schools had a severe setback since the abolition of any type of distance education in the early seventies.

Bachelor of Management Studies Honours (BMS (Hons)) Degree programme in four years in fact took 5 to 6 years to finish the programme, even through with a depleted number students. Instructional day schools, home assignments and periodic assessments tests took pride of place as teaching tools from the inception of the programme. These measures, together with the inevitable need for eligibility through the attainment of a minimum mark for continuous assessment have been successful motivating mechanisms for students.

The BMS degree programme has, on the other hand, catered largely to more experienced and adult learners on account of the very restrictive and competitive admission test that enables only less than 30% who apply to be admitted into the programme. Apart from this degree programmes which commenced at the inception of the Open University of Sri Lanka other degree programmes in certificate and master level have been also offered to students over the years with considerable success. The Distance Education Mechanism and the Open Learning Philosophy have been very effectively adopted in all these programmes, enabling large numbers of Sri Lankan students, both adults and School Leavers, to pursue degree programmes in an effective and successful manner through the Open University of Sri Lanka.

The successful competition of the BMS and DIM

and CEMBA/CEMPA, MBA in HRM, ESBM programme at the Open University of Sri Lanka and its continuance over two decades producing over 3500 graduates educated through a very much more welcome and motivated mechanism of distance education has indeed been a success story in the Open University of Sri Lanka. Not only adults, the matured and the employed, which are the conventional targets group for non-conventional distance education, but also a large number of school leavers, who would otherwise never have been enabled to obtain a recognized and acceptable university education, were able to reap the benefits of post-secondary education through the Open University of Sri Lanka.

Therefore, the Open University of Sri Lanka, through the mechanism of Distance Education and the concept of open Learning, has become the only effective path available for an average Sri Lankan to pursue a recognized university degree at a moderate cost. It is indeed so gratifying and satisfying to observe the large number of persons employed at middle level making use of the opportunity provided by the Open University of Sri Lanka to obtain a University Degree and better their prospects and enhance their career re-development.

2. Literature Review

Innovation and Quality ODL

Higher education, including open & distance learning, is an instrument of transformation. This transformation cannot come about without high quality of the system and what the system offers. It is difficult to define quality. In the distance learning system, quality is best defined as fitness for purpose in combination with exceptional high standards, perfection and consistency, value for money, and transformation capabilities. Quality assurance must cover areas such as curriculum design, content and delivery organization; teaching, learning and assessment.

Sri Lanka has always been quality conscious about education from times immemorial. Sri Lankan peers have laid great emphasis on quality education, and evolved systems and concerns for ensuring quality. In recent times, several national level efforts have been made to ensure quality. It is well recognized that higher education, including open and distance learning, is an instrument of social and economic transformation. The education without quality is no education at all. Gandhe, S.K. (2009)

There are two aspects of quality in the educational context: quality of the system as a whole and quality of what the system offers to the students or the learners. In relation to conventional education quality covers various components of face-to-face teaching such as infrastructure and basic amenities, social & geographical environment, professional competence of the teaching, administrative and finance staff, appropriateness and relevance of the curriculum, teaching-learning materials, teaching and learning processes, community support to the institution, performance evaluation of the teachers, students and the system as a whole.

A special feature of ODL is the application of well-trying principles of division of labour and specialization operating more systematically and self-consciously than in the conventional system. The five areas of quality concerns need to be vigorously applied to the following elements of ODL to ensure that no element lacks the expected degree of quality: Curriculum design, content and organization; Teaching, learning and assessment; Student progression and assessment; Student support and guidance. Kihwelo P.F (n.d).

Today, technology is a significant driver behind change, and sometimes plays an important role in innovations in educational design and delivery. There are immense possibilities for greater and wider-spread change with the use of present-day technological advancements, as well as with the implementation of innovative educational programs. The challenge is to ensure that innovation plays a constructive role in improving educational opportunities for billions of people who remain under-served in a rapidly developing world.

Technologies that are now available in most Commonwealth countries increase the potential to support learners and educators, and can help remove the barriers of time and distance. New information and communications technologies (ICTs) do not replace all previous ones, nor do they replace the need for good educational design and delivery. However, appropriate technologies can provide additional possibilities for learner support, interactivity, and access to education. (Olabisi, K. 2006)

With the emergence of smart phones, eBook readers, 'Podcasts' and 'Vodcasts,' Internet and low-cost computers, as well as solar electricity, cell phone access, and other technologies, comes the opportunity to provide education to assist

individuals and communities. Technology and other innovations enable educational design and delivery to be adapted to the needs and environment of students enrolled in Open and Distance learning (ODL) and traditional educational programs. Thus, technology can also help programs shift to a 'learner-centered' approach to education.

Providing education in new and unconventional ways is only one of a number of solutions, but it is through innovation that we can meet the challenges of improved efficiencies, lower costs, increasing accessibility, and greater success in achieving development goals through education. Since its inception as an instructional paradigm, distance learning has been characterized by creativity on the part of the educators and administrators who strive to provide rigorous programs of study for students at a distance. These educators have also provided creative learning experiences characterized by access, choice, flexibility, and mobility options for the students they serve. However, education, and especially distance education finds itself in a dynamic state, fueled by information and communication technology innovations that emerge on a regular basis. The context of innovation in a field such as distance learning requires that its practitioners continually examine their practices with a view to improvement or even transformation.

The trends, innovations, and challenges of the current instructional technology context may provide the stimulus for a renaissance in practice for distance educators, and may begin to provide us with a Distance Learning model that draws upon the power of social networking applications to bring communities of learners together in new, positive, and cost-effective ways. Anderson (2005) has noted that social software tools can alter the workload of instructors by substituting costly student-instructor interactions with student-student and student-content interactions in ways that are both academically rigorous and cost-effective when scaled beyond small groups of students. However, as the process of innovation proceeds, distance educators are advised to monitor the social fabric of the web, the blogs and wikis, and the formal and informal networks of researchers and practitioners that contribute thought leadership and critique to the trends and innovations that have the creative power to alter and improve the practice of distance learning.

Conceptualization of ODL Innovation Practices

Entrepreneurship and Employability: Dependent Variable

Bosma et al. (2009) identify agricultural, manufacturing and innovation driven economies. In agricultural or factor driven economies the notion of entrepreneurship is one of necessity: it is exercised to generate and maintain an individual income, herewith avoiding the risk of unemployment. In manufacturing economies or efficiency driven economies the notion of entrepreneurship is one of opportunity: it is exercised by the recognition of a good opportunity, which implies more income and a way of obtaining more independence. In service economies or innovation driven economies, the notion of entrepreneurship is one of possibility. Although modern societies are in need of innovation to sustain their economy, the individual and financial necessity of actually becoming entrepreneurial seems diminished: a relative decrease of entrepreneurial activity is observed for economies progressing from agricultural and manufacturing towards innovation driven economies (Bosma et al., 2009). Throughout the economic systems general school-level education and training is noted to increase with economic development; however post-school quality of entrepreneurship education and training is seen as inadequate in almost all innovation driven countries. The innovation driven economy strongly depends on entrepreneurs (Drucker, 2001). Entrepreneurship is one of the important drivers of economic growth, productivity, innovation and employment: with new firms entering the market and old ones disappearing, it allows for both growth and economic restructuring.

In Sri Lanka, concerning future labour market imbalances and expected shortages in skills and competences. Globalisation, greying populations, urbanisation and the evolution of social structures, together with the growing importance of information and communication technologies, biotechnologies, nanotechnologies and green technologies, have accelerated the pace of change in the labour market and associated requirements for skills and competences (EC, 2009). Although nobody is able to precisely predict what the future holds, it becomes more apparent that Europe is bequeathing us with an ageing, decreasing and more inflexible workforce which strongly requires anticipatory measures, therefore, the nature of work is changing. Labour markets and the skills people need are evolving ever

faster and future jobs are likely to require higher levels of education and a different mix of skills, competences and qualifications (EC, 2009).

Indeed society paces onwards and requires more and more complex skills; workers accordingly should be able to participate in lifelong learning and be able to adapt to a variety of new tasks over their working lives. Next to domain-specific knowledge and expertise, workers increasingly require the acquisition of transversal skills and competences such as analytical skills, self-management and entrepreneurial skills, which are transversal and transferable in the event of reconversion after restructuring and displacement. Preventive measures must be taken and upgrading of the lower skilled must be taken up as a priority to maximise employment and self-employment opportunities. Public authorities, education and training providers, students, social partners, as well as regional and local actors must join hands in contributing to the design of more efficient education and training policies.

Employability can be defined as the empowerment of students to seize opportunities on the labour market to gain and maintain employment and move around on the labour market (BBS, 2009). Employability depends on much more than explicit knowledge, but has a lot to do with personal skills and sociability, or the so called general and/or transferable skills, part of it including tacit knowledge. In frame of the innovation economy, organisations tend to look much further than just a successful degree when recruiting, they seek students with flexibility that are able to adapt to manifold situations. In order to improve chances on the labour market, the skills base of students must be extended. When considering the improvement of subject specific and personal skills in relation to the three cycles of Bachelor, Master and Doctorate, the dialogue and involvement of employers should be promoted, in order to effectively devise and innovate curricula. However, caution must be exercised with the adaptation of curricula to prevent universities from becoming proprietary knowledge providers to firms and/or or taking on the role of existing professional training centres.

Educated, employable or entrepreneurial: it is not a matter of choice. The innovation driven economy requires students to (i) generate, judge and validate knowledge, (ii) satisfy the need of human capital on the labour market, and (iii) push value creation by

new endeavours and/or ventures. The European Reference Framework for key competencies in a knowledge-based society (EC, 2004), was keen on identifying entrepreneurship as a key competence to be implemented for all students as part of a multifunctional package of knowledge, skills and attitudes that all individuals need as a foundation for lifelong learning. We must indeed strongly promote that students are equipped with the ability to induce change brought about by own discovery or invention, or by adapting to discoveries or inventions brought about by external drivers.

University Strategies and Institutional Profiling: Independent Variables

In as far as universities of the past have operated with none or semi-permeable borders to societal stakeholders, those that wish to grant themselves a respectable position in the educational landscape of the post-2010 decade, or even want to become recognisable landmarks, can no longer afford passivity. Universities must be inventive when it comes to satisfying labour market demands and the needs of the innovation driven economy. To adapt to a world altered by technology, changing demographics and globalization, in which the higher- education landscape includes new providers and new paradigms, innovation and flexibility from institutions are needed (U.S. DOE, 2006). In this context, the possibilities of Inclusion and Social Mobility, Continuous and Professional, and Education Innovation and ODL Delivery with new media and social networking technologies will bring high yields to the employability and entrepreneurial.

Inclusion and Social Mobility:

The higher education is associated with the various potential 'public good' functions. Herein, higher education aims to provide for more equitable access in terms of costs, entry qualifications and flexible learning opportunities. Education can enact a strategy of more inclusion (CEPS, 2009; Go8, 2009). An inclusive higher education strategy enables disadvantaged groups to enhance their educational attainment throughout first and second cycle study programmes, and improve their social and professional mobility. The aim is to fully take part in and benefit from a successful economy and obtain a set of competences which act as foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning.

Continuous and Professional Education:

The higher education connects with the labour market by delivering students with the so required high level skills and competences, while simultaneously driving the dialogue on curriculum development with external stakeholders (Mincer, 1962). This scenario connects higher education with continuous education and training requirements and employability prospects. Depending on the lifelong learning mission of the university under discussion, the organisation provides for continuing education and professional training and/or develops joint programmes in collaboration with dedicated professional education and training institutions.

Innovation and ODL Delivery:

The higher education connects with entrepreneurship and innovation by delivering students that are not only educated in subject matter but also have essential skills and competences to adopt or drive successful developments. Such universities excel in programmes aimed at the coaching of innovation and feed the lessons which they have learned back into the curriculum (WEF, 2009). Simultaneously, opportunities for new economic activity and entrepreneurship provide new research domains and teaching horizons. However, any decisions by universities on one of these three scenarios should be balanced with the current possibilities, and the level of transparency, of the university’s financial system.

Institutional Support: Moderate Variable

Multilingual Open Educational Resources (OER) for Independent Learning is a new generation of OER with a strong focus on development and delivery of quality-assured materials for off-campus target groups. Furthermore, open technologies to make learning and higher education more accessible (Boticario et al., 2006). To serve the call for employability skills and competences, along with the increasingly individualized needs of the 21st century, Open and Distance Learning Universities (ODLUs) experiment with radically new and flexible placement practices (van Dorp, 2008).

The networked business incubator is a key social platform for entrepreneurship aimed to support flexible modality entrepreneurship. It is an ‘open’ virtual platform, a social and technological infrastructure which delivers professional entrepreneurship services and takes full advantage of Web technologies. It caters for relational symbiosis

and scale advantages by providing virtual office space to tenants, communication facilities, collaborative support tools, virtual business and financial coaching support, IT infrastructure and web development services, access to e-content, access to incubator tenants, access to external stakeholders, and other types of social and entrepreneurial support, Bøllingtoft and Ulhøi (2005).

Universities in Sri Lanka, both conventional universities and ODLUs, tap from a mix of different public and private financial sources, which is reflected in the different institutional profiles, their missions, strategies and business models. One of the main challenges of today’s universities is managing an increasingly diversified portfolio of activities with increasingly limited access to state funded financial resources. Most universities increasingly rely on external project and programme funding schemes. Many university costing systems, however, do not account for the full costs made in these activities, and accordingly do not provide for a sound basis to decide on long term financial sustainability of these activities (Geuna, 2001). Only universities that will be able to identify their costs ‘in full’ will be able to determine whether they can operate on a financially sustainable basis and prove what is needed on a reliable and verifiable basis.

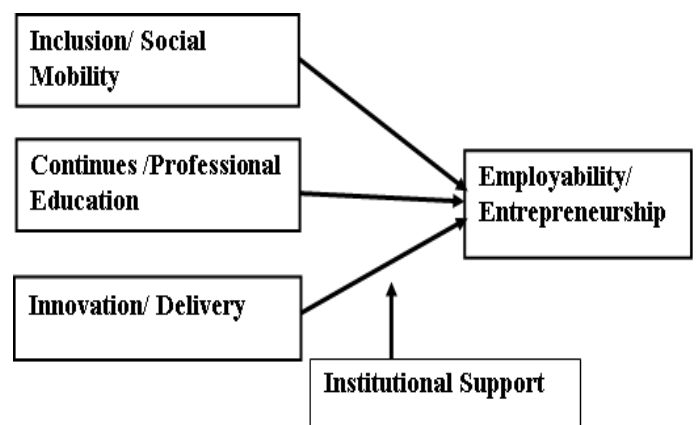


Figure 1: Conceptualization Model for ODL Innovation Practices

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative method has been used with interviews with students. As Kvale (1996: 174) suggests an interview is “a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee” with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the ‘described phenomena. The purpose

of the research interview is to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters (eg factors that influence their attendance at the dentist). Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative methods, such as questionnaires (Silverman, 2000). According to Oakley (1998) a qualitative interview is a type of framework in which the practices and standards are not only recorded, but also achieved, challenged and as refined. And also secondary sources such as annual reports and other newspaper articles etc. have been used as supporting evidences of the study.

In this paper, the open and distance learning providing universities are assessed on their potential to innovate beyond flexible education towards generating new ways of academic and commercial entrepreneurship, including networked initiatives of educational and enterprise incubation. It is evident that universities cannot do without creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship: this is the engine of prosperity not only for universities, but for enterprises, economy and society as a whole. Cornelis, A. and Alfonso, H. (2010). At present, few of the conventional universities are offering their Distance Educational Programs and external courses (in Management) in Sri Lanka other than Open University of Sri Lanka. Nevertheless, there is a need for further research to be conducted to assess the success of above with proper investigation.

4. Finding Best Practices

“The lectures and assignments were complimenting my day-to-day activities. Hence not feeling any stress during the course. Said Management graduate. Also the guest lecturers from other industries and sharing their experiences were true strength for the course. Also other extracurricular activities and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project undertaken by the group were taught us to build human relations which is vital in management programmes. CEMBA program of OUSL is scheduled in such a way not to improve the knowledge, but to develop the skills and develop human relations between different professional groups”

As stated by one of pass out student Dr Sridharan Sathasivam (Currently Director, Healthcare Quality & Safety, and Ministry of Health) CEMBA program has helped him solve management problems with

different perspectives; hence he's not feeling any stress during the course. Having MSc and MD in Medical Administration, MBA course gave an opportunity to think from a different angle. And also refer to the following quotation:

“The classroom gave me opportunity to mix with the professionals from other sectors especially banking, plantation, share market, private organizations and universities. Such interaction with the other professionals helped me to look my profession and strategies in the health management in a different view”

Networking is one of the most important aspects of the MBA experience which gives tremendous exposure and practical experience which is part and parcel of post graduate program. This has been supported by Ms.Pushpika Mullekanda (CEO/Managing Director-Rights Minds (Pvt) limited. Refer to the following testimonial:

“OUSL MBA program helped me to assess my decisions in qualitative and quantitative way. I achieved so much because of my honesty, passion and determination. As a female entrepreneur I was blessed to be admired by so many for my values and talents and My MBA batch mates always with me in my success. Secret of my success was I did 200% in whatever did and I was the happiest end of the day. And networking with my MBA friends always gives me comfort as they represent different fields and their opinions are very much important in decision making”.

This observation is aligned with the findings of Chen, Doherty and Vinnicombe, (2012) which discusses about how Women emphasized the benefits of acquiring and developing networks from undertaking the Executive MBA (EMBA). And also in Commonwealth of Learning (COL) always concern about gender equality which encourage COL Partner Universities to be inclusive of women in all aspects of the CEMBA/CEMPA Programme's activities.

Commonwealth Executive MBA program has initiated and contributed towards society for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. Following CSR activities has been conducted by the department and All CSR programs can be considered as part of Strategic Management module in MBA: (1) Cancer Hospital, Maharagama (CEMBA), (2)Udagama Primary School, Padukka (CEMBA), (3) Eye Cataracts Campaign (CEMBA), (4) Mehtsevana Detention Center –Nugegoda CSR

(CEMBA), (5) Ragama Ranaviru Sevana (MBA – HRM) and (6) Pandadura Seevali Vindyalaya (CEMBA).

Students are engaging with CSR and always willing to contribute more for this nature of work. The following remarks by Dr Sritharan illustrates the above statement. “Also other extracurricular activities and the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project undertaken by the group were taught us to build human relations which is vital in management programmes. CEMBA program of OUSL is scheduled in such a way not to improve the knowledge, but to develop the skills and develop human relations between different professional groups”

This has been supported by one of the student, as quoted by Sisil Silva (Engineer in leading private company in Sri Lanka) “Develop Human relations between different professional groups” always important. “This CSR has touched many of US and we feel we can do lot for others. As MBA students we need to identify the society as whole as macro environment and I think this (CSR program) always help is read that (society) in proper way” and activities always improves creativity with team work while emerging leaders following:

“Thank you very much for your appreciation. It is certainly with your guidance and marvelous commitment by the team leaders that we were able to achieve this success. In the process we have done something which is new and creative also” said one of leader Ravindra Pathirathna, upon completion of Mehtsevana Detention center, Nugegoda CSR – CEMBA.

Furthermore, CSR activities conducted by Department has improved team work among Students which is also important in the Journey of MBA. Refer to the following email by Ruwan: a student of MBA “It's your initiative and the guidance which contributed immensely for the success of this project. Finally the CSR project not only enlightened lives of our beloved sisters, it formed a group of friends.....Friends for life”.

Hence empowering students and engaging activities towards to society always important to increase the corporate image of the program and University as well as implied in the quotations of the following article which has been written for newspapers and bulletins.

“Life is all about learning. The most important facet in life should be learning with emotional

intelligence. This is all about learning by understanding by helping others, because you have been given a chance, a rare chance to be a human. Cohort ten of the Open University has utilized this “rare chance” by demonstrating their excellent talent team work, sense with subject knowledge. They have done a worthy cause as sons and daughters of mother Lanka”. (Asian Tribune, “CSR in Open University of Sri Lanka with MBA group”.

After a needs assessment, the Corporate Social Responsibility programme focused on building a library for the remote Udagama Primary School, which is located 33 km east of Colombo in the Avissawella Electorate. One of the key factors in focusing on this particular school is its student composition, which mostly comprises of estate children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. To build the library, the students raised LKR 1.5 million. Based on feedback from the students of Udagama Primary School, the Corporate Social Responsibility programme can be deemed a successful case study from an MBA perspective, as well as from a humanitarian perspective. McGowan, S (2016).

Department of Management Studies is serving students in Sri Lanka from different destinations, including some rural areas. According to Census and statistics department (2012) in Sri Lanka, majority of population in the country is in the rural sector (77.4%). Hence, reaching majority who need education is essential. Refer to the following comment made by one student (Kumara Alwis) who is following Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS) at Department of Management Studies (DMS).

“I am final year working student and locating in Badulla (220KMs from main city, Colombo). Because of University online system I get all schedules and time tables. And also I have my study center very close by. My knowledge has improved lot and last month I got a promotion as assistant manager and I think credit should goes to My University”

This is one of the good examples that the satisfaction of students with good practice has achieved with proper outreach. And also it can be seen that innovative ideas of the student being promoted in the course module of project proposal in the certificate course, Entrepreneurship of Small Business Management (ESBM) offered by DMS. See following comment by Mekala (female) who

already graduated from the program.

“I just passed my O/L s and joined OUSL. In my project proposal my supervisor always motivate me to have different marketing mix for business and finally for my proposed business of garments I have done with “A” Grade. On the same time I started my Business and used the same application of Product, place, Promotion with proper pricing (4 Ps) strategies which was something considered as competitive advantage”. And also same idea was communicated by Vimal, who is completed his certificate course and now following degree at OUSL.

“With project report I proposed how to start a “Communication center” and now it has converted into reality, I do not want to start this. But because of the course module I have to conduct a small study (market survey) which motivate me to do the same. I think it is a blessed choice”

In Sri Lanka, the Small and Medium enterprises (SME) sector is important for growth of the national income. The SME sector in Sri Lanka contributing for 52 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 45 percent of the total employment, whilst making up more than 75 percent of the total number of enterprises in the country. MIC (2016). It is clear that the Certificate course of Entrepreneurship of Small Business Management (ESBM) is contributing to Sri Lankan Economy in terms of skilled business people.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Regardless of the profile of educational institutions or the desired strategic shift in a certain direction, all educational institutions should meet the new standards of the innovation economy. Entrepreneurship is acknowledged to be a key competence and can no longer be omitted from the curriculum. At this moment, society is not eager to receive risk averting students or students that merely consume jobs. Society requires students who are more creative and risk taking and excelling in research, entrepreneurship and innovation, in order to drive the production of new jobs. Educational programmes should be reinforced and restructured with such requirements in mind. Especially ODLUs have the possibility of addressing the adult population, a population identified to be more entrepreneurial (Kauffman, 2010). The call for high-level, educated, employable and entrepreneurial (adult) students with the proper skills, competences

and qualifications in this respect, cannot be misunderstood. Curricula infusion with new elements must take place. We have posed the question: what transformations are welcome in university curricula, when skills to generate and apply new knowledge have become essential in powering the innovation-driven economy? By mode of example, we have provided a number of practices able to support institutional profiling in different directions.

However, infusing new parts in ODLU curricula, which have been successful in pilot projects, will by itself not be enough to satisfy the quality and the demand for new skills and competences in the labour market. Something more dramatic is needed: a change of educational philosophy. This change must come in the form of education and research programme fusion. In a traditional Bachelor profile, students have a standard intake of obligatory courses, while actually missing out on the real understanding as to why these courses are needed. Students often only realise the necessity of incorporating particular skills and competences once they have experienced own research work in their Masters. But without early research contact, students may easily decide to neglect certain courses and/or drop-out, and be deprived of vital skills and competences. Cornelis, A and Alfonso, H (2010). To say it bluntly, to allow for enhanced connectivity with future research and innovation directions, course flexibility should be added and research options incorporated. In the future education curricula should be steeped with research challenges and should promote undergraduate research in what we may call research-based bachelors. Students working with research and tuning their educational profile based on participation and experience in real research projects: directly learning to perform successful research. Undergraduate research also strengthens the relationship between the university and organisations in the region for which research is conducted and stimulates the creative and productive processes of students, making them better prepared for entry on the labour market. It is now evident as by societal progress that the old institutional dichotomy between education and research is fading out and making way for an education-research continuum. Cornelis, A and Alfonso, H (2010).

Table 1: Intake and Output of the Department of Management Studies

Year	Intake				Output			
	MBA in HRM	CEMBA	BMS	ESBM	MBA in HRM	CEMBA	BMS	ESBM
2007		95	467	745		10	58	98
2008		90	481	576		19	63	90
2009		70	582	249		23	36	96
2010	33	72	800	584		34	145	281
2011	53	68	816	596	25	39	195	101
2012	60	57	900	716	34	32	165	335
2013	26	74	880	658	28	30	172	182
2014	60	77	1038	817	29	48	250	310
2015	45	84	979	826	27	38	310	325
2016	46	65	702	654	38	51	332	182

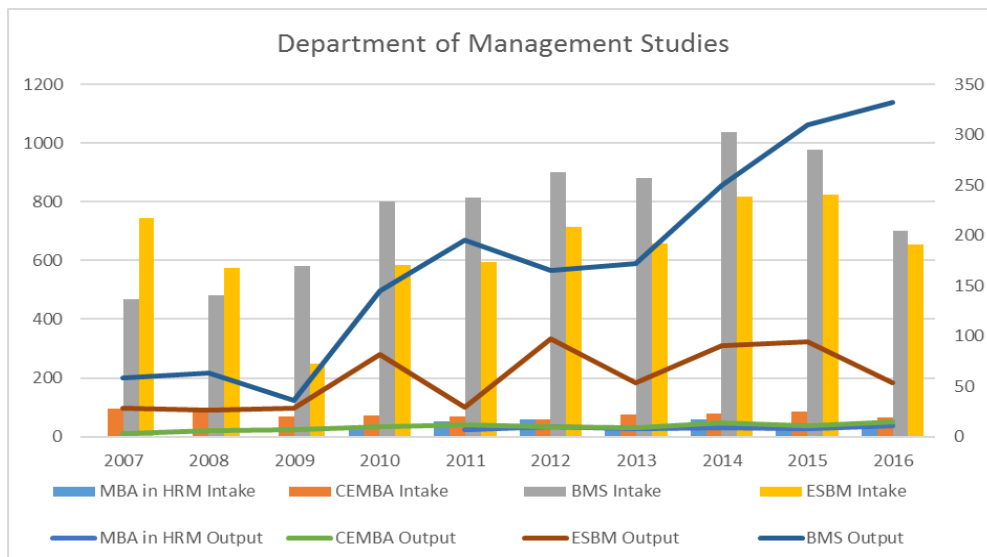


Figure 2: Intake and Output of the Department of Management Studies

Table 2: Intake and Output of the Management and Commerce Degrees - 2016

Universities and Institutes	Graduate Intake	Graduate Output	PG Intake	PG Output
Colombo	427	558	2193	540
Peradeniya	150	188	0	0
SJ-Pura	1169	1102	620	119
Kalaniya	606	465	727	154
Jaffna	570	377	2	5
Ruhuna	320	311	65	15
ESL	303	73	25	0
SESL	265	148	265	10
Rajerata	377	291	151	35
Sabaraga	360	287	19	0
Wayamba	501	315	246	104
Uva	127	91	0	0
OUSL	702	332	111	89
PGIA			461	60

PGIM			446	444
PGHSS			143	19
PGHRA			492	186
Total	5877	4538	5966	1780

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Author Profile



Dr. V. Sivalogathan: He is working as a Head and Senior Lecturer in Management Studies, The Open University Sri Lanka. Sivalogathan has a

B.Com (Hons) Degree from the University of Peradeniya, MBA in International Business from the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand. PhD in Innovation Management from Zhejiang University in China. He has worked as Assistant Lecturer at the University of Peradeniya, as an Assistant Registrar at the Vavuniya Campus of the University of Jaffna, as a Human Resource Manager for the International Organizations. He has more than 17 years' experience on both government and non-government sectors in multidiscipline aspects. His research interests include business strategy, organizational behavior, innovation management, HRM and entrepreneurship. He has been edited and published books, many research papers which were published at International and national research publications and many more articles in newspapers and magazines. Siva is in the editorial review board and reviewer of many top journals. He has studied and worked in different countries giving him first-hand knowledge of international management and cross-cultural training.



Dr. Nalin Abeysekera: He is a Senior Lecturer at Department of Management Studies, Open University of Sri Lanka. He received MBA (specializing in Marketing) from the University of Colombo in 2007 with 3 gold medals for Marketing, Strategic Management and Thesis. He graduated from the Faculty of Management, University of Sri Jayewardenepura with an Honors degree in B.Sc Marketing in 2001. Also he is fully qualified in CIM (Chartered Institute of Marketing)-UK.

He has over 10 years of experience in field of marketing (consumer durables and marketing research) and he is a certified mentor and trainer in online learning in Sri Lanka. His interested subject areas are marketing, political marketing and online learning.