

Managerial Innovations of the State University System in Sri Lanka: An Exploratory Study

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In the first part of the presentation she emphasized one of the intentions of the university system is to produce employable graduates with the essential knowledge, skills with positive attitudes in order to provide human resources for the development process of a country. In this context, the role of the Sri Lankan government is noteworthy. The total expenditure incurred for the education has been provided from the General Treasury. Thus, the education is imparted free of charge. This situation has long been contributed for empowering nation's human resources.

The government allocates 2.08% of the GDP (CBR:2009) to maintain the entire education system. The expenditure on education has been gradually reduced for the last several years (the government allocated only 2.59% and 2.27% of GDP for the years of 2007 and 2008 respectively). The lack of financial resources has been one of main constraints being faced by State universities. This situation has been negatively affected in improving quality and relevance of the undergraduates. Under this situation University authorities face much difficulties in implementing their plans and producing "Quality graduates". Despite these constraints the universities could not reduce or end up the expected service delivery. Thus, this research paper argues that the university administration has to find alternatives to achieve its intended objectives.

If academics perform in innovative ways in managing their educational programs, that would lead to improve the quality and the relevance of their output leading to more effective and efficient administration. The importance of innovative managers for the public sector organizations has been highlighted by several western scholars.

Improving performance of the public service is the key challenge faced by managers in the public sector organizations. The main aim of the study

undertaken on "Managerial Innovations of the State University System In Sri Lanka was to examine the utility of innovation theory in the university administration in Sri Lanka.

Then the research questions explained as: what would count "innovation" in the university administration? , what are the benefits of managerial innovation in the university administration, what are the main factors affecting innovation in the university administration? and what can be done to improve innovation in university administration in Sri Lanka?.

Then she explained about the methodology of the study. In the explanation she emphasized the study carried out in a qualitative approach. The Sample selected for the study comprised of 20 administrators and occupied purposive sampling technique. The participants in this research were the Coordinators, Heads and Deans of the Faculties of the Universities in the Western province. Further, the sample was selected based on the reputational snowballing technique. Data collected through In-depth interviews. Data analysis mainly based on the Thematic and Content Analysis. In addition to that descriptive analysis was undertaken with substantial description to identify characteristics and behavioral patterns of the administrators, and their experiences related the objectives of the study.

Theoretical Background of the research on managerial innovation explained as "As generation, acceptance and implementation of new ideas, process, and products or services" (Thompson, 1965). Interest in managerial innovation in the Public sector New Public Management, Managerialism, Reinventing Government Principles, Public Sector Management Reforms, Peter Drucker (1994) emphasizes the importance of innovation in the public sector for the success in their organizations

Research on Managerial innovation in the Public Sector Victor A. Thompson (1965), Lawrence B. Mohr (1969), Donald C. Stone (1981), Robert K. Yin (1977), Mohamed A. K. Mohamed (2002), Sandford Borings (2001), Sudatta Ranasinghe (2002). Fernando Lalitha S. (2004) & (2006) *"..in order to respond to the peoples' demands under the conditions of limited resources, the role and the behavior of the managers in the public sector need to be changed"*.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample consists of 15 are male, 2 are Deans, 17 are Heads of Dept., 10 are from the Faculty of Mgt Studies. & Comm., 4 of them are from the Faculty of Engineering, 4 of them from Arts and Humanities, Only 3 are Professors and 12 are senior Lecturer Grade 1, 16 administrators are Ph.D holders, The minimum age is 41 years and the maximum age is 57 years.

Professor Lalitha explained what is meant by Managerial Innovation in the University Administration according to her findings of the study as, "Novel ways and means to manage the resources in effective and efficient manner to improve the quality of the graduates", "Introducing and implementing systems of management by using new ideas for improving efficient and effective degree programs", "Improving the quality of the graduates including their values to achieve sustainable development of the society" and "Initiating and implementing strategies and activities to overcome constraints and also to exploit opportunities existing in the environment"

Innovative practices introduced by the participants of the sample were to Introduce a "Mentoring Program" with the selected private sector organizations. Students were trained under the supervision of a CEO in the selected business organizations to enhance the students' required skills and improving the relevance of the graduates to the job market, introduced "Industry consultation Board". Several discussions were undertaken with the selected managers of the industries to get the ideas and comments for designing and revising curriculum of the academic programs, introduced a "self finance program" to provide various services to the community and also to generate income to the university, started "Knowledge Centers" where students and the teachers could get various benefits for their teaching, learning and research, introduced a "Unit

for Statistical Case Studies" to learn and undertake various projects for improving the statistical knowledge of the students and to provide services to others.

Then as another finding of her study she explained the view of the participants about the benefits obtained from innovative activities as reduced students' dropout ratio, improved the students' various skills, creativity and decision making skills, report writing capabilities, English and presentation skills, earned more recognition from the other departments of the university and also from the outside the university, improved linkages between the universities and the employers in the job markets, so that the graduates were able to find job opportunities without waiting longer time period after their graduation improved the relationships between the students and the lecturers, changed the bad attitudes of the employers regarding the university graduates in the job markets, improved the students' satisfaction and confidence with the academic programs by improving students' active participation for the university activities, improved physical and other resources of the department as several innovative activities were generated financial resources. Thus, both students and lecturers were benefited.

Determinants of Managerial Innovation in the University Administrators' need to achieve explained by different participants as "I need to do something to my country as we are products of free education", "I want to do something to the country as I received much from the free education in Sri Lanka. By doing that I can get more self-satisfaction", Others' motive is to solve students' problems, improving the skills and the quality of the graduates by introducing and implementing different ideas and activities. Supportive internal environment (support from the academic staff) "New activities and innovative behavior can be done with the support of the department", "Corporation among the staff is very important to introduce new ideas and changes", "Junior academics' support could be obtainable without much difficulties than others". Another significant factor to enhance innovations is to obtain the support from the external environment. Therefore, other organizational supports are more helpful for innovative activities. These supports could be obtainable in various ways both financially and physically. She emphasized that some departments in universities offer various facilities and services

which are different from the normal activities as various organizations in the private sector and public sector supports them. Another utmost important factor is the Skills of the Human resources. As a result the support of the non academic staff who must be competent and experienced

During the policy implication for improving innovative behavior of the University Administration an emphasis should be given on the selection and the appointment of academics for administrative positions who have positive attitudes with more dedication towards public values. At the recruitment of the academics, the above mentioned matter should be equally applied. When obtaining the external environment support, the mass media has a significant role. By conducting awareness programmes, public seminars, panel discussions, research conferences, the awareness of the innovative ideas and programmes could be improved. In this way other organizational supports could be obtainable. For improving innovative culture in the university, administrators should find various supports even from organizations outside. Periodical training programs and workshops could

be arranged to improve the competence and skills of the non academic staff.

In conclusion she explained that there is no difference between managerial innovation in universities and other public sector organizational innovations. Universities are good places where innovation is possible and already happening within it. Much of innovative activities and ideas were implemented without extra financial resources. Innovation in the university administration means introducing and implementing systems of management which are different from the existing practices and systems to improve efficient and effective degree programs. Therefore improving the quality and relevance of the educational programs are prime benefits of the university administration in Sri Lanka. The administrators' motivation to achieve is the significant determinant of the managerial innovation in the university administration. The supportive environment, support of the external environment and competent and skillful human resources are other determinants. The highlighted policy measures are essential to improve innovative behavior in the state university administration in Sri Lanka.