THE MAKING OF THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

AN EVALUATIVE STUDY

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To My Wife

Rani

And my Two Daughters

Yajni Madhu and Kanchanakesi

PREFACE

It was the lack of a complete study on the system of Higher Education in Sri Lanka which stimulated me to undertake this study; I began to collect material for this study when I was functioning as the Minister of Higher Education. The Ministry of Higher Education and its allied institutions such as University Grants Commission and the officials and academics engaged in the administration of Higher Education readily provided me with the required material. The vast amount of material available at the Main Library of the University of Peradeniya was made available to me by its Deputy Librarian, Mr. A. T. Alwis, who kindly tolerated my numerous queries on the matter. I owe him an enormous debt of gratitude. It is no exaggeration that the entire staff of the Parliament Library, including its Chief Librarian, Mr. N. M. C. Tillekeratne and the Deputy Librarian, Mr. C. Kuruppu gave me enough assistance in my search for material. I would like to thank all of them for their kindness and cooperation. Prof. Gamini Samaranayake, the Chairman of the University Grants Commission, Prof. Lakshman Ratnayake, Director of the IRQUE Project and Kamal Pathmasiri, Director of SLIATE – currently District Secretary, Kalutara – came to my assistance in a variety of ways.

As usual, my wife Rani and my two daughters – Dr. Yajni Warnapala and Dr. Kanchanakesi Warnapala encouraged me throughout the period of the preparation of this manuscript. I left the Ministry of Higher Education in April 2010 and it was during the last one year that I invested both my energy and time for the preparation of this manuscript. I treated it as an academic exercise as I devoted my time for this work. I need to thank my younger daughter, Dr Kanchanakesi Warnapala for reading several drafts of this manuscript and she made

a number of valuable suggestions for improvement of the text. I owe her an enormous debt of gratitude.

Mr P. M. K. N. Kithsiri typed several drafts of this work, and he deserves to be commended for the painstaking job which he did amidst his numerous professional duties.

Finally, I need to emphasize that the terms Ceylon and Sri Lanka have been used interchangeably in the book.

Prof. W. A. Wiswa Warnapala
Pitihuma, KEGALLA
May 8, 2011

About the Author.....

Watareka Arachchilage Wiswa Warnapala was the former Minister of Higher Education in the United Freedom Peoples Alliance Government led by His Excellency President Mahinda Rajapaksa. In the period 1994 – 2000, Prof. Wiswa Warnapala was the Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education in the Peoples Alliance Government. He, before entering Parliament in 1994, functioned as the Professor of Political Science at the University of Peradeniya. He held the Chair in Political Science. He read Economics/Political Science at the University of Ceylon. After graduating in 1964 with Honours in Economics/Political Science, he obtained a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh, USA in 1967 where he was a Fulbright Scholar. He obtained hid PhD from the University of Leeds of the United Kingdom in 1970. He was Counsellor of Embassy of Sri Lanka for three years from 1974 – 77. He was Visiting Professor at the University of Tasmania, Australia in the period 1983 – 1984. He was also visiting Professor at the University of Connecticut, USA in 1990. His last Visiting Professor assignment was at the University of Gent, Belgium in 1991 – 1992. He was the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee from 1994 – 2000 and was also a member of the Committee on Public Enterprises. He was a member of the Committee on Constitutional Reforms. In 2001, he functioned as the Chairman of the Employees Trust Fund Board. In 2004, he was again made a National List Member of Parliament and was appointed the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2005, he was appointed the Cabinet Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. He became the Minister of Higher Education in the Government led by His Excellency Mahinda Rajapaksa. He was a member of the Electoral Reforms Committee; he also served as a member of the High Posts Committee in Parliament. He functioned as the SLFP representative of the APRC appointed to find a solution to the ethnic problem of Sri Lanka. He has published more than twenty books in English and Sinhala and in addition has contributed more than one hundred articles to learned journals. He still remains the leading academic in the field of political science in Sri Lanka.

About the Book.....

This is a study on the evolution of the system of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. Unlike the studies of the past on this subject, this study is a comprehensive examination of the system of Higher Education in the country and this has been done on the basis of the historical evolution of the system. It covers a long period beginning from colonial times up to date, and the challenges which the systems faces today has been analysed from the point of view of the need to reform the system to suit the emerging challenge in a globalised world. This study by a former Minister of Higher Education, who was a University Don for more than three decades, contains an introduction and eight chapters on the subject of Higher Education; the chapters follow the historical pattern of the evolution of the system of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. This study, which evaluates the nature and content of Higher Education in Sri Lanka, is a complete study of the subject and it, therefore, is an important contribution to research and scholarship in the field of Higher Education. This is yet another landmark publication by the author.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the nature of the evolution of the system of University education in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) and how the growth of the knowledge economy placed numerous burdens on the existing Universities; the system, therefore, needs to break-away from the tradition of making ad hoc adjustments without formulating a comprehensive reform strategy to tackle the issues within. The demand for higher education is increasing in most countries for a number of reasons, some of which are directly linked with the process of globalisation, and the unmet demand has paved the way for new types of providers of higher education. In Sri Lanka, while the demand is growing, the capacity of the State to continue to satisfy the growing demand is being questioned. An examination of the nature of the evolution of the higher educational institutions in the country, though several important studies have been done in the past, is vital as the system of University education, with its attendant changes and challenges which took place since 1942, has expanded to such an extent that a detailed review of its activities needs to be undertaken.[1] This study, therefore intends to make a comprehensive investigation into the system of University education in Sri Lanka, focusing primarily on the nature of the expansion and its attendant problems which, on a number of occasions, demanded ad hoc changes, which, unfortunately, did not become an integral part of a comprehensive strategy of reforms.

In Sri Lanka, as in all colonial territories of the period, the needs and objectives of the colonial administration largely determined the pattern and content of education, and this, as many a writer had pointed out, has been the

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[1] Several important studies have been done on the subject and they include the following. P.Chandrasegaram, D.L. Jayasuriya, Ralph Pieris, K.M.de Silva and G.H. Pieris, I. gratefully acknowledge my debt to these pioneering scholars who looked at the evolution of the system of University education from different angles.

Chandrasegaram, P. Policies regarding Higher Education in Ceylon, during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century's, with special reference to the Establishment of the University of Ceylon. M.A. Thesis, University of London, 1961.

Jayasuriya, D.L. Developments in University Education. The Growth of the University of Ceylon 1942-1965, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.XXIII, Nos. 1 & 2, 1965, pp.83-154.

Pieris, Ralph. Universities, Politics and Public Opinion in Ceylon, in Minerva, Summer,1964,pp.435-454. De Silva, K.M. & Pieris,G.H. The University System of Sri Lanka. ICES,Kandy,1995.

ostensible purpose of the colonial educational policy of the period. It was T.L. Green, who succinctly analysed the colonial foundations of the system of education which the colonial authorities founded in Ceylon in the British period of dominance, and he, in fact, stated that "whether or not Western education aimed first at religious conversion is unclear; that it had a vocational purpose in producing clerks and other such servants of State is certain, as it is that it sought to re-align the loyalties of some in terms of ruler identification."[2] It was true that the education system, which the colonial authorities imposed on the traditional system of education, registered a considerable expansion in keeping with the social and economic progress of the colony, but the colonial objectives, on which the system of education was built, underwent no substantial change in the last hundred years.[3] There were certain similarities among the colonial territories with regard to education, and this was particularly true of countries in South Asia. It was colonialism which made a lasting impact on the system of education. The financial provision made for education under British rule was largely determined by vocational and political considerations. The primary and secondary schools, though came to be established by both Government and Missionary institutions, came within the purview of religious oganisations, primarily Christian Missionaries, and colonial objectives, as stated above, determined the nature of the expansion of the system. Though the modern system was built on the ruins of the traditional system of education, one cannot say that the appearance of an educational system based on limited colonial objectives did succeed in destroying the remnants of the indigenous system of education; it existed in a rudimentary form associated with the Buddhist foundations of learning.

In 1799, within three years after the British occupation, Cordiner, the Chaplain, proposed the establishment of a training school for the sons of Mudaliyars and other chiefs who would supply English speaking officers to various Government Departments.[4] The aim was to make use of the base of the traditional elite for the recruitment of personnel for administrative and other services of the

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[2] Green, T.L. Education and Society in Ceylon, in Educand, Vol.ll,No.3,1956,p.3.
[3] Mendis, G.C. Adult Franchise and Educational Reform, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.ll,1944,PP.3?-43.
[4] Gratian, L.J . Government Schools in Ceylon,1798-1832. Govt.Press,Colombo, 1929, p.26.

colony. Having established three schools for this purpose, the first British Governor, Fredrick North, proposed the introduction of a scheme according to which two native youths were to be sent to British Universities; they were to be sons of the Chiefs who constituted the most influential segment of the traditional society. It was thought that the education of this segment of the society would be sufficient to supply the English speaking officers for the various Government departments in the colony.This arrangement to send two native youths to British Universities, though short-lived, aimed at the creation of an elite corps 'attached to their country by birth, and to England by education'.[5] This began in 1811 and sons of Chiefs were sent to England, especially to Cambridge and Oxford respectively, and it was in this form that the door of higher education opened to the members of the elite in the Ceylonese society. Therefore, the major objective of the system of education established by the Colonial authorities of the period was for the creation of an English-speaking Christian class from whom the personnel for the public services and other positions of authority in the colonial administration could be recruited.[6] In order to administer the empire, however, the British, as colonial masters, had to educate a class of Ceylonese; British acted similarly in India where they wanted to educate a native class of Indians for the same purpose. Lord Macaulay, in his famous Minute on Education, stated that the British should create an English-speaking native middle class 'who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect.[7]

It was this philosophy which guided the British policy in the sphere of education in the colonies, and the educational policy in Ceylon came to be built on this principle which, from the beginning, aimed at the creation of an elite capable of building the British type of institutions of good government. It was the Colebrooke Commission, which, in 1833, through a set of utilitarian-oriented reforms, laid the foundation for change in the country, and education, according to

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[5] North to Dundas.13 March,1801. CO 54.5

[6] Pieris,Ralph. Universities, Politics and Public Opinion in Ceylon, in Minerva, Summer, 1964, pp. 435-454.

[7] Cited by Deepak Laal, in Praise of Empire, 73-74.

the Colebrooke Commission, was to serve the twin objective of 'preparing candidates for public employment and as an aid to natives to cultivate European attainments'.[8] The colonial view was that the replacement of costly Europeans with locally recruited personnel could considerably improve the finances of the colony, and it was this consideration which provided the impulse for the expansion of educational opportunities. It was felt that English education was necessary for the introduction of fundamental changes in the island, and therefore, the establishment of a College in Colombo was recommended by the Colebrooke Commission to 'afford native youths a means of qualifying themselves for different branches of the public services'.[9] It further stated that 'it would be impracticable for individuals, even of the most respectable classes, to support the expenses attending the acquirement of a liberal education in Europe, and, if attainable, the advantages of affording to them the means of education in their own country are in many respects greater'.[10] The major consideration, as mentioned earlier, was the finances, and the Colebrooke Commission was of the view that 'superior advantages could be derived from local instruction, the expenses of which are inconsiderable'.[11] This showed that the current liberal ideas in England, especially those associated with the utilitarian thinkers such as Bentham, Adams Smith and Mill, had an effect on the colonial policy of the period, and the Colonial authorities, therefore, were so keen to transplant British institutions in the colony. It was their view that a competent knowledge of the English language was necessary for all the principal native functionaries in the country; this recommendation provided the impulse for the establishment of schools, and the Government was taking measures to make English education more freely available in the country.

Though there was discussion on the need for the establishment of a higher institution of learning, it took nearly fifty years for the British Government to establish the Colombo Academy in 1835; it was the first institution - nucleus of an institution of higher learning- established for the purpose of imparting some kind of

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[8] De Silva, K.M. Social Policy and Missionary Organisation in Ceylon 1840-1855.London, 1965,p.143.
[9] Mendis, G.C. ed. The Colebrooke-Cameron Papers. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press,1956, p.70
[10] Ibid;p.71.
[11] Ibidjp.71.

higher education.[12] The policy was to impart higher education through secondary schools, which have been established through the activities of the Missionary schools. The network of secondary schools, established primarily as a missionary initiative, partially turned out personnel for the government services, and they made arrangements for the student to follow courses leading to University degrees. In addition, these secondary schools, which were designated as Colleges helped the students to obtain qualifications required for white collar employment. It was through these Colleges that the Ceylonese students established links with foreign Universities, specially the Universities in England and India. For instance, the Colombo Academy came to be affiliated to the University of Calcutta in 1859; there were a number of Colleges which maintained this 'affiliated' relationship with Indian Universities which came to be established after 1857. The 'affiliated system of university education' was a colonial legacy in the former British colonial territories.[13] In the affiliating system, only those Universities are empowered to award degrees, and the instruction is done at the respective institution affiliated to the University. This, invariably, was a restrictive form of higher education. Since it is the University that awards the degrees, the preparation of the curriculum of teaching and evaluation of learner-achievements are controlled by the particular University. It, therefore, provided little scope for innovation by individual institutions in the affiliated system. Yet another deficiency of the system was that the Colleges in the 'affiliated system' favoured the Christian students who easily gained admission. In other words, as Ralph Pieris pointed out, the non-Christian students found it difficult to gain admission to these colleges, and it was a policy linked to confine the emergence of the educated elite to the Christianised elements in the Ceylonese society. In the period of Governor, Stuart Mackenzie 1837-1841, there was considerable discussion on social benefits of education. For instance, Governor Stuart Mackenzie, a firm believer in this aspect of education, publicly stated that 'the State must educate the masses and not merely an elite'.[14] Though this recommendation was not acceptable to the Colonial Office, its indirect result was the inauguration of a grant-in-aid

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[12] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p.436. A similar College was planned for Jaffna in 1823

[13] Ruberu, Ranjit. Missionary Education in Ceylon, in Holmes, Brian ed. Educational Policy and the Mission Schools. New York, 1957.

[14] Corea, J.C.A. Hundred Years of Education in Ceylon, in Modern Asian Studies,Vol.3,Part 2 1969,p.155.

system to expand the opportunities for education. In 1869 a new denominational system was established, under which religious bodies engaged in education were provided with Government assistance to establish schools. The immediate result of this policy was the expansion of the secondary schools and such schools were established in the urban areas and they, specifically, 'catered to the needs of the Mudaliyar class, that is the families of highest rank in the highest caste'.[15]

From the beginning, the school system opened up educational opportunities for the children of the well-to-do parents. Since the English Schools were fee levying private schools, it was only the rich who could afford an English education. This was the system which promoted an elitist system of education and English education, as T.L. Green stated, became the sole preserve of those with ability to pay fees, and it was almost unavailable in the free government schools.[16] Therefore, English education became the monopoly of the notable feudal families which now wanted to make use of the educational facilities to revive their traditional positions through influential government employment. This, in fact, was a part of a conscious policy to create a restricted colonial elite.[17] The low country Mudaliyars, who exploited the new commercial opportunities in rubber, coconut and the liquor industry, were able to obtain for their sons an expensive English education in Colombo. The schools which functioned in the backward rural areas were exclusively vernacular and the rural child had access only to an elementary form of education. This differential access to education, which continued till the introduction of the free education scheme in 1945, created a glaring situation of inequality in educational opportunity in Ceylon. According to Ralph Pieris, the number of students availing themselves of College education was negligible, and the number of English educated in the 19th century remained very small. In terms of literacy, two percent of the population was literate in English in 1901.[18] Therefore, the educated population, though small in terms of the population of the colony, came to be

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[15] Ryan, Bryce. Status, Achievement and Education in Ceylon, in Journal of Asian Studies, VOl.XX,No.4,196l,p.471.
[16] Green,T.L. op.cit;p.54.
[17] Pieris,Ralph. Social Development and Planning in Asia. New Delhi,19875,p.239.
[18] Universities, Politics and .Public Opinion in Ceylon, in Minerva, Summer,1964,p.437

differentiated into two groups, consisting of an English speaking minority and a vernacular speaking majority.

It was through the education establishment that a powerful base was created for the emergence of the local elite, whose links with the traditional society strengthened their position. The colonial authorities made use of this social grouping as a bulwark for their administration. Tambiah, in the course of his study of the Administrative Services, 1870-1946, argued that 'the rise of this new elite was furthered by the fact that the colonial power expressly sought to destroy the power of the older pre-colonial aristocracy'.[19] The introduction of the open competitive examination for the Ceylon Civil Service in 1880, and the object of the change, were to compel all candidates to obtain their education in England, owing to the inferiority of educational facilities in Ceylon.[20] This again explained that the colonial authorities expected the Ceylonese to depend on overseas institutions to meet its needs for higher education.

As mentioned earlier, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the colony could allow only minor expenditure for education, and this invariably interfered with the expansion of educational opportunities. The rapid increase of revenue in the nineties, due to the expansion of plantation industries such as tea and rubber, stimulated a steady growth of expenditure on education; as Lennox Mills noted, English education increased to a remarkable degree with the growing prosperity of the Ceylonese.[21] Still the main division was between the English and vernacular schools, and by 1929, nearly 89.76 percent of the school-going population was in the vernacular schools. Though the English schools were established, they were elite schools providing opportunities to a small minority of children who came from the well-to-do families. As in the schools-system dominated by the Christian Missionaries, the higher educational opportunities remained utterly limited; they always looked to a foreign university or to get a higher educational qualification

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[19] Tambiah, S.J. Ethnic Representation in Ceylon's Higher Administrative Services, 18?0-1946, in University of Ceylon Review,Vo1.Xl11,Nos. 2 & 3,1955, pp.113-134.
[20] Mil1s, Lennox. Ceylon under British Ru1e,-1932 oxford,1933, p.91.
[21] Mi1ls, Lennox. Op.cit;p.264.

through the system of 'affiliated Colleges'. The decade following 1901 was very conspicuous for interest in English education, and E.B. Denham, in his Census report, stated that there was an enormous demand for education, especially for learning English.[22] Education was treated as something which assured them a status in society. In fact, E.B. Denham stated that 'the demand has passed considerably beyond the desire for a good vernacular education; it is now a popular demand for an English education.'[23] It was in this background, where, the existing system of English education remained the preserve of the rich and the privileged, that a demand was made for the expansion of opportunities for higher education.

The educated Ceylonese had now emerged and they, through a number of associations, launched a campaign for constitutional reforms.[24] The developing nationalist movement , which agitated for constitutional reforms, received an impetus from the 'ranks of the elite of socially mobile people who were English educated', and it was from this base of the English educated elite that a movement sprang up, demanding the establishment of a University as well as the extension of secondary education.[25] The educated Ceylonese, who formed the Ceylon University Association, began demanding the establishment of a University in Ceylon on grounds that the existing facilities for university education were insufficient; for instance, they rejected both the 'affiliated' system and the British University examinations. In their view, the British University examinations were no substitute for a University. The Ceylon University Association was founded by some leading members of the English-educated elite, and they too represented the emerging nationalist movement; therefore, the formation of the Ceylon University Association, which clamoured for the establishment of a unitary residential university in the country for several decades, represented an aspect of the nationalist movement. In other words, the nationalist movement, in addition to its focus on constitutional reforms, committed itself to the establishment of a University through the articulation of the issue by an important segment of the political leadership of the

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[22] Tambiah, S.J. Op.cit;p.118.
[23] Denham, E.B. Ceylon at the Census of 1911. Colombo,1912,p.391.
[24] Weerawardene, I.D.S. Government and Politics in Ceylon,1931-1946.Colombo,1951,p.12.
[25] Tambiah,S.J. Op.cit;p,134.

nationalist movement, which, later, split on the issue of the site of the University of Ceylon. It was in this form that the educated and the vocal elements of the nationalist movement formed 'the University movement' which carried on a relentless struggle for the establishment of a University in Ceylon. The Ceylon University Association, which spearheaded the struggle for the establishment of the University of Ceylon, published a journal for the purpose, and, it, in fact, demonstrated the nature of the commitment of the English educated elite which campaigned vigorously for the establishment of a University in the country. It, in fact, became a major aspect of the political and constitutional modernisation of the country. One can say that this movement was confined to a small segment of the educated elite but had the support of the stalwarts of the nationalist movement. One significant element of the struggle was its avowed commitment to the promotion of indigenous Ceylonese culture through the establishment of the University of Ceylon, and this, to a great extent, determined and influenced the growth and expansion of the University as an institution of higher learning in the country.

Though the higher education institutions, both in the areas of Medicine and Law, came into existence in the 1870 s, the University College, which constituted a nucleus of a University , came to be established in 1921, after nearly a century of colonial rule in the country. The Universities in India came to be established in 1857, and Ceylon established its first 'University- level' institution in 1921, which, in effect, meant that the colonial authorities took more than six decades to establish a University College in Ceylon. It, though created opportunities for higher education for the students of the privileged classes, fell short of an University. It was not an autonomous institution organised as a University, and this was largely due to the fact that it was administered in the form of a Government Department. It, in the form of an affiliated University College , maintained a link with the University of London, and it was only in 1942 that this link was severed. This link, as all affiliated institutions of the period, limited its function as an institution of higher learning, which, in effect, was administered by the colonial bureaucracy in the form of a Government Department. The opinion in the country was that what was needed was a full-fledged autonomous national University, and the same protoganists, who began the university movement, continued to exert pressure for the establishment of

a national university in Ceylon. The debate continued, and it took another twenty years before the University of Ceylon was established in 1942. It was in 1929 that a Commission (Riddell Commission) reported on the issue of a national University and it, in addition to its comprehensive report on the future University, provided a blueprint for the establishment of a national university. Though the need for a national university came to be accepted in principle and there was official support for it, there ensued a new debate on the site, and the famous 'Battle of the Sites' was yet another protracted debate which delayed the establishment of the University of Ceylon. The 'battle of the Sites', with which the educated Ceylonese were involved, divided the nationalist political leadership as there were two groups strongly committed to two points of view on the site where the university was to be established. However, Peradeniya came to be chosen as the site, and the University of Ceylon was shifted to Peradeniya in 1952.

In other words, the University of Ceylon, which came into existence in 1942, remained in Colombo for more than a decade, and began to dominate the system of higher education in the country till the end of the sixties. Both these institutions-the University College (1921) and the University of Ceylon (1942) functioned as elite institutions, catering to a limited number of students, and it restricted its intake of students because they were expected to adhere to colonial objectives of education. The University College (1921) was very much of a colonial institution and it functioned on the basis of the colonial objectives of providing limited higher educational opportunities. The University of Ceylon, though wanted to function on the basis of a restrictive admission policy, was forced to change its policy due to the popular demand for the expansion of higher educational opportunities in the country.

Though the University of Ceylon functioned as an elitist institution, based largely on the Oxbridge model, this kind of elitist character came to be challenged by the populist forces in the country, and the major catalyst of change came to be associated with the Free Education Scheme of 1945. By this time, the educational structure, which remained confined to Missionary-oriented public schools and denominational Schools, had undergone a vital change; a network of

secondary schools and central schools had come into existence under the free education system under which education was made free from kindergarten to the University. The Central schools, according to Jayasuriya, represented a genuine attempt to extend the benefits of a good quality education.[26] The free education scheme, which later came to be called the social demand model of education, made a tremendous impact on the social, economic and political developments in the country. In the sphere of education, especially in the primary and secondary school sectors, the impact of the free education scheme came to be felt in the late fifties and sixties, and it was this transformation which demanded changes in university education of the country.[27] In addition to the introduction of the Free Education Scheme, there were two other important developments which directly demanded an expansion of university education in the country. The medium of instruction was changed from English to Swabasha -both Sinhalese and Tamil- and the students educated in the national languages began to enter the. University of Ceylon in 1960; the next important factor was the take-over of the denominational schools in 1962. These developments, as expected, demanded an expansion of the intake of students, and the unitary residential university, which still remained elitist, had to face a massive challenge to its existence as an exclusive institution catering to a limited number of students. Therefore, the forces, both nationalist and political, demanded unlimited extension of university education, and the purpose was to provide opportunities to the large number of students, who, due to the expansion of the network of secondary schools and the change in the medium of instruction, aspired to get into socially esteemed jobs with a higher educational qualification. The beginning of an expansion of university education took place with the conversion of the two leading Buddhist centres of learning into Universities in 1959, and with the creation of two more Universities, the University of Ceylon lost its monopoly over university education.

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[26] Jayasuriya, J.E. Education in Ceylon. Before and After Independence,1939-1968. Colombo,1968,p.85.

[27] Sir Ivor Jennings was one who opposed the introduction of the Free Education Scheme; he was a member of the Special Committee on Education. Dr. N.M.Perera, in his short analysis of the Free Education Scheme which he prepared while. in jail, answered most of the criticisms of Jennings. Vide Perera, N.M. The Case for Free Education. Ola Books.Colombo,1944.

In the period that followed this decision, the whole trend in the sphere of university education came to be associated with the need to expand the access for university education, which, in the course of time, resulted in the expansion of the system. The system, which, from its inception remained elitist, came to be converted into a mass system where there was a large scale expansion of student intake. For instance, the intake to the University College in 1921 was 155, and the intake to the University of Ceylon in 1942 was 904, and this restrictive admission policy underwent such a radical change that the intake in 2010 was nearly 23,000.This was the nature of the expansion of university education; many more issues and problems arose within the system of higher education in the last few decades, and they, in a variety of ways, interfered with the stability of the system. The expansion of the system of university education, in addition to the growth in the number of universities, brought into existence a federal system of university education which demanded the establishment of the University Grants Commission. The establishment of new Universities, though done in response to economic and social changes, followed a certain pattern, according to which the new institutions, established in the provinces, were expected to break-away from the traditional mould of the University of Ceylon founded in 1942, and adopt a curriculum with which an employable graduate could be produced. It was with this change that the dominant position of the traditional disciplines,which dominated the curriculum for more than five decades, began to crumble,paving the way for the introduction of courses with more economic and social relevance. Both elitism and narrow professionalism, which dominated the system from its very early phase, needed to be changed. The unfortunate thing was that the expansion of university education did not take place on the basis of a well integrated plan and ad hoc decisions and adjustments were made in response to political pressure; it was this which led to the creation of a haphazard system, the numerous problems of which interfered with the emergence of a national system of university education.

The differences and disparities, which now exist within the present system, are so marked and wide that the institutions cannot respond to the social and economic needs of the period. The system, as at present, consists of Universities which are State-funded, and the lack of enough public resources is a major problem

faced by the Universities. There is a demand for equality of status; this is on the basis of the need for similar facilities for all universities. Students demand facilities similar to those available in the established Universities, and the Government is faced with a dilemma as to how to reconcile such divergent demands in the context of severe financial constraints. In other words, there are two sectors, the privileged and the under-privileged; for instance, the University of Peradeiya is in the privileged sector, because it was the only planned residential university in the country. Therefore the question has arisen whether the existing system could be diversified by allowing private providers to share a part of the burden; this question of private participation in the sphere of university education has been a highly controversial matter, largely because of the fact that free education, which came to be introduced in 1945 as an aspect of an egalitarian political ideology, has become part and parcel of the political culture of the country. It, undoubtedly, is an integral aspect of the country's political culture, and any attempt to dismantle it is certain to be viewed as a policy aimed at the enthronement of the privileged and the rich in the country.

Social needs are very deceptive and they should not be treated as the sole criterion for change in a system of university education, and this is especially relevant to Sri Lanka at this stage of development. In the context of globalisation, higher education is being treated as a commercial product, which, in reality, means that the Universities in the developing countries have to follow global trends. Therefore, the Universities, which are, today a part of a global structure, cannot remain confined to national policy making; in other words, international trends and considerations have to be taken into account in formulating higher educational policy .based on the need for a development of a knowledge society. Universities are still functioning as knowledge producing institutions, which are integrally linked to the process of globalisation, and the change which we envisage in the Sri Lankan system have to focus on this matter as the dynamics of globalisation impinge on the development and expansion of Universities.

CHAPTER I

HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER COLONIAL RULE

This chapter discusses the system of higher education before the establishment of a University in Sri Lanka. In other words, the emphasis is on those tertiary institutions, which constituted a nucleus of a system of University education which, in fact, preceded the establishment of proper institutions of higher education. The British colonial policy made a lasting impact on the system of education, and Sri Lanka, though had a fairly established network of primary and secondary education, took more than a century to establish an institution of higher education. Though the British sovereignty over the island was established in 1815, no worthwhile attempt was made to establish a University type institution till 1921; it was in 1921 that the University College was established on the basis of the colonial objectives of higher education. The higher education institutions were created primarily for the purpose of providing the required manpower for the colonial administration.

The institutions of higher learning established during this period were primarily affiliated institutions, and the affiliating system of University education was a colonial legacy, and it, in terms of policy, fell in line with the limited colonial objectives in higher education. In the affiliated system, higher education is offered in institutions that are affiliated to a University. An 'affiliated' institution is a higher education institution which affiliates itself with a University to provide instruction and to prepare students for examinations. In this type of set up, each such affiliated college is in itself an embryo University, except that considerable external control, especially over courses and standards of instruction, exists and vested in the University to which the college is affiliated. This pattern existed in many a country which came under British colonialism.

It was the Colebrooke Commission which saw education as a means of opening the door for the Ceylonese to get into administrative posts which hitherto remained the exclusive monopoly of the Europeans. The changes, which the Colebrooke Commission proposed, could not be realised without radical changes in the existing structure of education.[1] The system of education, which was confined to primary and secondary education, remained dominated by Missionaries, both American and Wesleyan, who claimed a monopoly of education until the re-organisation of the state system which commenced much

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[1] De Silva, K.M. ed. History of Ceylon. Vol.111; University of Ceylon,1973,p.175

later, with the implementation of the recommendations of the Colebrooke Commission in 1834.[2] It was on the recommendation of the Colebrooke Commission that a School Commission was established and it, as the critics often mentioned, came to be dominated by the clergy in the country; Buddhists were represented in it but this Commission, which was expected to supervise and direct the establishment of schools, became an instrument of Anglican policy.[3] The opinion among the clergy, who more or less directed the educational policy of the Government, was to 'educate the natives of Ceylon in connection with the established Church'.[4] The School Commission, though was reorganized in 1841, failed to direct an appropriate education policy due to differences between the laymen and the clergy, because of which the School Commission failed to function as an effective educational body. It would not be inappropriate to quote Colebrooke on this subject of the dominant position of the clergy within the educational system. Colebrooke wrote that 'in England the population is Christian and therefore it is natural that all the schools and colleges should be Christian establishments, but we have, I think very absurdly, carried the same system into the schools here where the people are generally Buddhists or Hindus, and of the greatest defects of our system of schools, is in my opinion, that it has got too much into the hands of the clergy. It has been considered more as an instrument for the conversion of the people to Christianity than 'of general improvement in civilization'.[5] This, therefore, displayed how he has been influenced by utilitarianism of the period. In a way, it made a significant contribution in establishing an institutional framework for the propagation of English education with which the colonial authorities wanted to pave the way for the growth of a class of Ceylonese 'who stood apart from the mass of their countrymen'.[6]

This, in fact, was based on their policy on English education which aimed at the creation of an English-educated elite, and it was on the basis of this policy that Colebrooke recommended the government to establish and maintain only English schools. It was Colebrooke's view that education was not only an exportable commodity but it should bring with it the whole cultural pattern of the West.[7] Therefore the Colebrooke Commission recommended that the Government should not spend money on vernacular schools but should concentrate

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[2] Ruberu,Ranjit. Educational Work of the Christian Societies in Ceylon during the early years of British Rule, in The Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies,Vol.3,No.2,1960,p.158.

[3] Holmes, Brian. British Imperial Policy and the Mission Schcols. London, 1965, p.20

[4] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.176.

[5] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p. 177

[6] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.177

[7] Sumathipala, K.H.M. History of Education in Ceylon, Colombo, 1968, p.ll

on-English education.[8] Colebrooke, in keeping with the colonial policy on education, wanted to create a class of Ceylonese in blood and colour but Christian in culture, and this was implicit in his recommendation that the Government should 'aid the disposition already evinced by the natives to cultivate European attainments'.[9] The purpose was to achieve two objectives; one is to propagate English education and thereby to create a class of English educated, and secondly, to pave the way for the Ceylonese to get into the administrative services of the country. Therefore, it was the view of Colebrooke that a competence of the English language should however be required in the principal native functionaries throughout the country. The prospect of future advancement to situations hitherto exclusively held by Europeans would constitute a most powerful inducement with the natives of high caste to relinquish many absurd prejudices, and to qualify themselves for general employment.[10] It was their view that through English education the doors are to be opened for the local people to get into public employment.

In this way opportunities were to be created to enter the Civil Service of the country. This amply demonstrates that the educational policy, specially the policy in the sphere of higher education was determined by vocational and political considerations, and it, in addition, depended on the island's financial resources. It was the Governor Fredrick North, who proposed to send two youths from state schools, every year, and after eight years of study in one of the ancient British Universities, primarily Oxford and Cambridge, they were to return to receive ordination as Christian Ministers. [11] Colebrooke, referring to this particular scheme which benefited two aristocratic families in the low country areas of the country, stated that 'it would be impracticable for individuals, even of the most respectable classes, to support the expenses attending the acquirement of a liberal education in Europe, and if attainable, the advantages of affording to them the means of education in their own country are in many respects greater'.[12] It was his view that the benefits of sending young Ceylonese to Europe, and maintaining them at English Universities were not commensurate with the expenses incurred.[13] His view was that affording them the means of education in their own country is in many respects greater, and superior advantages could be derived by establishing a local institution, the expenses of which are inconsiderable.[14] The philosophy

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[8] Holmes, Brian. op.cit;pp 77-118.
[9] Mendis, G.C. op.cit;p.72.
[10] Mendis, G.C. op.cit; Vol, 1, p.70.
[11] Pieris,Ralph. Universities, Politics and Public Opinion in Ceylon, in Minerva, 1964, p.436.
[12] Mendis, G.C. Colebrooke-Cameron Papers,Vol.l,p.71.
[13] Ibid; p.71.
[14] Ibid;.p.71.

behind this move was to 'form a nucleus of a class attached to their country by birth, and to England by education'.[15] It was in 1811 that two sons of Chiefs were sent to Oxford and Cambridge respectively.[16] Such scholars, who made use of this facility in the period 1812 to 1834 were specially ordained as Christian ministers. J.H. de Saram was at the Exeter College, Oxford and received a MA in 1820.[17] His cousin, Balthasar de Saram, who found it difficult to adapt himself to English conditions, was at Trinity College, Cambridge.[18]

The objective of this scheme established during the early phase of British rule was the creation of an English-speaking Christian class from whose ranks personnel for the public services and other positions of authority could be recruited.[19] Colombo Journal of 11 January, 1832, the only newspaper published by the Government, openly supporting the scheme stated that 'a body of men, respectable from superior education and property, is absolutely necessary as a means of good government'.[20] Sir Edward Barnes, who was Governor of the Island from 1824 to 1831, was critical of the Colebrooke proposals, and he, in fact, stated that Colebrooke's knowledge of Ceylon was superficial.[21] Colebrooke's proposal for the gradual recruitment of natives to offices held by Europeans was treated to be 'ludicorous in view of their lack of Western education'.[22] It was true that the higher administrators and higher technical cadre too came from England; only those positions in the clerical and lower grades in the public services were available to the local people and they in fact came to be recruited from the established families loyal to the British. Sir Edward Barnes also opposed the entry of Ceylonese into the public service, and he stated that 'I know not a single high situation held by a member of the Civil Service which is an object of ambition to any native nor do I know any native calculated to execute the duties of such a situation, or whose appointment would give confidence to his fellow countrymen'.[23] In spite of such criticism, the majority of the recommendations were implemented, and the Government was firmly committed to the establishment of more English schools; the vernacular education was left to the missionaries. It was the view of the Government that the existing Sinhalese and Tamil schools did not provide sufficient education to meet contemporary needs. It

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[15] C.O. Records 54/5, 1801
[16] Pieris,Paul. Sinhalese Families Vo1.V,1911.
[17] He was described as Fourth Maha Mudaliyar
[18] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p. 436
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Bailey, Sydney. Ceylon. London, 1952, p.99.
[22] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p.436
[23] Quoted in Bailey, Sydney.op.citjp.99.

was their opinion that all native functionaries in government should possess a competent knowledge of the English language.[24] This, in fact, represented a major shift in policy and it reflected a change in the British colonial policy which, by this time, came to be influenced by utilitarianism.

It was this change in colonial educational policy which subsequently compelled the colonial authorities in the Island to take measures to make English-education freely available. In Ceylon, as in all colonial territories of the period, the needs of the public services determined the pattern and content of education. T.L. Green, supporting this contention, wrote that' whether or not Western education aimed first at religious conversion is unclear; that it had a vocational purpose in producing clerks and other such servants of State is certain, as it is that it sought to realign the loyalties of some in terms of ruler identification'.[25] During the early part of the 19th century the limited revenue of the colony allowed only a small expenditure on education, and this had an impact on public employment which was dominated by Europeans. It was their belief that the replacement of costly Europeans with local talent could considerably improve the finances of the colony. It, therefore, meant that English education was necessary for the introduction of fundamental changes in society.[26] The establishment of a college in Colombo-Academy in Colombo was recommended and its purpose, as stated by the Colebrooke Commission, was to afford 'native youths a means of qualifying themselves for different branches of the public service'.[27] It was to be established in Slave Island in Colombo and the recommendation was that an English Professorship to be maintained by the government. Yet another view of Colebrooke was that 'this institution, if it should be effectually supported by the inhabitants, would give great encouragement to the elementary schools, and afford to native youths a means of qualifying themselves for different branches of the public service'.[28] This Academy in Colombo was to be staffed by teachers from Britain and it, as anticipated by the British, was confined to a number of upper class Ceylonese children. As S.J.Tambial mentioned, colonial power often used the aristocratic elements to stabilise themselves in power and their privileged position was partly contingent on their learning the conqueror's language and art of governments.[29] In addition to the Academy in Colombo, the Government

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[24] See Chandrasegaram, P. Policies regarding Higher Education in Ceylon.MA Thesis, London, 1961

[25] Green, T.L. Education and Society in Ceylon, in Educand Vol.ll,No.3,1956,p.53.

[26] Warnapala, Wiswa. Civil Service Administration in Ceylon. Colombo, 1974.p.12.

[27] Mendis,G.C. op.cit;p*74.

[28] Ibid;p.74.

[29] Tambiah, S.J. Ethnic Representation in Ceylon's Higher Administrative Service 1870-1946, in University of Ceylon Review Vol. XIII, No. 2& 3,1955, p.113

established schools in Kandy and Galle, and the opportunities in English education benefited the Burghers in the initial phase, and the next group of people were the members of the Mudaliyar class, and they were quick to see the importance of acquiring a knowledge of English.[30] Once their children completed the education at the Academy, they were sent abroad; for instance, the Mudaliyar of Hanwella sent his son to Calcutta. In addition through the social respectability which they achieved through English education, they were able to make a stronger claim for public employment. James de Alwis, for instance, wrote that 'the necessity for English-speaking men was so greatly felt at the time that both the parents and teachers devoted their most earnest and exclusive attention, in the education of the young, to teach them English. Without a knowledge of English in those days, the natives could not get any employment and the Government could not be carried on without English speaking natives'.[31]

Though a school was established in Kandy with the objective of teaching the sons of the Kandyan chiefs, the Kandyans showed little enthusiasm and it was this apathy which could be attributed to the 'slowness of Kandyans to appreciate government employment'.[32] It needs to be mentioned that English education became 'one of the major channels of individual and familial advancement in British Ceylon'.[33] Jeronis Pieris and several generations of the Pieris family treated English education as the surest path to an elite status which the Christianized low country upper classes enjoyed whereas the Kandyan aristocratic elements were slow to appreciate the usefulness of an English education. According to Kumari Jayawardene, the low country Mudaliyars were the first to send their children for a foreign education, which, in the first phase, included theological-education. But by the latter period of the century, they obtained medical and law degrees from foreign universities.[34] Jayawardene, while making a detailed assessment of the impact of English education on those powerful families stated that it represented 'an important example of an attempt to thoroughly assimilate and identify with the British way of life'[35] It would be useful at this stage to quote T.B. Panabokke to see the changing attitude of the Kandyan traditional elite families; Panabokke, for instance wrote that 'a knowledge of

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[30] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.p.178.

[31] De Alwis, James. Memoirs and Desultory Writings. Colombo,1878,p.116 (Edited by A.C. Seneviratne)

[32] Ryan, Bryce. Status, Achievement and Education in Ceylon, in Journal of Asian Studies, Vol.XX, No.4 August, 1961 p. 471

[33] Roberts, Michael. Facets of Modern Ceylon History. Through the Letters of Jeronis Pieris. Colombo,1975tP.25.

[34] Jayawardene K; Nobodies to Somebodies. The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeosie in Sri Lanka. Colombo, 2003, pp 249-259

[35] Ibid;p.258

English meant so much: power, office and a means of livelihood'.[36] It was one of the Panabokkes who came-to a school of a Church Missionary Society in Kotte. In other words, the Colombo Academy established in 1835 for the purpose' of imparting some kind of higher education had an impact on other secondary schools which began to provide some form of higher education. Certain secondary schools sent few students to Calcutta to learn Medicine.

By the turn of the century, several Colleges were established through Christian missionary initiative, and they were supported by the Government because they turned out personnel for the Government service. These Colleges, founded and run by the Christian missionaries provided Matriculation courses leading to University degrees, or at least to the levels of intermediate examination which, from the point of view of the Government, was considered superior to the Senior School Leaving Certificate with which a person could obtain white collar employment. The most important College was Colombo Academy, popularly known as Queens College, which was affiliated to Calcutta University in 1859. It was renamed Royal College in 1881, and it was the first educational institution to begin some kind of higher education in the country. Up to 1909, 34 free Government scholarships at the Royal College were provided for boys whose education was considered desirable, but whose means did not permit them from paying the usual fees. These scholars were entitled to free tuition as day students, and they were nominated by the Director of Public Instruction after careful inquiry into the claims of parents and the character and abilities of the boys themselves. Though the full number was not given, it introduced a competitive element into admissions to the College.[37] It, being the leading College in the country, prepared students for examination for London University external degree programmes. The Colombo Academy was at the apex of the system of education and it gained a reputation as one institution which gave the best available education in the country.[38] Its curriculum was planned on the lines similar to what was available in the Grammar Schools in England.[39] Queens College was started as a part of the Academy for preparing students for Calcutta University entrance examination; it later became an affiliated College of the University of Calcutta and prepared students for both intermediate and final examinations of that University. It was this relationship which eventually expanded the institution. Most students, though got registered for external degrees, did not proceed beyond the intermediate

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[36] Panabokke and Halangoda. The Autobiography of T.B.Panabokke.Kandy,1938 P.11

[37] Vide Legislative Council Hansard 1909-1911,April 24,1911,p.421

[38] Central School Commission Report,1852.

[39] Ruberu,Ranjit. School Commission of Ceylon 1834-1867, in University of Ceylon Review,Vol.20,No.2,1962,p.264

examination. It took more than five years for a student to obtain the Bachelor's degree, and there were many 'failed' BAs. The Colombo Academy had an influence on the establishment of similar Colleges in other parts of the country; St. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia (1851) Trinity College, Kandy (1857) Jaffna Central College (1870) St. Johns, Panadura (1891) Jaffna College (1878) Wesley College(1878) St .Joseph College, Colombo (1892) and Ananda College (1895) followed, the example of the Colombo Academy, and were affiliated to Madras or Calcutta Universities.

The American Missionary activities in Jaffna made a significant impact on English education in Jaffna and Jane Russel, writing on this aspect, stated that 'the level of English education imparted in Jaffna was much higher than elsewhere in Ceylon'.[40] During this period, American Missionary activities began to expand and Jaffna became the centre of their operations. By 1822, there were 42 schools in the Pennisula and, in 1823, the Batticoloa Seminary was set up in Vaddukodai. It was a true boarding school and there were four other schools in areas such as Tellipallai, Uduvil, Panderuppu and Manipai. It was in Manipai that the earliest Medical College was established and it produced doctors who practised in Sri Lanka and India. According Emerson Tennent, the standards in these schools was comparable to that of "a University.[41] The Colleges, as Ruberu had explained prepared students for external examinations of the Universities of Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. Cambridge, Oxford and London examinations were introduced in 1860 and many Colleges began to prepare students for those examinations.[42] The Colleges, run by the Missionaries, imitated the public schools in Britain and established those traditions in Ceylon. Though the Government supported them with grants; they charged fees which only wealthy parents could afford to pay, because of which these Colleges offered opportunities to children of wealthy families. It was through these Colleges that a new elite of learned men were created by the end of the nineteenth century.

In the period 1850- 19l0, the country witnessed the expansion of governmental activities and the British colonial administration was beginning to show an important change, the impact of which was seen in the increased recruitment into responsible positions of the administrative hierarchy in the country.[43] The change was such that many of the products of the Colleges were

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[40] Russell, Jane. Communal Politics under the Donoughmore Constitution 1931-47. Tisara Praksakayo, Colombo, 1982, P..22

[41] Ibid; P.21.

[42] Ruberu, Ranjit 'Missionary Education in Ceylon' in Holmes, Brian ed. British Imperial Policy and the Mission Schools. London, 1965.

[43] Tambiah, S.J. op.cit;,p.117.

able to find employment within the Government departments and the commercial establishments of the country. The possession of a school examination certificate was sufficient to get into public employment through which they were able to obtain elite status and this gave them considerable social prestige. By 1880, the country had a ready made examination system to cater to these products from the Colleges and the British Universities; primarily Cambridge began to conduct examinations. The University of London, since 1881, began to conduct examinations and it enabled the Ceylonese youths to obtain a University degree without entering a University.[44] The rapid increase in revenue of the country which began with the prosperity of tea and rubber, was accompanied by an increase in expenditure on education. Consequently, the popular demand for education and particularly English education increased to a remarkable degree with the growing prosperity of the Ceylonese.[45] In addition, the Mudaliyar class, the small landowner and the cultivator who has prospered under these changes believed that 'education will make a clerk of his son or fit him for a learned profession'.[46] The school system came to be graded and in the higher grades of the English schools, the standard of instruction maintained was enough to sit the entrance examination to a University. As Ralph Pieris rightly pointed out, it was through the spread of English education that the colonial elite, though came from the undifferentiated high ranking families, came to be differentiated; the elite, on the basis of this principle, remained restricted but it expanded the base of the colonial elite.[47] The spread of Western education, with its growing emphasis on English education, weakened the status system dependent upon tradition, localism and immobility.[48] This showed that the introduction and spread of English education had laid a strong foundation for the emergence of an educated elite in-the country. According to Marshall Singer, who studied the emerging elite and its association with the political leadership in the country, concluded that education had an enormous impact on traditional indigenous elite, whose powers were weakened to pave the way for the emergence of a Westernised elite.[49] The primary factor for this kind of change was the spread of English education.

It was during this period that several changes in the sphere of higher education took place in India, and those changes had a major impact on the

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[44] Mills, Lennox. Ceylon under British Rule 1795-1932.London,1933,p.264.
[45] Ibid; p. 264
[46] Ibid; p. 264.
[47] Pieris, Ralph. 'New Elites in Ceylon', in Pieris, R. Social Development and Plannina in Asia. New Delhi,1970,pp.237-247.
[48] Ryan, Bryce. Caste in Modern Ceylon. USA, 1953, p.307
[49] Singer, Marshall. The Emerging Elite. A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon. Pittsburgh, 1964, p.29.

development of higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. The Indian Universities Act of 1857 established the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, and they were· constituted on the general plan of the University of London.[50] They began to function purely as examining bodies to those institutions which were affiliated to them. The power of affiliating Colleges to a University was vested not in the Universities themselves but in the Government. The Acts of 1882 and 1887, with which the Universities of Punjab and Allabha'd were created, followed the same principles incorporated in the Act of 1857. It, in other words, meant that the University was only an examining Corporation-and the powers of affiliating colleges were vested with the Government.[51] The Colleges, which were established in Sri Lanka to provide opportunities for higher education, maintained links with the Indian Universities; the Colleges in Sri Lanka were affiliated to the Universities of Madras and Calcutta. Though higher education opportunities were to be expanded, the principal objective of an English education was to prepare students for particular occupations. Ruberu, writing on Missionary Education in Ceylon, stated that 'in the 19th century an education intended to improve the cultural development of pupils was less important to the average Ceylonese than one which prepared him for future employment'.[52] The kind of education given in the missionary schools of the period broadened the outlook of those who received it. The curriculum consisted of such subjects as Latin, Greek, Western Classics, Science, Mathematics, Philosophy, History and Geography. The indigenous languages, which later became popular as Oriental or Indo-Aryan Languages as Sinhalese, Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit, began to be taught in the Colleges which prepared students for Indian and English University examinations. One pernicious effect of this system of education was that the upper class Sinhalese, though they became proficient in Greek and Latin, were not able to read Sinhalese. This was the nature of the de-nationalisation of the Sinhalese gentry. This was the view of James de Alwis who stated that 'even amongst the higher classes a knowledge of their own language was confined to a bare ability to read and write, and that too with indifference. Even such scanty learning was given up in course of time'.[53]

It was in this context and also in the background of educational changes in India that the Government took measures to improve educational opportunities in the country. The system of education, under which English education was confined to the maintenance of few superior English schools

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[50] Littlehailes, R. Progress of Education in India, 1922-27, Vol.1, Govt. of India Culcutta, 1929, p.52.
[51] Ibid; pp. 52-66
[52] Holmes, Brian. op.cit;p.99.
[53] De Alwis, James. op.cit;p.16.

established by the Central School Commission, came under attack by some leading English educated Ceylonese in the Legislative Council.[54] In the period 1850-1870, the developments in the sphere of education did not keep pace with the developments in the country; in 1868 the Government had only eighteen English schools with 1908 pupils and forty one anglo-vernacular schools with 1949 pupils. However, there were sixty three Government vernacular schools with 3624 pupils. In 1870 the School Commission, which had lost its authority, was abolished; the Committee appointed in 1865 made a number of recommendations.[55] In the sphere of higher education, an important change was made by abolishing the Colombo Academy's link with the University of Calcutta. It was the upper section of the Colombo Academy which prepared students for examinations of the University of Calcutta. The opening of the Suez canal created opportunities for students to go to a British University and promising students were awarded scholarships.[56] Now, as for higher education, Ceylon began to look to England instead of India. By the middle of the 19th century, Victorian society had its counterpart in Ceylon and the English educated, in outlook and style of life, had gone far on the path of Westernisation.[57] The social consequence of this development, in effect, meant the differentiation of the English-educated population into two segments, and it was a direct result of the expansion of educational opportunities. This expansion of education which accompanied the coffee boom in the country was halted, and the official attitude was to, follow restrictive policy towards opportunity for English education. Jennings wrote that demand for English education was not due to any love of English or even of the English. It was due mainly to the fact that English education enabled the Sinhalese and the Tamils, like the Burghers, to obtain posts in the Government service. It was more desired because it was difficult to obtain, had to be purchased, and therefore had a scarcity value.[58] This was the position before many more institutional changes were made in respect of higher education in the country.

It is at this stage that we need to devote our attention to some of the changes in the period after 1870; there were a number of fundamental changes which affected higher education during this period. In the period 1850- 1910, the structure of Government expanded and several departments came into existence; some departments came to be organised on a regional basis. It was this change that compelled the Government to expand the colonial public bureaucracy, and the

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[54] De Silva, K.M. op.cit; p.182.
[55] Mendis, G.C. Ceylon under the British. Colombo, 1945, pp.106-107
[56] Mendis, G.C. op.cit; p.107.
[57] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit; p.438
[58] Jennings, Ivor. The Commomwealth in Asia.Oxford,1951, p.42.

Government began recruiting more Ceylonese to responsible positions of the administrative hierarchy.[59] Such developments had an inevitable effect on education, which, by this time, had produced an enormous demand.[60] The establishment of a Department of Public Instruction was considered a step in the right direction, and it was under this institution that the number of schools increased rapidly.[61] In 1872 there were 200 Government schools with 10,852 pupils, and 402 grant-in-aid schools with 25,443 pupils. The number of schools doubled and the rate of literacy too rose.[62] Yet another important feature of the period was the establishment of Buddhist schools associated with the Buddhist revival, and it was able to break the monopoly of English education by the Christian missionaries. Ananda College, the leading Buddhist school, was opened in 1895. Besides two ancient centre of Buddhist learning, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas came to be established in 1870, and they, eventually, turned out to be institutions specialising in Oriental Studies. The nationalist, Anagarika Dharmapala, who inaugurated a period of Buddhist renaissance, spoke on education, and he adopted a very different position on education. It was his conviction that problems of Ceylon could only be solved by the sons of the soil. He said that 'we require men of education with brains to lead the people and to defend their interests from the Western free-booters who come here to ruin our people by giving them alchohol'.[63] He urged the young men in Ceylon to study politics, philosophy, history and industrial economics, and to go to the root causes of national decay.[64] He was concerned with an educational policy which could produce such leaders; he was critical of the vernacular schools which did not have proper facilities. He was equally critical of the facilities available for higher education. He argued that expenditure on higher education of the children of four million of Ceylonese was less than the salary paid to the Governor. While expressing his dissatisfaction with the facilities for higher education, he stated that 'the education that we get in our local scholastic institutions does not make us men, but ill-paid clerks, and to get a higher qualification, as it is impossible in Ceylon, I should ask you to migrate to Madras, Calcutta, Benares, Bombay, Lahore, Aligarh or Rangoon. Men who pass examinations in either of the Indian Universities are employed as judges of the High Court with a monthly salary of Rs.4000/, and the cost of education is three times lower than what you have to pay in Ceylon. What we got in Ceylon is a bastard education.[65] This was a scathing

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[59] Tambiah, S.J. op.cit; p.117
[60] Ibid; p.118
[61] Mendis, G.C. op.cit;p.127
[62] Ibid; p. 127
[63] Guruge, Ananda. Anagarika Dharmapala. Colombo, 1967, p.71.
[64] Ibid; p.71.
[65] Ibid; p.72

attack on the system of education then prevalent in Ceylon. He also said that 'there is no University, no technical college, no arts school, no industrial school and no weaving school'.[66] He was a strong supporter of scientific and technological education.

The Government of the period was so keen to connect English education in Ceylon with that of England rather than that of India. The immediate result of this was the introduction of Cambridge examinations in Ceylon, and the English schools were encouraged to provide University scholarships on the results of the Cambridge senior examination; the scholarships which hitherto remained restricted to students of the Colombo Academy were now opened to general competition.[67] This, in fact, became the only provision available for higher education. According to Charles Collins, the university scholarship scheme proved most popular and useful.[68] One major objective of this kind of education policy was to create an English-speaking elite loyal to the colonial master. With the expansion of Universities in India after 1857, the imperial policy with regard to higher education underwent a change, and students were encouraged to go to India. In the early part of the 19th century, the Government of Ceylon continued to depend on overseas institutions to meet the needs of higher education. The view was that the Queens College was not much of a success as an institution of higher learning; the first English university scholarship awarded in 1870 was won by J. Casie Chetty who entered Exeter College, Oxford.[69] Prof. G.P. Malalasekera, writing on this matter, stated that it 'enabled venturesome students to obtain university degrees without actually entering a university'.[70]

In the sphere of medical and legal education, a fundamental change took place and it paved the way for the establishment of a Ceylonese system of higher education. Before the establishment of the Ceylon Medical College in 1870, the Ceylonese students interested in a medical qualification got training at the Bengal Medical School in Calcutta, and the first batch of students trained at this school joined the Medical services in 1843, and this was after four years of stay in India. The need for a Medical school was first pointed out by the Colonial Surgeon to the Northern province, who, in his report for 1869 on the depopulation of certain districts, including Vanni, drew attention to 'the necessity for providing medical education in Ceylon in order to make medical assistance

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[66] Ibid;
[67] Mendis, G.C. op. cit; p.128.
[68] Sumathipala, K.H.M. op. cit; p.23
[69] Hundred Years of Education in Ceylon. Chapter 73, p.868.
[70] Collins, Charles. Public Administration in Ceylon.London, 1951 p.91

generally available and to displace the present class of ignorant quacks'.[71] The Principal Medical Officer, as an initial measure, recommended the establishment of an elementary school for practical instruction in medicine, surgery and midwifery. This scheme was accepted by the Colonial Government and the Medical College came into existence in 1870. The colonial policy on the provision of medical services to the people in the colony underwent a change, and this, as expected, had an effect on the Medical College. The Council of the Medical College wanted a new building in 1910. The view was that the success attained by the Ceylonese who have followed the profession of medicine has been well marked. The number of qualified doctors and apothecaries trained at the College have been sufficient to enable the Government to recruit from among them almost the whole of the Civil Medical Department.[72] In the year 1880, there were only 39 students, while in 1916 the number increased to 220; this included the two categories of Medical and apothecary students. Inadequate buildings and accommodation were problems which required immediate attention.

It was during this period that some attention was paid to both the study of Agriculture and Engineering. The idea was to convert the Botanical Department at Peradeniya into a Department of Agriculture; and initially to establish a provincial School of Agriculture. Yet another area in which the colonial policy underwent a change was in respect of Technical education. Technical College had been set up for the preliminary training of candidates for employment in the Survey, Postal and Railway Departments. The superintendence of the Technical School was in the hands of a Board of Management consisting of the Colonial Secretary, the Director of Public Instruction, the Surveyor General, the General Manager of the Railways and the Post Master General. The idea was to make the Ceylon Technical College an institution for greater practical utility.[73] In the sphere of Engineering studies, the opportunities were made available for students to obtain Government scholarships at the Madras College of Engineering. Yet another incentive given to these students was the institution of a higher scholarship for the purpose of proceeding to England for further training. It was originally proposed to establish six scholarships at the Madras College of Engineering, with a view to their ultimate appointment to junior posts in the Public Works Department and the Irrigation Department. A Departmental Training School for surveyors was organised; for administrative purposes, it was separated from other technical classes and placed solely under the control of the Surveyor General. At the start, this course was in the Technical college. The elementary

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[71] See Malalasekera, G.P. in Hundred Years of Education in Ceylon, p.868.
[72] Legislative Council Hansard, April 24,1911, p.114
[73] Legislative Council Hansard, April, iii JI 1911.

status of the Medical College was changed and it became the Ceylon Medical College which, in 1889, came to be registered by the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom. It needs to be mentioned that from the beginning medical education in Ceylon was better organised than other fields of higher education. It was in 1873 that a Council of Legal Education was set up, and the Ceylon Law College was established in 1887 to undertake direct professional training of lawyers. It was in this way that the two leading professional institutions in Law and Medicine- came into existence. In the field of Technical education, the Ceylon Technical College was established in 1893. It was established to meet the demands (both public and private) for instruction in the different branches of engineering, and Government scholarships were provided by the Government to go to the Madras College of Engineering. The successful students were to get scholarships to proceed to England for further training. It was originally proposed to establish six scholarships for the training of Engineering students in the Engineering class at the Madras College with a view to giving them appointments to junior posts in the Public Works and Irrigation Departments.[74] As the Ceylon Medical College, the Technical College too functioned as a Government Department.

By the beginning of the 20th century, significant institutional changes had taken place in the field of higher education but the country continued to depend on overseas institutions for higher education. It was during this period that certain members of the Legislative Council discussed the question of affiliation to Indian Universities, and a Sub-Committee of the Legislative Council recommended that the affiliation of colleges with the University of Calcutta should be discontinued. P. Coomaraswamy, one of the unofficial members of the Legislative Council, proposed that a Committee be appointed to review the state of higher education in Ceylon. It was on the basis of the recommendations of this Sub-Committee that a proper relationship with the British Universities came to be established. Certain aspects of the examination system of the University of Calcutta were criticized saying that 'it was the most pernicious system of instruction, namely cramming.' The system of higher education, which was in an incipient form, became very much British-oriented; the British University examinations set the standards in the secondary schools and the London University external examinations began to offer higher educational opportunities to those parents who could not send their sons to England. The association with the British system of examinations came to be strengthened during this period. Though the Cambridge examinations were introduced, the schools in the North continued to prepare pupils for Calcutta and Madras examinations. In 1907, as a result of the

[74] Legislative Council Hansard 1909-1911,p.420.

recommendations of the Curzon Committee on Education, Colleges were assigned to Universities according to territory and those in Ceylon were placed under the University of Madras. It was only in 1911 that Jaffna College, though conducted degree level classes, severed its connection with the University of Madras.

This amply demonstrated that the pattern of higher education was undergoing a change to pave the way for the establishment of a University of Ceylon. It was in this background that a movement came to be launched for the purpose of clamaoring for the establishment of a University in Ceylon.

CHAPTER – II

CEYLONESE DEMAND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

It would be interesting to begin this discussion on the demand for Higher Education by the educated elite of the country with a reference to India. As we have already mentioned, it was in 1857 that three Universities were founded in India, and they had an influence on India's destiny as profound as the popular uprising that took place the same year.[1] The Universities of this period were also a crucible of nationalism and the young men and women, who studied at such institutions of higher learning, learnt to question the logic of colonial rule. Many thousands of people who participated in the nationalist struggle of India were educated at these Universities, and they 'trained those who led and manned the freedom struggle'.[2] It is known that the impact of the Indian struggle was felt within the political developments in Ceylon; this integral relationship between certain elements of the Indian nationalist movement and Universities, undoubtedly, influenced the Ceylonese agitation for the establishment of a University in Ceylon.

The extension of secondary education had expanded to such an extent that there was a group of potential University students whose higher educational opportunities, unfortunately, were limited to the Medical and Law Colleges and the external degrees of the University of London.[3] Such restrictive higher educational opportunities came to be questioned by the educated middle class who examined the issue of the availability of higher educational opportunities from the point of view of the need to enhance the level of employment. Yet another factor, which provided an impetus to the emerging nationalist forces advocating the establishment of a University, was the Buddhist Theosophical Society, founded in 1880, for the promotion of Buddhist education in the country. In addition, the country, by this period, had witnessed the emergence of a number of organisations and associations engaged in the nationalist struggle. Weerawardene, writing on the emerging middle class in the country, stated that 'it

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[1] Pandey, Ira. ed. Beyond Degrees. Finding Success in Higher Education.Delhi,2008,p.2

[2] Ibid;p.3., Both Gandhi and Ambedkar had their early education at the Bombay University. C.R. Das and Subash Chandra Bose went to Caicutta. University while C. Rajagopalachari and C. Subramaniam studied at the University of Madras. Vide Pandey, Ira. op.cit.

[3] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.469.

was during the close of the century that the middle class attained considerable numbers. This, in fact, was the most important factor in the constitutional development of Ceylon in the first half of the 20th century'.[4] For while the period 1833-1900 saw the controlling power of the Europeans, the beginning of 1900 saw the increasing influence of the Ceylonese middle class. It was the emerging middle class, influenced by the forces of nationalism in neighbouring India, which began to organise themselves into a movement to clamour for the establishment of a University in Ceylon. The formation of the Ceylon University Association, the activities of which later came to be described as the work of 'the University movement', preceded the formation of the main political organisations which, in the subsequent period, committed themselves into a nationalist movement. It was the educated elite, who extracted enough concessions from the then existing system of education dominated by the Christian missionaries, who was at the forefront of this struggle. Michael Roberts, discussing certain aspects of elite formation in the period, stated that 'the social transformation that occurred provided individuals and families with the opportunity of achieving and consolidating national elite status through broad channels: (a) a new avenue of economic enterprise (b) educational acquirements in the English medium in an environment which gave scope, albeit with limitations, for such acquirements'.[5] This provides an example as to the growth of the educated elite interested in the expansion of educational opportunities, primarily those affecting higher education. According to Roberts, the wealth accumulated by the pioneer entrepreneurs enabled them to educate their sons in the best schools in Ceylon and to send them to the Inns of Court in London to become fully-fledged barristers.[6] The second and third generations made use of education to consolidate their economic and social position.

Therefore, educational achievements in professional education provided them the opportunity to enter into the growing category of the national elite, and it was a section of this national elite who saw the lack of facilities for higher education for the children of the emerging middle class.[7] The limited opportunities were available only to a handful of affluent families who could send their sons to Universities abroad.[8] It was in response to this demand for more and

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[4] Weerawardene, I.D.S. Government and Politics in Ceylon.Colombo,1951,p.4

[5] Roberts,Michael. 'Local country Sinhalese plotters of Local elite chauvnists. Direction and Pattern in the 1915 riots' in A Symposium on the 1915 Riots, Ceylon Studies Seminar, Peradeniya,1970,pp.56-57

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[7] De Silva,K.M. op.cit;p.469

[8] Ibid;p.469.

more higher educational opportunities by the emerging middle class, consisting of the English-educated, that the Ceylon University Association was founded in 1906 under the leadership of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1853-1924). The other members of the Association were Sir Marcus Fernando (Vice President) James Pieris {Vice President) S.C.K.Ratnam (Secretary) and C.P.Dias (Treasurer).[9] The university question, as anticipated by the members of the English-educated elite of the period, became a burning issue among-the nationalist leaders in the Ceylon Reform League (1917) and the Ceylon National Congress (1919); it could be surmised that the formation of the Ceylon University Association (1906) had some effect on the emergence of nationalist organisations committed to the freedom struggle, and its Indian counterpart, undoubtedly, made an impact on the movement. Hence, the British administration was not very sympathetic to the stand of the Ceylon University Association, which by this time, had become a forum of much intellectual debate and discussion; and the British authorities feared the cultural and political repercussions of a local University.[10] Yet another concern of theirs was the way in which the Indian Universities, established after 1857, were involved in the nationalist movement of India. It was at the inaugral meeting of the Ceylon University Association held on the 19th January, 1906 in the Pettah Library Hall that two resolutions were discussed. The Chairman of the Association, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, addressing the gathering, spelled out eloquently the numerous arguments in favour of the establishment of a University, some of which have been already mentioned. H.A. Jayawardene, proposing the first resolution, stated that 'the present condition of higher education in Ceylon is unsatisfactory, and this meeting recognised the importance of an efficient system of higher education for national welfare'.[11] He, in fact, stated that 'the money spent on higher education is the best of all national investments', and he was of the view that 'the higher education of this Island should be organised on an efficient footing'.[12] Though there was a system of primary and secondary education, there was no system of higher education in the country. Jayawardene, speaking on the resolution, stated that 'after a boy had passed his Cambridge Senior Local and London Matriculation, he would not find anybody in the Island to teach him anything higher and improve upon that knowledge'.[13] This deficiency could not be corrected by London and Indian examinations; the remedy, therefore, would be in the establishment of a University controlled by learned men and

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[9] Vide Journal of the Ceylon University Association, Vol.l,1906

[10] Sumathipala,K.H.M. op.cit;p.43.

[11] Journal of the Ceylon University Assooiation,Vol.l,No.1,April 1906,p.8.

[12] Ibid;p.8.

[13] Ibid;p.9.

efficient men, and then there would be nothing to be desired in the education of the Ceylonese.

As Arunachalam emphasised in the course of his introductory remarks on the University question, Jayawardene too emphasised 'the absence of the stimulus to study Oriental languages It needs to be noted that one significant aim of the establishment of a University was to stimulate the study of Oriental languages, which later became popular in the University.[14] Dr. Marcus Fernando, through the second resolution, proposed the establishment of a University which can 'adapt the education and culture of the West to the less advanced state of society here and develop the education of the country along the line which experience shows to be the most suited to local conditions and needs.[15] They agreed on the establishment of a University which suits and could adapt to the local conditions, by which they probably meant that it needed to be a University which can take root in the given cultural environment. In that sense, it was not to be a replica of a foreign University. Dr. R. Marcus Fernando, adducing arguments in support of the resolution, stated that 'to get a thorough knowledge of the subject of higher education in Ceylon at the present time, it is of great importance to trace the steps that have been taken in the last thirty years.[16] It was in the course of his explanation that he placed before the audience information relating to the nature of the system of higher education which then existed in Ceylon. According to him, in the seventies- 1870's- almost all the high schools in the country were more or less attached to the Indian Universities. The Colombo Academy, the premier institution of the period, thought that the Indian system was unsatisfactory for Ceylon's needs and they were the first to give up this relationship with the Indian system. It devised a scheme of study which enabled the students to proceed to England to complete their studies. It was the view of Dr. Marcus Fernando that the Colombo Academy was a flowering institution; the course of studies arranged for Ceylonese students contained 'the germs of a future local University'.[17] In other world, it was viewed by the then local elite as a University in the making. By 1880, the Director of Public Instruction introduced Cambridge Local examinations into Ceylon, which hitherto remained a close preserve of the Colombo Academy, and the Government scholarships were made available to all students through a form of public competition. It was mentioned that this step was taken to raise the general level of secondary education throughout the country. A large number of

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[14] It was Dr.C.W. Van Geysel who seconded the motion.
[15] Journal of the Ceylon University Association,Vol.l,No 1.April,1906,p.9.
[16] Ibid;p.10
[17] Ibid;p.10

students benefitted and the Ceylon centre, it was stated, 'has been for years the largest centre for the Cambridge examinations outside the United Kingdom'.[18]

In 1900, the Director of Public Instruction, Mr. Burrows, in his report, examined the issue of establishing something in the shape of a Colonial University Examination to be managed by a body of examiners in England.[19] This was mooted in order to postpone the establishment of a University in Ceylon. Mr. Harward, who succeeded Mr. Burrows as the Director of Public Instruction examined the possibility of making an arrangement with the London University to conduct examinations locally for the BA, B.Sc., and preliminary examination for medical students. Dr. Marcus Fernando made a number of criticisms of this scheme.[20] In brief, his contention was that such examinations, however well they may suit the requirements of English students in England, are 'highly unsatisfactory for Ceylon students'.[21] Rev. R.J.M. Parks, making a speech on the occasion, stated that 'the time has come when the higher education of the country should be settled once for all'.[22] His view was that the desire for higher education is growing everyday, and he quoted the figures pertaining to the Cambridge examination in Ceylon. In 1880, when it was introduced in Ceylon, the number sat was 21. In 1904, 693 candidates sat the examination and the following was the pattern of increase in the numbers.

Year	Number of Students
1880	21
1882	115
1892	316
1902	564
1904	693

This amply demonstrated that the desire for higher education had increased and the time had come 'to develop these educational seeds which the Cambridge examinations have sown'.[23] The argument in favour of the establishment of a University came to be spelled out in the following form: 'Today we are reaping the benefits of the actions of those who introduced these examinations twenty five years ago, and it is the bounden duty of all who

[18] Ibid; p.ll
[19] Ibid
[20] Ibid;pp.12-13.
[21] Ibid;.p.14.
[22] Ibid; p.16
[23] Ibid;p.17

appreciate the worth of education, not merely in itself but as contributing to the welfare of the country, to endeavour to the best system of higher education for the country. It will not merely affect the present generation but its influence will be felt of all time. The London examinations are only suited to the very best students and what is needed is a system which will affect all and improve the education of all and raise it to a higher level'.[24] Rev. R.J.M. Parks, concluding his lengthy observation on the question of the establishment of a University, stated that 'it will not be hard to show that the material for a University is already in existence.'[25] However, critics harped on the idea that there was not enough students to feed a University. In fact, a derogatory remark was made when the University was called 'pigmy University'.[26] It was in the third resolution, which was prepared by S.C.K. Ratnam, that the purpose in forming the Ceylon University Association was spelled out; he, as others, recounted the arguments in favour of the establishment of a University. According to him, the establishment of the University would result in the following advantages.

1. It would unify the present scattered Colleges and introduce and establish an uniform standard of education in the various departments.
2. It would promote efficiency by securing a higher educational status in the various professions.
3. Its influence would permeate to all classes.
4. It would solve the problems of higher education in the country and place it on a solid foundation.
5. As higher education is a national investment, it would result in much good to the country, and it would promote moral improvement and national prosperity.

It was true that the need for University education for the country was raised as far back as 1889. The opinion of the Colonial Government was to provide higher educational opportunities through an active relationship with the University of London.[27] In 1902, the Senate of the University of London decided to continue the Ceylon Centre for Higher Studies. It was during this period that the educated Ceylonese felt that such meager facilities are insufficient and demanded the establishment of a University. This was a period of nationalist revival, within which there was a powerful force of Buddhist revivalism, and it was in this wider context that the demand for the establishment of a University came to be regarded

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[24] Ibid;p.17
[25] Ibid;p.17.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Sumathipala,K.H.M.op.cit;p.42.

as an aspect of national renaissance.[28] The Association, while arguing for the establishment of a University adapted to local needs, mentioned the fact that the London system naturally deleted the oriental surroundings and specially the languages'.[29] They, in fact, argued that the knowledge imparted by a University established in the local soil should be relevant and adequate to the needs of the country and it should include agriculture and science as well as fine arts and music. Such subjects were neglected by the Colleges which then existed, and this imbalance was entirely due to the colonial policy in respect of higher education which came to be guided primarily by the employment needs of the country. It was in this context that the Ceylon University Association envisaged the University as an essential institution for national revival. It is not at all out of place at this stage of our discussion to mention the fact that Oriental languages and studies were revived during the period of the administration of Governor Sir William Gregory.[30] The development of an interest in Oriental Studies and Languages had an impact on nationalists who wanted to look back with pride· to their glorious past.[31] In this way, the seed had been sown for the flowering of cultural nationalism with the revival of vernacular learning and Oriental studies.

It was the same impulse which influenced the stalwarts of the Universities movement to advocate the establishment of a University as an integral element of the process of cultural revival in the country. It was on this issue of the need to resuscitate the oriental culture that several important points of view and different interpretations came to be expressed by the nationalists as well as the members of the Ceylon University Association. Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, for instance, argued in 1906 that 'instruction directed to foreign examinations left pupils uninterested in the subjects they studied, that the majority were strangers to Western culture, while those few who contrived to assmillate a modicum of European culture owing to the Western-oriented background of their homes passed through a curriculum in which the mother tongue was proscribed.[32] Arunachalam was very much interested in arresting this trend of cultural retardation and he thought that the University was the best instrument through which it could be arrested. In the eyes of the early nationalists of the period, 'the creation of a University meant national existence; without sitting idly to arrest the process of

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[28] Pieris,Ralph. op.cit;p.442.

[29] Wimalaratne,K.D.G. 'The Battle of the Sites and the Establishment of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya', Gunawardene,R.A.L.H. ed More Open than Usual. Peradeniya,1992,p.l.

[30] Bastianpillai,B. The Administration of Sir William Gregory 1872-77.Colombo,1968, pp.131-156

[31] Ibid;p.155.

[32] Pieris, Ralph.op.cit;p.442

de-nationalisation, the Ceylonese will have to wake up, as they owed a duty to themselves and to posterity'.[33] It was in this vein that the issue of the establishment of a University with local characteristics penetrated into the island's nationalist movement, and those involved and interested in this task constituted themselves into what later came to be known as the University movement. The Ceylon Social Reform League, founded in 1905, was one of the major organisations associated with the University movement. It published a journal by the name 'The Ceylon National Review', and Ananda Coomaraswamy, who was a leading advocate of cultural renaissance, did not want an 'Anglicised University'. What he recommended was 'an institution which will give education and not merely estimate the amount of knowledge possessed by examiners'.[34] It was to be an institution in which students would acquire 'culture and independence of thought'. He, as the leading Orientalist of the day, made a plea that the new University should dedicate itself to the development of the Oriental languages. He was not opposed to the use of English but was not for the neglect of the mother tongue. Ananda Coomaraswamy, advocating a cultural renaissance in the country, wanted an institution in which students would acquire a knowledge of culture and indigenous languages.[35] As an ardent lover of the Sinhalese traditional culture, most elements of which was embodied in his celebrated work, 'Medieval Art in Ceylon', Coomaraswamy was able to highlight the importance of Sinhalese culture; he, therefore, advocated a University which could resurrect and promote Sinhalese culture, a special aspect of which was the development of Oriental languages. It was this emphasis on the development of Oriental languages in the initial phase of the University movement that eventually helped those subjects to enter the University curriculum in the twenties and forties. Coomaraswamy, as most of the contemporaries of the period, advocated the establishment of a residential University which would 'revitalise and promote indigenous culture, at the same time providing instruction in modern science, medicine, commerce and agriculture'.

It was not only the great orientalist, Ananda Coomaraswamy who ardently advocated the establishment of a University; there were others such as Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan and D.R.Wijewardene.[36] It was in 1906 that Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam expounded his vision on University education; he, in the form of a set of guiding

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[33] Journal of the Ceylon University Association,1906,p.2.

[34] Malalasekera,G.P. in Hundred Years of Education in Ceylon,p.870

[35] Pieris,Ralph. op.cit;p.443.

[36] Ibid.

principles, declared that 'it will be the chief aim of the Ceylon University while making efficient provision for the study of English and the assimilation of 'Western culture, to take care, that our youth do not grow up strangers to their mother tongue and to their past history and traditions. The vernacular literature of the day will then be rescued from its pedantry and triviality and be made a worthy vehicle for the dissemination of what is best in Western and Eastern culture'.[37] He, in fact, argued for a synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures through the portals of a national University which he recognised as a vital instrument of cultural change. It was during this period that most of the nationalist organisations began to champion the cause of a unitary residential University in Ceylon.

Immediately after the formation of the Ceylon University Association for the purpose of promoting the establishment of a University in Ceylon, the participants at the inaugural meeting of the Association appointed a Committee to function as the Executive Committee of the Ceylon University Association.[38] This Committee, consisting of 25 members of the Association, included men such as Dr. Marcus Fernando, S.C. Paul, D.B. Jayatilleke, James Pieris, Charles Dias, H.J.C. Pereira, Ananda Coomaraswamy and P. Arunachalam.[39] Though the Ceylon University Association, was the first organisation to be formed with such a galaxy of educated men in the country, it, did not confine its activities to the clamour for the establishment of a University. For instance, Ananda Coomaraswamy as the most renowned Orientalist of the period, advocated the teaching of Indian Music in Ceylon. He did not specifically say that Indian Music needs to be a University subject; Anada Coomaraswamy, though anticipated the establishment of Chairs of Tamil, Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit, doubted that the University will include a Chair in Music. He wanted Music to be associated with the teaching of Eastern languages.[40] His view was that it was desirable to associate the teaching of Music with the local University, as exactly in every other branch of learning. His other view was that the connection of musical teaching with a recognised University should lead also to further study and research; Yet another subject which attracted the Ceylon University Association was female education; in 1906 the number of females attending both

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[37] See the following publications.

1. Arunachalam, P. Speeches and Writings,pp.182 - 294.
2. Vythialingam, M.ed.Ramanatahn of Ceylon. The Life of Sir P.Ramanathan,vol.II,1977 pp.617-646
3. HUlugalla, A.J. Life and Times of D.R.Wijewardene,Lake House,1960,pp.189-211

[38] Journal of Ceylon University Association,1906,p.25.

[39] Ibid;p.25.

[40] Journal of the Ceylon University Association,Voll,N_o.2 of 1906,p.142.

Government and aided schools was in the region of 64,651 and the number of girls schools in the country was 470. In the entire country, there were 71,060 girls in schools, and this was 28 percent of the girls of school going age. Therefore, the Association saw this as a major imbalance within the system of education; the situation in the higher education sector was worse indeed. The number which sat the Senior Cambridge examination in 1906 was 35, out of which 27 passed and they came from the established elite families. In the Junior Cambridge examination, 70 girls sat the examination and 36 were successful.[41] This shows that the pioneers of the University movement were aware of the importance of female higher education and the changes, as they anticipated with some kind of visionary zeal, made a tremendous contribution to the subsequent process of social and economic change in the country.

Though the Ceylon University Association was at the forefront of the movement for the creation of a University in Ceylon, there were other political organisations which advocated a similar institution of higher learning. Political organisations like Ceylon National Association (1909) and the Ceylon Reform League(1917) too emphasised the fact that the existing system of education, with its bias for Christianised education, 'stunted the education of Ceylonese youth and hampered the growth of national culture'.[42] The continued emphasis on the need to use the University as an instrument of cultural revival did not preclude them from recognising the economic function of a University.

Both Arunachalam and Ramanathan, through the Ceylon University Association, continued to campaign for the establishment of a University on the basis of their ideals, specially those pertaining to the restoration of Oriental Culture and the indigenous languages, and in the course of their advocacy of this idea, they came out with valuable ideas with regard to University education.[43] Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, writing an article titled 'A Plea for a University' in the Journal of the Ceylon University Association in October, 1906, made a strong case for the establishment of a University.[44] They were slow to respond to the demand for the establishment of a University but the idea, had already penetrated into the ranks of the emerging educated elite in the country. In addition, the Christian Missionaries, who dominated the system of education in the island, supported the move to establish a University.[45] Arunachalam, stating that

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[41] Op.cit;Vol. l,No.4 of 1907.
[42] Year Book of the Ceylon Reform League (1917-1918)
[43] Ramanathan,p. op.cit;pp.182-294.
[44] Journal of Ceylon University Association Voll,No.2,October,1906.
[45] Malalasekera,G.P. op.cit;p.868.

the discussions and criticism which the University movement elicited within a very short period of time, amply demonstrated the fact that the country is ripe for the movement.[46] The discussion, though intellectual and political in content and character, highlighted the major drawbacks in the existing higher educational opportunities and the importance of the issue of University education for the country. Several arguments were put forward by the colonial authorities and certain segments of the educated elite, and they focused on two issues. One issue was that the country is not ripe for a University, which, in other words, meant that the main prerequisites for the establishment of a University are not available in the country. The second important argument was that the country does not have a sufficient number of students to feed a University. The degrees of such a University will have no value and in addition, they cannot be compared with those Degrees of Oxford, Cambridge and London. Arunachalam, in an effort to demolish these arguments which emanated from the colonial authorities who saw a potential danger in the establishment of a University on the basis of their experience of the Indian Universities with their integral link with the Indian nationalist movement, argued that 'these objections arise from inattention to the conditions' of the problem and from imperfect knowledge of the facts'.[47]

In all matters of political and educational change in the country, the educated elite in Jaffna never failed to make their contribution, and with regard to University education, the Jaffna Association, the composition of which came from among the educated elite in the region, came out openly in favour of a University. Since the entire Ceylon University movement was some kind of a unique intellectual movement, the Jaffna Association too exhibited such characteristics; they need to be discussed to place the history of this movement in its proper historical setting. The point for consideration in regard to the opening of a new University is not what value its degrees will have but whether it will supply a real want and will contribute materially to the advancement of the people. It was the view of Arunachalam, that the immense differences of race, religion, language and physical and intellectual conditions justify the demand for a University in Ceylon.[48] The students, who desire and propose to study at an English University by paying fees, are not forced to enter the University of Ceylon. The Jaffna Association, discussing the issue of a University stated that 'we have after all a University in Ceylon, though without the name, and they confer degrees without the pomp and circumstance usually attached to the act. There are practically two

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[46] Arunachalam,P. Speeches and Writings,p.182.

[47] Arunachalam;P.op.cit;p.182.

[48] Ibid;p.256.

and very strong faculties - those of Law and Medicine'.[49] In other words, this meant that there was a University in some incipient form. Therefore, what the Jaffna Association demanded was 'a unification of the various resources with a view to increased efficiency and usefulness'[50] 'The Jaffna Association, as others of the University movement, were critical of the London Examinations whose unsuitability to Ceylon youths had been repeatedly expressed.[51] The Jaffna Association, therefore, enumerated all the advantages of a University for Ceylon, and very cogent and effective reasons were given in support of the establishment of a University. It identified the establishment of a University as national existence. It stated that 'we have four languages in the island languishing and in a fair way to extinction. Sanskrit is a language of acknowledged value. Pali's claim to antiquity is not denied. Sinhalese is the language of the majority.

Arunachalam, arguing further on the matter of the value of Ceylon degrees, stated that qualifications obtained at the Ceylon Medical College, the Ceylon Law College and the Ceylon Technical College, have a distinct and appreciable value; the qualifications in both Law and Medicine were similar to British qualifications in the respective fields. According to him, the aim of a Ceylon University was to concentrate these three faculties and add to them faculties of Arts and Science. Countering the argument that there are not enough students for a University, Arunachalam gave details pertaining to students in respective Colleges, and those registered with Universities in India. In Calcutta, there were 61 candidates registered for the Matriculation from Jaffna.[52] It was, therefore, his view that the University can rely on an admission of nearly 850 students, coming from such academic disciplines of Arts, Science, Law, Medicine and Engineering. He, making a comparison with English and Australian Universities, asked the following question: Can it then be said that 850 students are not enough? 'We Ceylonese owe a duty to ourselves and to posterity. Shall we sit idle and do nothing to arrest the process of de-nationalisation already at work'?[53] It was the general opinion of the educated that the process of de-nationalisation could be arrested through the establishment of a University. Yet another thing which came to be highlighted throughout the University movement was the desire to uplift 'the native languages preserved in their ancient glory'.[54] J.K.Chanmugam, the Head Master of the Central College, Jaffna, moved the

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50 Ibid;p.258
51 Ibid;p.253
52 Ibid;p.255
53 Ibid;p.255
54 Ibid;p.258

relevant resolution, 'that in the best interest of education and the general Advancement of the Colony, establishment of a University for Ceylon suitable to its needs and conditions'.[55] M.A.Arulnandan, who seconded the resolution, made a couple of relevant remarks on the examinations available in Ceylon. He referred to both the Law College and the Technical College; the latter, according to him was a 'huge white elephant'.[56] The entire proceedings of the Ceylon University Association showed the intellectual nature of the debate on the question of the establishment of a University. The important presentations before the meetings of the Association and the key speeches indicated that they were quite familiar with the University system in Europe and the vision, which guided the movement, was very much national in outlook; in other words, the pioneers of the University movement advocated a University that can turn out to be a natural national institution. The University, which they envisaged, was to be an embodiment of an ideal. The ideal, based on the views of the stalwarts of the Ceylon University movement, went a bit beyond what Macaulay envisaged via the establishment of Universities in India after 1857; it was Macaulay who said that 'aim should be to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect'.[57] This class was to serve as interpreters between the government and the masses, and who, by refining the vernaculars, would supply the means of widespread dissemination of Western learning'.[58] It was on the basis of this principle that Universities in India came to be built and Lord William Bentnick asserted that the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India. The elite in Ceylon, therefore, had to wage a battle to break away from this mould when advocating the establishment of a University, the characteristics of which could be examined later to find whether they succeeded in establishing a University as an embodiment of an ideal.

The next point which he emphasised was the inevitability of certain examinations conducted in Ceylon. Arunachalam, while making this criticism, mentioned that 'the local needs and conditions are first and most important element for consideration in framing an educational scheme'.[59] It is this principle which has been violated by the adoption of Cambridge and London examinations. He identified the defects in the London Matriculation Examination

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[55] Ibid;p.253

[56] Ibid;p.254.

[57] Ashby,Eric. Universities, British, Indian and African. A Study of Ecology of Higher Education.London,1966,p.52

[58] Ibid;p.52.

[59] Arunachalam,P. Speeches and Writings, p.266.

and the London Intermediate Examination in Arts; he lamented at the lack of provision for the study of Sinhalese, Tamil and Ceylon History or Geography. He, more in the form of an intellectual visionary, saw the significance of traditional disciplines which became very popular at the University of Ceylon in the forties, fifties, and sixties. It was this legacy of the traditional disciplines which created problems within the system and serious adjustments and changes were necessary to realise the proper economic function of the University.

This kind of intellectual debate on aims and functions of a University in Ceylon went on for sometime, and the Ceylon University Association, through a Committee, examined the issues, and came to the conclusion that 'the University is to be not merely an examining but a teaching body'.[60] The Committee, therefore, said that 'it is the teaching function and its influence on the whole educational life of the Island to which we attach importance. The University bring together in one place under the personal influence of Professors of high attainments and culture the best youths in the country'.[61] The vision of the University, which Arunachalam expounded in 1906, was something similar to the ideas expounded by Cardinal Newman who saw the University as a place of teaching universal knowledge.[62] Arunachalam's approach to the subject was that of an intellectual, and it was in the spirit of a scholar-cum-intellectual that he referred to Professors as 'true high priests at the shrine of learning'.[63] He further stated that 'the clash of opinions caused by association and discussion with teachers and fellow students, stimulate intellectual life and create an atmosphere, of culture and loyalty to high ideals. This is the most valuable result of University life, not the learning of books of the passing of examinations. Who can estimate the loss we have suffered for want of such a fountain of intellectual and moral life?'.[64] This provides ample testimony to the fact that early advocates of a University wanted in Ceylon a centre of learning that could guide the development of the country. The Government in Colonial Ceylon was still hesitant on the question of the establishment of a University, and Arunachalam, therefore, stated that 'it is necessary to create and organise public opinion in favour of higher education and a University. When such opinion has been created, and organised, then we can approach the Government and try to convert them to our view's.[65] He, in fact, referred to the establishment of the Calcutta University

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[60] Ibid;p. 268.
[61] Ibid;p.276.
[62] Newman, Cardinal. The Idea of a University. New York,1852,p.7.
[63] Arunachalam,P.op.cit;p.276.
[64] Ibid;p.276.
[65] Ibid;p.287.

in 1857; it was not the spontaneous gift of Government but it was the result of years of agitation on the part of patriots and enthusiasts. The Ceylon University Association, therefore, was formed for an indispensable task; the request was for a University which can suit our special needs.[66] Arunachalam addressed a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the question of higher education in Ceylon and made a special request to treat Sinhalese, Tamil, Pali and Sanskrit as University subjects; he, in the course of his submissions, stated that 'the root of the evil in Ceylon is that the vernacular was neglected'.[67] He spoke of the richness of the Tamil language and its literature; speaking on the Sinhalese language, he stated that 'Sinhalese would not, perhaps, be accorded so high a place among the world's languages and literature, but it has a more special interest for Ceylon'.[68] This shows how he stood by the Oriental Languages, and wanted them to be included in the University curriculum so that the University would become an instrument of cultural nationalism. Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan, like his brother Arunachalam, saw the University as a centre of cultural revival; M. Vythialingam, writes that 'a nationalist far ahead of his time, Ramanathan sought to recapture through the agency of a University all that is great and glorious in the cultural heritage of the Sinhalese and the Tamils who have time immemorial made this island their common home and have enriched its cultural and national life'.[69] Thus, early University movement was guided by a philosophy of its own, and the emphasis was on national and cultural renaissance which came to be reflected in the intellectual life of the University of Ceylon during its early phase.

A discussion on the birth of the University movement, which advocated the establishment of a University in Ceylon, is incomplete without a reference to the responses of the Government to the University question. The emergence of a middle class and the growth of professions, especially Medical 'and Legal professions had an effect on the nationalist movement, though two important organisations pressed for constitutional reforms, which, in a way, was intertwined with the issue of the establishment of a University'.[70] Jennings, making a reference to this impact of the nationalist movement, stated that 'Ceylonese nationalism was essentially a product of Western education and its ideology was not fundamentally different from that of the nineteenth century

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[66] Ibid;p.291.
[67] Ibid;p. 291
[68] Ibidjp.294.
[69] Vyathialingam, M. ed. Op.cit;p. 619
[70] Weerawardene, I.D.S .op.cit;p.5

Europe'.[71] The nationalist movement led by the educated Ceylonese came to be preoccupied with constitutional reforms and the very same individuals, who were active in the University movement, were the key individuals of the growing nationalist movement. Higher education and the Ceylonisation of public services became a major area of conflict between the English-educated nationalist leadership and the Colonial authorities; some segments of the Colonial bureaucracy and certain organisations including Missionary school managers were hostile to the demand for a University.[72] Such organisations as the Ceylon Board of Education, where the majority of its membership had connections with the colonial bureaucracy, and the Ceylon Education Association, remained opposed to the establishment of a University.[73] Till 1910 the attitude of the Government was hostile, and the authorities rejected the demand stating that the country is still not ripe for the establishment of a University. It needs to be mentioned that with the emergence of the University movement, certain important changes were made in respect of higher educational opportunities; changes were made in respect of scholarships. The Government, immediately, offered two scholarships in Arts and Science to English Universities; for nearly 38 years, they offered only a single scholarship, and this decision indicated the changing attitude of the Government.[74] Since the award of the scholarship, it was attached either to Oxford or Cambridge but in 1907 the Ceylonese were able to go to London on a scholarship, the numbers of which still remained very limited. Yet the Ceylonese elite thought that the external examinations conducted by British Universities were no substitute for University education proper. The external examinations conducted by the University of London provided a popular means of higher education to those who could not afford the expenses of a University education abroad.[75] The view of the colonial authorities was that the demand for a University is the 'most laudable ambitions to be cautiously but firmly encouraged'.[76] With the participation of the educated elite, the demand for a University became much more articulate resulting in the government becoming much more cautious. Still they were not totally committed to the proposal for the establishment of a University.

With the introduction of the compulsory Swabasha education, the Government devoted its attention in 1907 to the reorganisation of English

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[71] Jennings,Ivor. 'Nationalism and Political Development in Ceylon', in Ceylon Historical Journal,Vol.3,No.l of 1952,pp.62-84.
[72] De Silva,K.M. op.cit;p.470
[73] Ibid;p.470
[74] Malalasekera, G.P. op.cit;p.809.
[75] Pieris,Ralph.op.cit;p.442.
[76] Ibid.

schools, most of which functioned as denominational schools. The attitude to education had undergone a change, and the impact of the growing nationalist movement was such that certain policy changes became necessary. In 1911, the Board of Education wrote to the Under-Secretary of State for Colonies requesting for a competent officer from England to probe into the English school system in Ceylon. J.J.R. Bridge was sent to Ceylon, who spent nearly ten weeks in the Island and submitted a report, in which he advocated the establishment of a local University.[77] It is not intended here to go into a detailed examination of the Bridge Report as most of its recommendations touched the English school system, including the cadre of teachers. He, in the course of his study of the system of education in Ceylon, identified the major weaknesses with a view to recommending measures to rectify those deficiencies and the reasons for incompetence within the system.[78] Some cursory reference to those aspects is not at all out of place. The Bridge Report discovered that every child in the system preferred to be taught in the medium of the English language. The Director of Public Instruction, for instance, stated that there 'are about 29,000 pupils in English schools, of whom about 4,000 are Burghers , while there are probably about another 4,000 pupils, who can talk English with some degree of comprehension'.[79] It was Bridge's suggestion that the medium of instruction up to the age of twelve should be the vernacular, which is to them the natural means of expression. Improvements were made to provide facilities for the direct method of teaching English, because over 72 percent of the children who go to English schools know nothing but the vernacular.[80] There was some support for the use of vernacular in the schools. In respect of examinations, there was a proposal to adopt the system of Cambridge Certificate Examination through a Cambridge Syndicate; the English schools in Ceylon, therefore, were compelled to teach the subjects acceptable to the Cambridge Syndicate. Tamil and Sinhalese were not included. It was their view that Cambridge examinations have gained a great prestige in Ceylon. The criticism of this examination system, though they were popular, was that 'they are designed for English schools, and based upon English conditions, which now do not exist in Ceylon, and cannot exist for many years to come'.[81] Therefore the recommendation was that the needs of Ceylon can only be met by means of an examination designed by those who know and appreciate local circumstances, and the facility of providing for a school-leaving examination

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[77] See System of Education in Ceylon. Sessional Paper XXVL, 1913.Govt.Printer,Colombo, 1913

[78] Vide System of Education in Ceylon. Sessional Papers No.XIX and No.XX of 1912 and Sessional Paper No.XXVl of 1913.

[79] Sessional Paper No.XXVl of 1913,p.9

[80] Ibid;p.10.

[81] Sessional Paper No. XXVll of 1913,p.2.

through the staff of a-University College is yet another argument in favour of the establishment of such an institution.

It was proposed that an Examination Board be set up with the staff of the University College. A Committee was appointed in 1911 to make a general survey of the System of Education in Ceylon and to investigate the existing provisions for secondary and higher education.[82] The Committee consisted of eleven members and its Chairman was K. Macleod, and it was expected to report on both secondary education and higher education.[83] Though the Committee recommended the establishment of a University, one of its members, A. Kangasbai made his own observations and they are worth quoting to show the position adopted by the members of the local elite; 'I feel that a University will be the only solution to the educational problem of the island. It is to be hoped that the proposed University College, if established in the very near future result in the formation of a University, and that in the meanwhile the College will prepare, or at least afford proper facilities for students to prepare for external examinations of a University recognised by Government. The present system of encouraging grant-in-aid schools to prepare pupils for external examinations should be continued until the formation of a University suited to the requirements of the people'.[84] This statement was indicative of the fact they were awaiting the arrival of a fully fledged independent University. Bridge agreed to the proposal to establish a University College in Ceylon, and the principal reasons given in support of the proposal could be mentioned below:

1. In the absence of a University' College an inordinate amount of the time of the best teacher in each school is devoted to prepare students for London examinations; sometimes the number of pupils consist only of a single pupil and seldom more than three or four.
2. Without such an institution there is a serious gap in the educational system of the country. The most important reason was that those who are unable to send their sons to Europe have now no means of giving anything more than a school education.
3. Medical students will benefit largely by being members of such an institution.
4. A University College will provide higher learning for students in the Government Training Colleges for teachers.

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[82] The other members were K. Kangasabai, F.H.de Winton, John Harward, R.F.S. Hardie, J Van Langberg, B.W. Bawa, H. Marcus Fernando, W.H. Rigby, Lucien de Zilva and Edwin Evans.

[83] Sessional Paper No.XIX of 1912.

[84] Report of the Education Committee. Sessional Paper XIX,1912,p.7.

In addition to the above arguments in favour of an institution like a University College, there were concerns as to whether such an institution could survive. The following are some of those concerns:

1. Whether the majority of parents who now send their sons to England for a University education will not continue to do so; and
2. Whether it is justifiable to spend a considerable amount of public money on providing an University education for sons of those parents who, though fairly well to do, are not sufficiently wealthy to send their sons to an English University.[85]

Yet another argument was whether the Government should provide an education at the expense of the general taxpayer in Ceylon for a set of students who still cannot make an adequate and profitable contribution to the country. But there was general agreement on the need for a University College, because a recognised local seat of higher education would make a difference. It, therefore, was strongly reiterated that 'some such institution is urgently desirable in order to obviate the present dissipation of higher educational forces, and to provide the necessary mental equipment of future generations of teachers. These were not only considerations, from which the impulse came for the establishment of a University. The view was that general advantages to be derived from such a College are sufficiently real to justify its establishment'.[86]

In response to the Bridge Report, which incidentally contained a set of good proposals, the Macleod Committee was appointed to investigate the existing provision for both secondary and higher education. It was in their Interim Report that major recommendations to which we referred above were included. In other words, most of the ideas of the Bridge Report came to be recognised by the Macleod Committee, which, while recognising the opposition of Governor, Sir Henry MaCulum to the establishment of a University in Ceylon, suggested a compromise; it was to convert the Royal College into a University College to prepare students for London University examinations.[87] It needs to be noted that the recommendations of the Macleod Committee came to be influenced by certain recommendations in the Bridge Report.[88] There was further discussion on the recommendations of the Macleod Report, and its major proposal for the

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[85] Sessional Paper,XXV1,1913,p.21.
[86] Sessional Paper XXVI of 1913,p.21.
[87] De Silva,K.M Op.cit;p.470.
[88] Sumathipala, K.H.M. op.cit;p. 45.

establishment of an institution of higher education became a controversial matter. K.H.M. Sumathipala, writing on this matter, stated that 'the unseen hand of the vested interests and reaction were apparently at work. There were many who wished to confine University education to the social class which could send their children to England'.[89] The Catholic Church, which maintained a near-monopoly over primary and secondary education in Ceylon, expressed their point of view on the 'question of the establishment of a University, and their attitude to the issue was largely based on the need to protect their own vested interests. The Roman Catholic Church, through their Archibishop and other Bishops, questioned the necessity for a University on religious grounds; their main argument was 'to educate Catholic youth under a system of non-Catholic education, whether elementary, secondary or higher is incompatible with her own inherent right'.[90] In addition to this interpretation of their position vis-a-vis the proposal for the establishment of a University, the Catholic Church forwarded the claim of having a Catholic College affiliated to the University College, with the right to impart in a Catholic College the instruction which will be given in the University College, together with the required financial support. This proposal, in effect, meant the creation of yet another parallel University College and the Governor Robert Chalmers did not agree to this sectarian proposal. The agitation with regard to this matter, though made some impact, died a natural death.[91] The Government accepted the need for a higher education institution in 1912, and in 1913 the Executive Council resolved that a University College should be established to provide facilities for higher education, including courses for teachers in training colleges and pre-medical courses for medical students. The Governor, Robert Chalmers, in a dispatch in 1915, stated that he had no doubt the situation in Ceylon really calls for the establishment of a University. Though the Government accepted the proposal in principle, the World War 1 intervened and the question had to be postponed till the cessation of hostilities, and it was only in 1920 that actual preparations were made for the establishment of the University College, the details of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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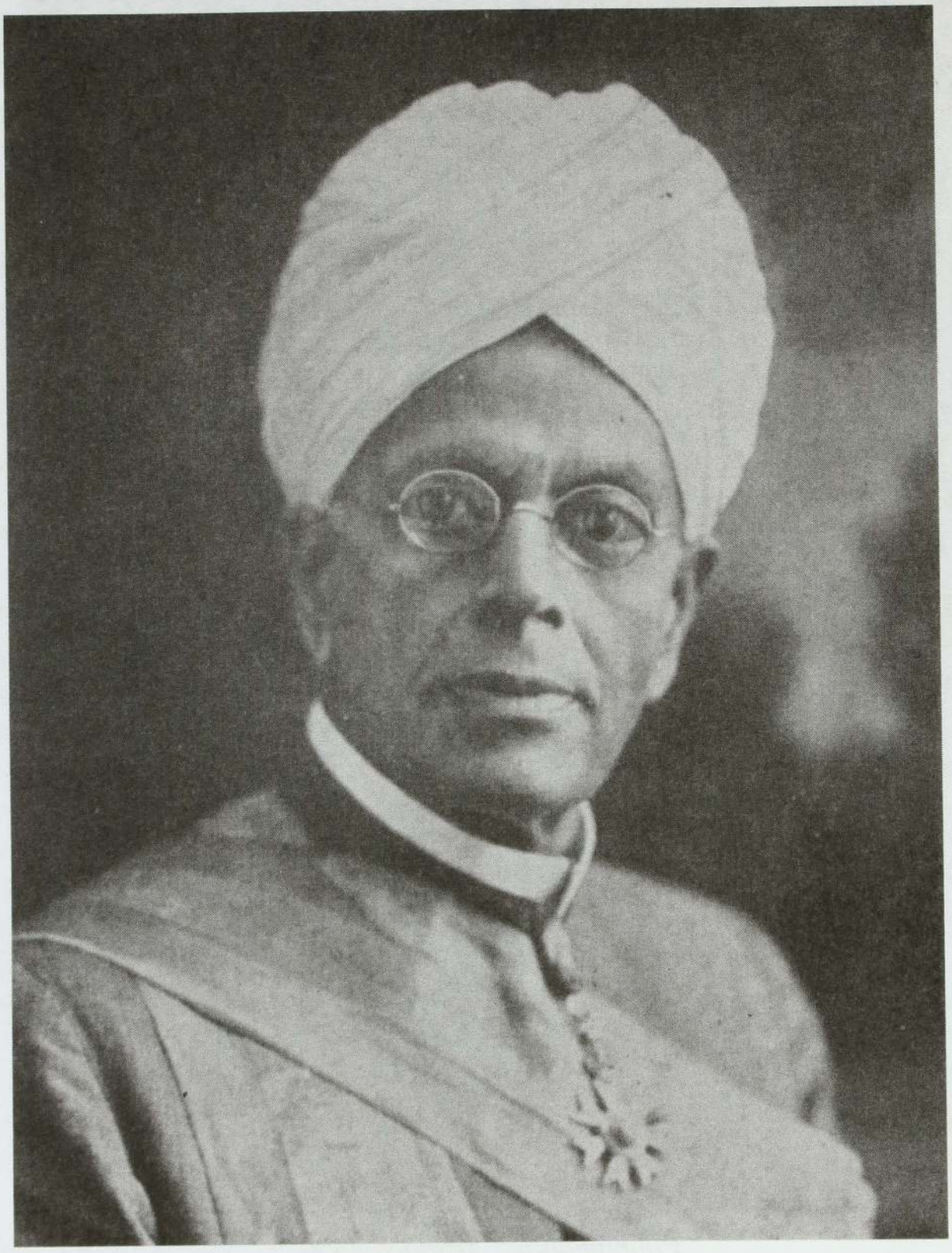
[89] Ibid;p.50.
[90] Ibid;p.50.
[91] Ibid;p.51.



Ponnambalam Ramanathan

Ponnambalam Arunachalam

Chapter III

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE 1921-1942

The discussion of the establishment of the University College in 1921, though a significant step in the direction of an evolution towards a full-fledged independent unitary University, needs to be prefaced with an examination of the educational developments that took place in the early beginnings of the twentieth century. The Ceylonisation of the public services had a major impact on the educational changes; the English educated Ceylonese who aspired to get into the public services wanted more educational opportunities.[1] A Committee of the Legislative Council had recommended that the proportion of Ceylonese in the public service should be increased and this could not be achieved without expanding the higher educational opportunities available in the country. Lennox Mills, in fact, highlighted some of the changes in the system of education before the War. The school-going population had increased and this had an impact on the rate of literacy in the country. According to Lennox Mills, the percentage of literacy per 100 of the population increased from 24.6 percent in 1881 to 40.4 percent in 1911 for males, and from 2.5 percent in 1881 to 10.6 percent in 1911 for females.[2] In 1911, 3.3 percent of .the males and 1.2 percent of the females were literate in English. The education system in 1921 was to a large extent, conducive to the establishment of a University College. The total number of students attending schools was 404,430 of which these 383,108 attended Government and grant-in-aid schools. There were 971 Government schools and 2120 grant-in-aid schools; the number of unaided schools stood at 1232.[3] In addition to Medical and Legal education, the Government Technical College in Colombo provided courses through a scheme of industrial schools. Nearly 89.76 percent of the children of school going age attended the vernacular schools. It was in the higher grades of the English schools that the standard of instruction was similar to that of an entrance examination to University.[4] In 1913, Governor Henry MaCllum, in a dispatch to the Secretary of State for Colonies, argued that 'the needs of Ceylon can only be met by means of an examination designed by those who know and appreciate local circumstances, and the facility of providing for a school-leaving examination through the staff of a University College is yet another additional argument in

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[1] De Silva,K~M. op.cit;p. 470.
[2] Administration Report of the Director of Education for 1921,p.A 1.
[3] Mills, Lennox. op.cit;p.264.
[4] Ibid;p.265

favour of the establishment of such an institution'.[5] The type of examination to be held in· the country was discussed and the view was that one examination to be held by the schools should correspond to the Matriculation of the University College. The argument was that in the absence of a University College, the teachers in schools have to spend an inordinate amount of time in preparing students for the London examinations, and this could be avoided only by setting up a University College. The Executive Council, which examined the arguments for and against the establishment of a University, agreed in principle to establish a University College. Henry MacCallum, the Governor himself, stated that 'I think the objectors underestimate the number of those who can, with profit to the community as well as themselves, be accorded the privileges of higher education, and I believe also that some of the boys who are now sent to England would not continue to be so sent if a recognised local seat of higher education were available'.[6] The prospective general advantages to be derived from such a College are sufficiently real to justify its establishment in the Island. The Executive Council, after a full discussion of the subject, adopted the following resolution:

1. That a University College be established in Ceylon;
2. That it be called the Ceylon University College;
3. Preliminary training of medical students in Chemistry, Physics and Biology;
4. A member of the Council-of Legal Education to be on the University College Council;
5. Hostels to be provided by Government and be leased to different religious bodies.[7]

As to the question of degrees to be awarded by the University College, certain preliminary suggestions were made; some reference to it is necessary at this stage of our discussion of the early stages of the University College.It was possible to obtain the Arts Degree from the University of London; it was also possible to obtain the B.Sc. degree in Economics, which was considered a degree in Commerce. It was mentioned that the University of London would agree to hold B.Sc. examinations in Physics and Chemistry. The view was that 'the establishment of a University College will therefore give a great stimulus to those who are anxious to obtain a degree without proceeding to England'.[8] The existence of a University College will be a strong factor in the request for external degrees of

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[5] System of Education in Ceylon. Sessional Paper No.XXVI of 1913,p.2.
[6] Ibid;p.21
[7] Ibid;p.21
[8] Ibid;p.21

the University of London. The University College will be able to prepare students for external degree courses of the University of London, and this will afford additional recognition to the University College. The Secretary of State for Colonies submitted the proposal for the establishment of a University College in Ceylon to the English Board of Education, which, as usual, raised a number of issues. Among the issues raised, the following are relevant for our discussion. The issues raised are as follows:

1. Whether the proposed institution should be a University or a University College;
2. Whether it is to be located in Colombo or Kandy;
3. Whether special provision is to be made for Oriental Studies;
4. Whether the institution should not be affiliated to an English University to ensure the maintenance of standards;
5. Whether the head of the institution should hold a Professorship or whether he should be merely an administrative head.[9]

The war intervened and it interfered with the implementation of the proposal, though the Government had accepted in principle the establishment of a local University. The views of the English Board of Education reached Ceylon only in 1914; the answers to issues raised by the English Board of Education were given by the then Governor, Robert Chalmers.[10] Yet another question, which they explored, was the possible affiliation with the University of Oxford. The possible incorporation into the Royal College and the institution to be called the Royal University College were also explored, but those suggestions were later abandoned. Governor MacCallum had his own arguments which supported the retention of the Royal College as the premier secondary school in the country. He, in fact, stated that 'I regret the practical disappearance of the Royal College as such from the educational area. The school has a long and honorable history'.[11] His view was that the University College to be put up in new buildings, for which public endowments need to be attracted. He, therefore, was very emphatic that it was not desirable to call the proposed institution the Royal University College as suggested by some individuals. It was the Governor's view that 'the name which has such a distinguished history' needs to be perpetuated.[12] The same report, in an enclosure,

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[9] Jennings, Ivor. 'The Foundation of the University of Ceylon', in University of Ceylon Review1Vol.lX, 1951, pp.147-152.

[10] Dispatch relating to the establishment of a University College in Ceylon. Sessional Paper No. XVl of 1915.

[11] Sessional Paper,No.XXVl of 1913.p.4.

[12] Ibid;p.41.

examined some of the immediate logistics pertaining to the establishment of the University College. In July, 1921, the University College was opened by the Governor, who was the President of the College. The following subjects were included in the curriculum of the College: English, Latin, Greek, Sinhalese, Tamil, Sanskrit, Pali, Mathematics, History, Economics, Geography, Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology, Education and Philosophy. Admission of students was confined to applicants who are registered as Matriculated students of the University of London.[13] The cost of new buildings and extensions to the Royal College were examined; initial vote for the Library and the cost of passage of Principal and Professors too have been examined. All appointments were sterling appointments, which, in effect, meant that they will be paid in Sterling pounds. The Principal was also expected to do the work of a Professor; no pay was attached to the Chair held by the Principal. Seven Professors and five Lecturers were to be appointed initially; another category of Lecturers were to get Rupee appointments. It was mentioned that the University College will have a Registrar, Assistant Registrar and a Librarian; all these three appointments are to be held by the Professors or Lecturers.[14] In the area of hostel accommodation, three hostels were to be run by religious bodies.

Robert Chalmers, though raised a number of issues with the Colonial authorities in the United Kingdom, did not have a clear vision regarding the type of University that Ceylon should get and where it was to be located. He envisaged the establishment of a University College qualified to grant Diplomas, and it was to be converted to a degree granting University, affiliated to an English University, preferably Oxford.[15] The location was to be in Colombo and the Royal College buildings were to be utilised. The issue of the location of the University College, which later developed into a major debate, assumed importance at this stage, and it was suggested that since Oriental Studies are to be given prominence, Kandy might be a suitable location for the establishment of the University College. The decision to establish the University College in the new buildings of the Royal College was abandoned and E.B. Denham, the Director of Education, persuaded the Government to purchase 'Regina Walauwwa' on Thurston Road, which was later named College House. The failure to take a decision on the location further delayed the establishment of the University College, and at last, on 24, January, 1921, the University College was inaugrated at the College House as a Government institution- with its status as a Government Department, affiliated to the University of London. It needs to be mentioned that the establishment of the University

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[13] Administration Report of the University College for 1921, p.A7.
[14] Sessional Paper No. XXVI of 1913.
[15] Malalasekera,G.P. op.cit;p. 871.

College opened up a new chapter in the history of University education in this country.

A change was necessary in a system of education which remained 'too exclusively directed for examination'.[16] It, therefore, was thought that the establishment of the University College would lead to the enrichment of the intellectual life of the island. Both Sinhalese and Tamils possessed a natural aptitude for cultural advancement through the portals of a University. It was on the basis of such assertions that the official attitude of a University underwent a change; Director of Education stated in 1920 that a University College 'is bound to be of great benefit to the people of the country and to develop within a short time into a University with a degree which will have a permanent value and a value outside Ceylon'.[17] Therefore, the details pertaining to the establishment of the University College needs to be further elaborated for the purpose of understanding the importance of this institution which, in fact, represented an important landmark on the road to the establishment of a fully-fledged independent unitary University in Ceylon.

The Governor, Sir Robert Chalmers, before his departure from the Island, summoned a Conference in November, 1915, for the purpose of discussing matters pertaining to the establishment of the University College. In the report, which he submitted, there was the need to include a Professor of Sanskrit and Pali; the professorial staff was to be assisted by lecturers. This shows that provision was made for Oriental Studies at the initial phase itself. According to the curriculum agreed upon, the ordinary course was to consist of two parts (1) a course of general nature leading up to an intermediate examination, and (2) a more specialised course leading up to the final Diploma in Arts, Science and Oriental Studies.[18] The College was to be residential in character and the Government was to provide hostel facilities. The most important recommendation relating to the administration of the College was the appointment of a Council; the governance of the College was in the hands of the Council. The conduct of examinations became the responsibility of a Board of Studies nominated by the Council. Though affiliation with the University of Oxford was proposed, there was no immediate approval for it; instead it agreed to appoint an Advisory Committee to advise the Government of Ceylon. The question of full affiliation was to be considered later.

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[16] Pieris,Ralph.op.cit;p.445.

[17] Sessional Paper ·IX of 1920,p.3.

[18] Report of the Conference on the Proposed University College. Sessional Paper XIV, 1916,p.2.

The status of the University College became an issue at the very initial stage itself and the Governor, therefore, had to sort it out in an acceptable form. He emphasised the fact that its status as a College must be regarded as a preliminary status only, and that the ultimate aim was its development into a degree granting University.[19] The importance of the residential principle came to be highlighted; it was stated that 'the University College was not to be a mere collection of lecture rooms, but was to comprise, as an integral part of itself, hostels, in which the students would live under the control of appropriate wardens, who would guide and mould their characters out of College hours'.[20] The cooperative life among students was to be encouraged through hostels which were to be run by responsible religious bodies, and they were to be given to such organisations at a low rental sufficient to cover the cost of annual maintenance. The issue of hostels was fully examined by a Sub-Committee, and the major recommendation was that, despite the numerous problems experienced at this stage, 'the residential principle should be progressively enforced'.[21] The pioneers of the Ceylon University movement anticipated the University College to become a centre of learning where there was a fusion of indigenous and Western cultures. According to Ralph Pieris, what the pioneers of university education expected early in the century were neglected when the University College actually came into being in 1921.[22] The Colombo Oriental Studies Society wanted to promote the study of Sinhalese, Pali, Sanskrit, History and Archaeology.[23] The Oriental Studies Society of Jaffna too made efforts to encourage the study of Tamil and Sanskrit classics.

The Vidyodaya Pirivena, the principal seat of Oriental learning in the country, prepared pupils for examinations in Sinhala, Pali and Sanskrit. All this provides ample evidence to the effect that there was an interest in promoting Oriental Studies. The English Board of Education, whose opinion was consulted by the Secretary of State for Colonies, stated that 'it was desirable to give a larger place in the new institution to the study of Oriental languages, literature and history'.[24] The increasing influence of the 'Westernised middle class was such that they showed no much of an interest in the promotion of Oriental Studies, because of which the University College did not 'contribute to a renewal of indigenous Ceylonese culture.[25] There was a class of people who wanted the University

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[19] Ibid;.p.2
[20] Ibid;p. 2.
[21] Ibid;p. 5.
[22] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p. 445.
[23] Administration Report of the Director of Education for 1922, Page A 7.
[24] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question.(undated),p.2. This publication is available in the Parliament Library.
[25] Pieris, Ralph.op.cit;p. 445.

College to become a centre of Western culture. Yet another reason, which contributed to the failure to renew indigenous Ceylonese culture, was the foreign content of curricula oriented towards the London University examination, and it was this bias in the curricula that resulted in the retardation of the indigenous languages and scientific development in the country. Jennings's vision of the colonial university, which he expounded in his article on 'Universities in the Colonies', according to which the colonial university is not merely a University; it is an institution based on the recognised institutions of Western culture as represented in England.[26] Since the University College was treated as a transitory institution, this feature had its effect on the development of the institutions at its very initial phase. The very choice of the location showed that it was a temporary institution, which was to be elevated to the status of a fully-fledged national university in the future.

Though a decision was taken in 1915 to establish the University College, it did not begin till 1921. The College began with 155 students studying for the Arts and Science degrees of the University of London. Before an examination of the 'battle of the sites', it would be relevant to discus the academic and administrative organisation of the College. Mr. E. Evans, the acting Director of Education, was appointed to act as the Principal; Professor Robert Marrs assumed duties as the Principal of the University College in the second academic year 1921-22. It was Prof. Robert Marrs, as the Principal of the College, who proposed the appointment of an Academic Committee, similar to the present day Senate, to make proposals for the academic work of the College and the University when it was established.[27] In this way, two important institutions came into being; the university College Council and the Academic Committee. The general direction of affairs of the University College was placed in the hands of the College Council consisting of sixteen persons, including the Principal.[28] Jennings, expressing his dissatisfaction with this kind of arrangement, under which the University College functioned under Government control, stated that, 'from the point of view of modern university administration, it was an astonishingly sketchy proposal, which discussed none of the fundamental issues and very few of the subordinate proposals. Some of the defects of the University College which came into existence in 1921 were due to their extraordinarily haphazard manner in which these proposals were developed'.[29] The Akbar Committee, referring to the University College Council,

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[26] Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly,Vol.XVII,1946, pp230-231.
[27] A Short History of the University Question, p.3
[28] Jennings,Ivor. 'The Foundation of the University of Ceylon' in University of Ceylon Review, Vol IX, No.3, July, 1951,pp.150-51
[29] Report of the University Site Committee. Sessional Paper V of 1927,p.6.

had this to say; it stated that 'gradually from being an advisory body to help the Principal to manage the University College, the University College Council came to be treated as an executive body by the Principal of the University College'.[30] The Principal stated that 'though it is nominally an advisory Council, I have referred all matters of importance to it. I have in fact treated it as an essential body for all practical purposes'.[31] He, paying a tribute to the Council, referred to 'the admirable reasonableness of this body of gentlemen'.[32] By the end of the academic year 1922-23, the outlines of a scheme of degrees and courses were ready, and in the following year, the Board of Studies prepared detailed syllabuses for various subjects. By 1924 the academic part, relating to a future University had been completed; it was envisaged that a University would be established in 1926.

In June, 1925, Prof. Robert Marrs prepared a draft Ordinance, based on the recommendations of the Sadler Commission for Dacca and Lucknow.[33] This Commission was empowered to examine the existing organisation of the University of Calcutta with special reference to its standards and examinations, its constitution, and its relations with affiliated Colleges and with the Government. In fact, problems in Bengal 'offered a representative cross section of the problems which called for solution in Indian higher education.[34] At the close of Sadler's inquiry, he pronounced that the University system of Bengal is 'fundamentally defective in almost every aspect'.[35] The University system, which Britain had planted in India was defective; but, it as a foreign plant, paying all too little regard to the culture and traditions of an ancient people, the Indian University in its existing form was singularly ill adapted to assist in the birth of a new life'.[36] This was the view of R.S. Trivedi, the Principal of Ripon College, whose perceptive ideas were thought provoking. He pleaded for a careful comparative study of the educational ideals of the east and west so that a new policy might be evolved, more closely attuned to Indian needs.[37] Trivedi pointed out briefly 'the ways in which the University system imported from abroad had violated the characteristic ideals of the east'.[38] The indigenous system was based on Indian scriptures and religious traditions whereas the imported system was shaped to the secular needs of the State.

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[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid
[32] Ibid
[33] Michael Sadler was the Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds. He was appointed as the Chairman of the Calcutta University Commission. See Ashby, Eric. Universities; British, Indian and Africa A 'Study of the Ecology of Higher Education, London, 1966, p.113
[34] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p. 114.
[35] Ibid;p. 115.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid;p.ll5.
[38] Ibid;p.118

Therefore, what was needed, in his view, was 'what was best in the ancient traditions of India with what is best in the educational aspirations of the West'.[39] Such ideas, expounded in the context of the Sadler Commission, had a profound impact on the discussions here in Ceylon on the question of the establishment of a University. Contextually, those ideas fell into the right milieu of the intellectual debate on the question of the establishment of a University in Ceylon. Prof. Robert Marrs, deriving inspiration from great ideas similar to those above, was very keen to convert the College to a full fledged autonomous University on the lines indicated by Governor, Robert Chalmers.[40] It was Governor Robert Chalmers who steadfastly advanced the idea that the University should be unitary and a teaching institution.[41] The usual controversy over the site began to dominate the discussion, the contents of which will be examined later.

The initial academic and administrative organisation of the University College needs to be subjected to a detailed discussion, without which a proper understanding of the structure of the College can not be obtained. Prof. Robert Marrs, who held a Professorship, was the Principal, who was assisted by the College Council. Since the Governor, Robert Chalmers, wanted the University College to be affiliated to the University of Oxford, there was a discussion on this matter in 1915. The University of Oxford was approached and a Committee was appointed to examine the proposal.But the question of affiliation was not given much thought. It was in 1920 that a Committee was appointed to study the courses, and the initiative for this came from E.B. Denham, the Director of Education. It was this Committee, which undertook the selection of Professors, of whom five came from England: (a) English Language and Literature. (b) Classics and Philosophy, (c) Modern History and Economics (d) Physics and (e) Chemistry. The Professor of Mathematics was to be obtained locally or from India. Men between twenty five and thirty with Oxford and Cambridge Honors degrees were to be appointed as Lecturers. The College was to be presided over by the Director of Education, and this was the type of governmental control established at the very initial stage itself.[42] There were seven Professors, representing such disciplines as English, Classics, Mathematics, Modern History and Economics, Philosophy and Physics. In certain subjects, a qualified Lecturer handled the teaching of the subject. Most, if not all, members of the academic staff came from Britain there were a few locals with good foreign, primarily British qualifications. The Post of Registrar

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[39] Ibid;p.116

[40] Sumathipala, K.H.M. op.cit;p.55

[41] Sessional Paper XVI of 1915,p.2.

[42] Jennings, Ivor. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, University of Ceylon Review Vol.IX, No.3, July, 1951 ,0.151.

could be held by a Professor or Lecturer in addition to his academic responsibilities; Rev. W.S.Senior, Lecturer in Western Classics, functioned as the Registrar. In 1922, Suriyagoda Sumangala thero was appointed Lecturer in Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit; this means that at the very initial phase itself, Oriental Studies was given recognition. A College prospectus was published in September, 1922. As mentioned before, the interest in the study of languages of the country was revived. In 1921, a batch of teacher-scholars entered the College for a year of training in Theory and Practice of Education. This course was not continued because it was felt that Education should in principle be a post-graduate course.[43] This subject was discussed at length, and it was recognised that Secondary School teachers should be given a course of training at the College level. It was left to the Department of Education to make necessary arrangements with the cooperation of the University College, and it was accepted that teacher training had now become a normal feature of a modern University.

Though the University College was established with a view to converting it into a full fledged autonomous University in a short period of time, it continued the system of providing instruction for the external examinations conducted by the London University. It also provided a course in Physics, Chemistry and Biology for those students who sat the first Professional Examination of the Ceylon Medical College. There was very little interest in the teaching of Oriental subjects, though this matter came to be discussed long before the College was established. The movement for the revival of interest in the study of languages of the country was to make an impact on the courses of study in the future University.[44] The number of students enrolled in October, 1921 was 166, and this number varied during the year as some students failed to 'satisfy the conditions of University College life'.[45] The subjects most favoured by students were Pure Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry; there was a preponderance interest in Science subjects, and this was attributed to the natural aptitude of certain sections, particularly the Tamils for Mathematics. Yet another reason was the neglect of Oriental languages and the advanced teaching of History and Geography in the secondary schools. Another important reason was that the superior degrees of success obtained by those qualified in Mathematics and Science over Arts scholars, who had proceeded to English Universities or competed for Civil Service. It, therefore, was hoped that the study of Humanities will develop in its centre of

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[43] Administrative Report of the Director of Education, 1922, B 3.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid. Swarna Jayaweera, in K.M. de Silva ed. History of Ceylon, Vol. III stated that the number enrolled in 1921 was 155. D.L. Jayasuriya, in his study in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. XXIII, Nos. 1 & 2,1965 did not refer to this aspect

advanced intellectual study with the advancement of Science. Most Arts students stopped at the Intermediate level in order to get into the Law College. It was expected that students would proceed to a degree before branching off into law. This could be avoided by establishing a Faculty of Law but there was no immediate programme to set up a Faculty of Law. With regard to the teaching of Oriental languages, arrangements were made to set up a class to teach Sinhalese. But it did not meet with immediate success. However, it was felt that 'the University cannot exclude from its ideal the elevating influence of the humanities and more particularly, the advancement of those Oriental Studies languages, culture, art, history, philosophy and archaeology which are appropriate to the origin and genius of the people'.[46] In the initial phase of the College, some students, instead of taking the full courses at the University College, opted to sit as private students for the London examination; in other words, the tendency was to regard the College as a coaching institution where the students purchased instruction in one or more subjects. This, according to authorities, interfered with the idea of encouraging youth to pass from the secondary school to university studies, and come under the varied influences of University life for a minimum period of three years. It was expected that the tendency to regard the London intermediate as a kind of terminus in education would disappear with the establishment of the University.

Though a reference to the University College Council was made at an earlier occasion, there was not enough discussion on the matter. In the period 1921-22, the College Council, which, in fact, was the advisory body of the University College, met seventeen times to discuss matters of importance. Though it was nominally an advisory body, it could make recommendations to the Government on matters of importance. This body was constituted of professional men, officials and eminent persons; it was this Committee which appointed the Academic Committee and also a special committee to consider the constitution and administration of a future University. Therefore, in terms of its role, it functioned as a powerful body. The Academic Committee consisted of 26 members; there were academics as well as outsiders who were eminent men in the area of education in the country.[47] The Academic Committee wanted the College to continue to teach

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[46] Administration Report of the Director of Education for 1922,p.B 3.

[47] The Committee consisted of the following members:

1. Principal, University College
2. The Director of Education
3. The Principal, Government Training College
4. Principal, Royal College
5. Hon. F.A.de Stockdale Highfield
6. Rev. R.
7. Rev. W.A. Stone Kularatne
8. P. de S.

for the London examinations which, according to them, have a known standard. This was to continue till degrees were offered locally by the University. It was interesting to note that Mrs. W.T. Southhornt a member of the Academic Committee, who coordinated matters pertaining to women students, arranged a representative meeting of women interested in education in order to elicit their views on the various problems connected with the position of women in the University. This shows that gender issues in respect of University education were not totally neglected despite the absence of such gender based organizations.

The most important task of the Academic Committee was to devise a scheme for the Entrance Examination of the future University. Yet another Sub-Committee was appointed to draw up recommendations for the proper organisation of a Oriental Studies Department of the future University of Ceylon, and also to examine the work done by the· Society for the promotion of Oriental Studies, with a view to establishing a link between the two. This Sub-Committee consisted of reputed Orientalists such as Ven. Sri Gnanissara thero, D.B. Jayatilaka and Mudaliyar W.F. Gunawardene; other members were Sir P. Arunachalam, N. Selvadurai and Principal Prof. Robert Marrs. In discussing the lack of interest in the study of Oriental languages, the Committee came to the conclusion that an effort should be made to attract external students to the study of languages of the country-Sinhalese and Tamil. It was therefore decided to request the Government to start special classes in these languages; the proposed course was to cover a pre-matriculation stage and thereafter to proceed to the stage of the London Intermediate Examination. It was suggested that for the benefit of the external students, the University College should hold an examination in these languages at the end of the years' course and issue a College Certificate to successful candidates.

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9. Hon; Sir. P.Ramanathan
10 N. Selvadurai
11. Ven. M. Sri Gnaissara Nayaka Thero
12. M.B.A. Cader
13. Miss W.T. Somanathan
14. Prof. Leigh Smith
15. Prof. A.E. Grant Pakeman
16. Prof. S.A.
17. Prof. D.J. Cameron
18. Prof. W.N. Rae
19. J. Pearson
20. Rev. Fr. Le Goe
21. Registrar, Ceylon Medical College
22. Hon. Anton Bertram
23. Sir P. Arunachalam
24. W.T. Stace
25. D.B.Jayatilaka
26. Rev. Fr/ F.I. Bevers

The Academic Committee was of the view that encouragement of the languages of the country is the proper foundation of educational progress. Therefore, a suggestion was made that the University Entrance Examination should include a compulsory paper in Sinhalese or Tamil for candidates whose mother tongue was in Sinhala or Tamil. One objective of this proposal was to encourage the teaching of these languages in the schools; it was expected that the schools will gradually promote the study of the Oriental Classical languages and include in them a History syllabus with certain sections on Oriental History. Prof. Robert Marrs, writing in his Administration Report for 1922, stated that 'the encouragement of Orientalia is no easy task under present conditions. But it seems obvious that the development of Oriental Studies, particularly those related to the Pali language, offers a real chance for peculiar distinction in a Ceylon University'.[48] He thought it desirable to encourage a strong Oriental School with the cooperation of the learned Buddhist clergy, whose methods of scholarship have their independent value. It was his view that the accepted indigenous methods of study should not be disturbed in order to encourage a strong Oriental school conducted on modern lines. This shows that the need to encourage Oriental Studies at the University College became an important aspect of its academic policy, and there was much discussion and debate on this matter throughout the initial phase of University development in the country. Two important matters too came to be highlighted during this period; the College was conceived with the design of being converted into a University, and secondly, it was meant presumably to be an unitary University which is to serve the needs of the whole Island. There were certain gaps in the academic policy of the College; for instance, there was no provision for courses in Agriculture. Some subjects were not taught at the Honours level. It was the existence of such gaps, which compelled the Principal, Prof. R. Marrs, to remark that 'if the University College or the University is not only to turn out scholars but also to provide instruction in applied sciences and branches of study intimately related to the professions or vocations, it is evident that its resources will have to be increased very materially. But we cannot afford to neglect those theoretical branches of study which react through the University on the general quality of the country's citizens and its statesmen and administrators. In this connection I would particularly welcome much greater assistance than what has been proposed in the direction of Economics and Political Science'.[49] It was his view that once the main branches of study have been properly equipped, it will then be possible to develop research studies in those subjects. Though much emphasis was not laid on research, it was expected that with the development of various disciplines within the College, a research culture too would emerge in time.

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[48] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1922, p. B 8.
[49] Ibid.

Some reference has to be made to the paucity of funds for the University College, which though filled a gap in the education system of the country, was in no sense fully equipped. While adverting his attention to the lack of funds, Prof. R. Marrs stated that 'the forward movement is however impossible unless funds are made available. It is regrettable that the private wealth of the Island has so far contributed practically nothing to the University project'.[50] This assertion remained the position for a long period of time as Ceylon did not have rich private benefactors who could assist a project of this nature.

It is relevant at this stage of the discussion to refer to the student numbers. It was already mentioned that the College began in 1921 with 166 students. The following statistics are useful for further examination of this question of student enrollment.

Year	Number of Students	Year	No. of students
1921	166	1927	278
1922	217	1929	338
1923	262	1930	394
1924	262	1934	449
1925	272	1935	540
1926	313	1938	664

Source: Administration Reports of the Principal, University College

In 1929, the University College admitted 338 students; during the same period, the Ceylon Medical College admitted 193 students while the Law College admitted 360 students; it was through this student intake that a potential professional elite came to be recruited from a widely differentiated segment of the Ceylonese society. It was during this period that the British colonial policy on education underwent a change, and it had an effect on the educational policy of the British Colonies in both Asia and Africa. It asserted that, while voluntary educational efforts would be encouraged, government reserves to itself the general direction of educational policy and the supervision of all educational institutions. The most significant aspect of the British colonial policy was that 'education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of

[50] Ibid.

their social life'.[51] It proposed that the content and method of teaching in all subjects, especially in Arts subjects, should be adapted to the conditions of the given country. This policy, undoubtedly, had an effect on the educational policy of Ceylon, and the acceleration of the process of Ceylonisation of the public services too had an effect on the nature and content of education in the University College.[52] The University College, therefore, was able to provide more access to the upper rungs of the administrative cadre, and this process came to be accelerated with the decision to hold the Ceylon Civil Service examination simultaneously in Ceylon from 1927. This had a major impact on the Ceylonisation of the public services and the expansion of the professions which, indirectly influenced the constitutional advancement of the country. For instance, the African Education Commission in 1920 made a similar recommendation; it recognised that 'provision must be made for the training of those who are required to fill posts in the administrative and technical services, and the door of advancement through higher education must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education'.[53] It acknowledged the need for an expansion of facilities for higher education, but on a carefully controlled basis. Such changes in Colonial policy began to be felt in regard to the policy pertaining to University education in Ceylon.

In 1929, 338 students were admitted, and the total number graduated since the establishment of the University College in 1921 was 177, 23 of whom graduated with Honours in such subjects as English, Mathamatics, Indo-Aryan and Chemistry. In 1930, 27 students graduated, and there was a First Class in Indo-Aryan Languages. The Principal, Prof. Marrs, writing in his Administration Report for the year 1930, stated that 'our Oriental Department are to be congratulated on the early attainment of the highest honours in the BA examination. In the Honours examination in Indo-Aryan, students could offer either Sanskrit as main subject with Pali as subsidiary or Pali as the main subject with Sanskrit as subsidiary. In the case of K. Kanapathipillai, he offered Sanskrit as the main Subject'.[54] In 1930, 394 students were admitted on the basis of the results of an Entrance Examination; the intake, to a large extent, was based on 'the limits of our accommodation in the crowded Departments of Study'.[55] The lack of room in the existing buildings too interfered with the annual intake of students. The number of students enrolled in 1931 stood at 355 and in 1933 it was increased to 417 students.

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[51] Ashby, Eric.op.cit;p.191.
[52] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.471.
[53] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p.191.
[54] Administration Report of the Principal, University College for the year 1930.p.4
[55] Ibid; p.4.

In 1934, 440 students were enrolled and in 1938, the number of students enrolled increased to 664, an increase of 78 from the previous year. The highest number of students was enrolled in 1938 at 664 students.[56] It was still insufficient an intake when looked at from the point of view of the aspirations of the people and the needs of the country.

In setting up the Indian Universities in the 1850' s, the policy impulse, as expounded by those British academics who adopted a policy in exporting Universities to India, came to be guided by the need to respond to the cultural challenges of the Indian sub-continent.[57] The advocates of this system defended the customary oriented type of institution. They did not dispute that useful learning was the ultimate objective, but they were strongly of the view that any attempt to force the pace of Westernisation is sure to defeat its purpose, and they also maintained that only those adequately grounded in the old learning would be effective in preserving the new'.[58] It was not merely on this pragmatic ground that they defended the emphasis on Oriental Studies. There was a similar need in Ceylon for the study of Oriental subjects, which made a major impact on the evolution of the academic policy of the University College. In India the value of the study of Oriental languages was recognised, and this naturally exerted an influence on the curriculum of the University College. The Departments of study at the College were as follows:

1. English
2. Classics and Philosophy
3. History and Economics
4. Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese
5. Tamil
6. French and German
7. Geography
8. Mathematics
9. Physics
10. Chemistry
11. Botany
12. Zoology

In most Departments, the College conducted two classes; one for the General degree and the other for the Honours degree. The Head, Department of

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[56] Administration Report of the Principal, University College for the year 1938,p. B 3.
[57] Ashby,Etic. op.cit;p. 53.
[58] Ibid;p.50.

English, writing his report for the year 1926, stated that at the beginning of the academic year there were two Honours classes; later it was reduced to one. The Honours students have shown themselves well able to cope with an Honours course in English.[59] The number of students, reading history, remained nearly constant from year to year. The number of students reading for Honours degrees increased, and the course in History consisted of Medieval and Modern History, Modern European History, English Constitutional History, English Political History and History of Political Theory. A paper on Oriental History was to be included; it, the College report stated, cannot be done without the addition of two lecturers, one of whom must be specially trained in the subject. This shows that the course in History was very much weighted in favour of English and European History. A considerable number of students offered British Constitution, and this was regarded as a soft option, though it provided excellent groundwork for the serious study of Politics. The lectures on British Constitution were attended by History Honours students in their first year in order to make themselves acquainted with modern conditions. Economics, though became popular in the later years, did not attract students at the beginning. In the academic year 1926-27, there was only one student reading Economics with a view to taking a degree in the subject. He passed the Intermediate Economics Examination, and subsequently left the College in order to join the London School of Economics.[60] In Economics, there was a shortage of staff; the Administration Report of the College, therefore, mentioned that 'it is impossible for the study of Economics, as represented by the Final Science Examination, to· be pursued in the University College, even in a restricted form, until the staff is augmented by two more lecturers'.[61] In the 1926-27 academic year, there were only eleven students in the Economics course, and the single Lecturer in Economics, P.J. Thomas - an Indian by origin - left the College at the end of the year, on being appointed to the post of Professor of Economics in the University of Madras. It would be interesting to quote Dr. N.M. Perera, who was the only student reading Economics for the degree in this particular period, to explain the issues relating to the lack of teaching staff in certain disciplines. Dr. N.M. Perera, writing in his incomplete autobiography, referred to the Economics course at the University College; he stated that 'year 1926 and the early part of 1927 saw me in full concentration to clear the Inter-Economics. Before I sat for the examination, my progress towards the B.Sc. (Econ) degree was in jeorpardy, because Prof. P.J. Thomas who lectured to us in Economics left the University College and went back to Madras to take up another appointment. I was the only student preparing for the B.Sc. (Econ) degree, and in the absence of a competent lecturer, I was likely to be

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[59] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1926-27,p.B 6.
[60] The student referred to here was Dr. N.M. Perera
[61] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1926-27,p. 7.

stranded without the prospect of future progress in my studies'.[62] It was this reason which compelled Dr. N.M. Perera to leave the College and proceed to the London School of Economics. Economics was taught in the Department of History and Prof. P.J. Thomas wanted the establishment of a separate Department of Economics; he was of the view that though progress had been made in economic studies since 1924, the Economics courses were hardly suited to the conditions and needs of Ceylon students. He, in 1926, suggested that economics courses need to be drawn up to suit the special needs and requirements of the island.[63]

However, the Oriental Languages were becoming popular and they attracted a substantial number of students. In 1927, Rev. R. Siddartha joined the College as a lecturer, and there were students, offering Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit for Intermediate as well as the Honours course. It was in June, 1928 that Ceylonese students sat the Indo-Aryan Honours examination. There were various incentives provided for the purpose of popularising Indo-Aryan studies; prizes were awarded to the candidates who did well in Pali at the Intermediate Arts Examination, and special government scholarships were made available to those taking up the Indo-Aryan Honours course. It was believed that with such moves, an impetus would be provided to that branch of study, not only in the University College, but also in the secondary schools in the island. Special attention was needed to promote Oriental Studies as there was very little interest in vernaculars; the ancient classical languages were not taught in a large majority of English schools in the country. Therefore, the Head of Department of Indo-Aryan Languages had to state that 'it has to be admitted that many of those who enter for courses in Oriental languages at the University College do only after they discover that they are not fit to join other departments of study. None of the aristocratic schools of the Island teach Sinhalese or Tamil above the Cambridge Junior form, so that the majority of intelligent students who come from these schools are compelled to apply their talents, where linguistically inclined, to languages other than their own classics'.[64] Yet another factor was that the University of London charged high fees from those who offered Oriental languages. The decision to bring the subjects of study within the scope of the Civil Service examination influenced students' choice of subjects at the University College, and the inclusion of Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhalese as subjects for the Civil Service examination increased the number of students offering these subjects at the College. Such changes affected the place of

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[62] Gooneratne, Colvin. ed. NM in his own words, As seen by ohtres. Birth Centenary. Publication, N.M. Perera Centre, Colombo, 2006,p.57.

[63] Warnapala, Wiswa. 'The Need for a Faculty of Social Science', in Warnapala, W. Politics in Sri Larika, Godage, Colombo, 2001, pp.133-l46.

[64] Administration Report of the Principal for the year 1926-27,p.B 8.

Oriental languages in the University College curriculum. At the beginning, there was hardly any enthusiasm for the study of Tamil; in 1926 only five students offered the subject for the Intermediate examination. The reason for this was that the majority of the Tamils among the undergraduates prefered Science courses to Arts courses; another reason was that Tamil was not a subject for the BA Honours of the University of London. In the thirties, the situation in respect of Oriental languages underwent a change; Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, reporting in 1934, stated that 'our numbers remain steady. The students who now join our classes from schools seem to be better equipped to profit from our courses of study than those of the past. The provision of special scholarships in Indo-Aryan has definitely encouraged the study of Orientalia in our schools'.[65] Dr. G.P. Malalasekera, making use of the report, commented on an important general issue affecting the development of the country. He stated that if the languages of the country are to find an adequate place in the life of the people, it must be through the efforts of the public schools of Ceylon. He, discussing the matter further, stated that he is not satisfied that the issue of giving local languages their due share in the curriculum of studies in secondary schools run either by the Government itself or with State Assistance, has been tackled with sufficient seriousness. Malalasekera, describing the then existing system of education as 'bread-butter', stated that as years roll on, 'my conviction grows stronger that until we have a University of our own there can be very little hope for the revival of Tamil learning in Ceylon'.[66] It was thought that a full-fledged independent autonomous University would create conditions for the propagation of such studies. The decision to introduce compulsory papers in Sinhalese and Tamil at competitive public examinations stimulated the study of these subjects at University College level. It was in 1938 that the University of London made preparations to hold the BA Honours Degree Examination in Tamil. G.P. Malasekera, as mentioned earlier, was of the view that as long as the public is content with such a system, the neglect of local languages cannot be avoided. The inclusion of Pali in the syllabus of the Ceylon Civil Service examination was well received, and it was his view that 'this should prove to be a distinct encouragement to the study of languages'.[67] With regard to Tamil, however, the prospect did not look good at all. The Lecturer in Tamil, Rev. Fr. Kingsbury, stated that 'I have little or nothing to report about the Tamil Department for the year under review'.[68]

It is now clear that an attempt was made from the beginning of University education in Ceylon to afford a special place for the study of Oriental

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[65] Administration Report of the Principal of the University College for 1934-35,p.B 5
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid
[68] Ibid

languages. The development of Oriental studies suffered due to the foreign content of curricula oriented towards London University Examinations.[69] The Colombo Oriental Studies Society campaigned for the promotion of the study of Pali, Sinhalese and Sanskrit. There were no similar organisations to promote the study of Social Sciences. In 1931, the University College produced the First Class in Indo-Aryan Studies and it was awarded to J.V. Fonseka. This was the first occasion on which a student had obtained a First Class in the London University Examination offering Pali as his main subject. Still there was not much interest in these subjects, and it was entirely due to the lack of adequate provision for the study of these subjects in the higher classes of the secondary schools. Yet another criticism was that 'the requirements of the local Law College, of a pass in Latin in the Cambridge Senior, have affected the curriculum of studies in this country far more deeply than is generally realised'.[70] It was this over-emphasis on Oriental languages and other traditional subjects which interfered with the growth of Social Sciences at the University. This neglect or slow expansion of such disciplines deserves careful study.

Prof. R. Marrs, writing on this aspect in 1923, stated that 'we cannot afford to neglect those theoretical branches of study which react through the University on the general quality of the country's citizens and its administrators. In this connection, it would be particularly welcome such assistance that what has been proposed in the direction of Economics and Political Science'.[71] This shows that the need to teach Political Science was stressed at the very inception of University education in Ceylon. The British Constitution was taught as a part of the course in History, and it came under the purview of the Professor of History and Economics. Both groups of students could offer British Constitution, and a considerable number of students did. It was in 1929 that a course in Politics was introduced. During this period, History and Economics was able to obtain the services of some leading members in the Civil Service; they came to lecture as Visiting Lecturers, and they were none other than Sir Charles Collins, H.P. Kauffman and M.F. de S. Jayaratne - all three from the Ceylon Civil Service.[72] Prof. P.J. Thomas in Economics resigned and in his place Dr. B.B. Das Gupta was appointed to the post of Lecturer in Economics, and he, in 1936, was appointed to the Chair in Economics. Prof. P.J. Thomas, during his tenure in the Department of History and Economics, did much to develop an interest in economic studies in Ceylon and he was largely instrumental in forming the Ceylon Economic Society.

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[69] Ibid

[70] IbidiP.B 6.

[71] Warnapala, Wiswa. op.cit;P.136

[72] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1927-28.

Gate Mudaliyar, N. Wickremaratna, in his short study on Village Agriculture in Ceylon, referred to the formation of the Ceylon Economic Society. It was he, through an article in the Ceylon Daily News, who suggested the formation of an Economic Society for the study of rural economics.[73] Prof. Marrs took an immediate interest in the matter and the Ceylon Economic Society was formed and Prof. P.J. Thomas was associated with it.[74] It was formed for the purpose of the study of economic problems, primarily those in the area of rural economics. This again explained the growing maturity of the College as an institution of higher education. Prof. Marrs himself commented in 1928 that 'it has been in existence now for eight years only,and it speaks well for the natural ability and aptitude of the Ceylon people that the youth of the country have seized the opportunities of University education in their own country with such rapid and signal success'.[75]

Yet there were concerns about certain courses of study, and the question was whether they had been devised to suit the conditions of the country. In the thirties, after nearly ten years of existence of the College, this issue came up for discussion. In 1934, Oriental History, with special reference to History of India was included in the History Honours course. A course in Diploma in Economics, with special reference to the Economy of Ceylon, was introduced. It was decided that the London B.Sc. in Economics course was not strictly suitable for Ceylon students studying in Ceylon. A beginning was made to organise the curricula on the basis of the conditions in this country, and it was realised that an emerging national University should formulate its own syllabi on the basis of its own national needs. Referring to the new course in Diploma in Economics, Prof. R. Marrs stated that 'if it is true that the University is likely to come into existence in a few years time, this experiment will be of considerable value and significance. From the point of view of the syllabus, the only subjects which are likely to be particularly affected by the change over from a University College to a degree granting University will be those of History and Economics, for the London examinations naturally do not, nor are they ever likely to include any reference to local history, conditions or circumstances in their syllabus in either subject'. The Diploma course in Economics was organised for the purpose of helping those students to gain 'a valuable insight into local economic conditions which are so badly in need of study, and something more than the purely theoretical knowledge of Economics which is all that the B.Sc. Economics London can give them; there will also be the satisfaction of knowing that they will be assisting in laying the foundation of the

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[73] Wickremaratne, N. Memoir on Village Agriculture in Ceylon. Second edition, Kandy, 1983, P.28
[74] Ibid; p.28
[75] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1927-28, p.b 14

Economics school of the future Ceylon University'.[76] This provides enough evidence to the fact that such subjects were allowed to evolve into disciplines based on national conditions and criteria. Yet another issue, which came up for discussion, was the study of Ceylon History, which, even at the height of the clamour for Oriental Studies, did not receive much attention. Though Prof. Marrs wanted to introduce a Diploma course in History, there was objection to it on the ground that the History Honours course offered opportunities to candidates to sit the Ceylon Civil Service examination. It was mentioned that 'it does seem to me eminently desirable that there should be at least some study of Ceylon History in an institution such as this'.[77] Several arguments against this suggestion were made. The absence of books, and particularly the complete absence of works on the Dutch period made it well-nigh impossible to have the subject studied at the undergraduate stage. It was suggested that it could be studied at the post-graduate stage and organised research work could be undertaken. It was thought that such research studies are preliminary to the introduction of Ceylon History into the Ceylon University course in History. Prof. Marrs, in this context, recommended the inauguration of a Diploma course in Ceylon History. He, in fact, stated that 'I have a very sincere hope that I shall see Ceylon History taking its place in the higher education of the Island, and a full and proper place in the secondary education too before I finally quit its shores. My fifteen years sojourn in Ceylon has had, from the academic point of view, to be devoted to the training of students by the ordinary teaching of History at the undergraduate stage, which has meant that there have been no opportunities of research work. As these students pass into everyday life, they ought to form the nucleus of a well informed body of public opinion which will press for the adequate study of their own history while realising its difficulties and their implications. This has, all along, been my object. Much lip service is paid on public platforms and elsewhere to the necessity of studying 'the glorious history of ancient Lanka' but very little has been done'.[78] This was a scathing criticism of the failure to inaugurate a course in Ceylon History, and Prof. Marrs made a strong plea for it.

The intake of students, as mentioned elsewhere, began to increase annually; in 1935 the intake was 540, which was well ahead of the total number of students of all faculties. Since the annual intake was treated as a phenomenal rise in numbers, the University administration had to think of an admission formula. The Principal, Prof. Marrs addressed the Department of Education on the subject of a University College Entrance Examination, and the

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[76] Ibid; p. B 7.
[77] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1934-35,p. B 8.
[78] Ibid; p. B 8.

report on this matter was presented to the State Council with recommendation that there should be an Entrance Examination conducted by the University College but this proposal was rejected by the State Council. The procedure followed for admission was to allow students who pass the School Certificate examination with exemption from the London Matriculation Examination, to apply for admission to the College. Even in England, this scheme of admission based on both the School Certificate Examination and the University Matriculation came to be criticised. It did not examine the suitability of the candidate for University studies; what was suggested and needed was an examination which could test the suitability of a candidate. A pass in selected subjects in the Higher Certificate examination or a pass in the University Entrance Examination specially designed to test the candidate's suitability for University level studies was recommended. It was stated that a University entrance test would cease to be a marketable qualification, whereas the School Certificate, from the beginning, was intended to be a test of good general education - without regard to Universities. Yet another criticism of the School Certificate was its 'predominantly literary character'.[79] The School Certificate, which the Ceylon schools had used, hitherto provided a satisfactory test of general education, and could be easily adapted to the needs of those who do propose to 'enter a University. Yet another criticism was that as long as it remained linked to a University Matriculation examination, through the exemption it offers, the school curriculum would remain limited and oriented toward the particular direction given by the University of London. The existing close relationship between the School Certificate examination and the University Matriculation examination did not produce the standard of attainment required for entrance to University studies. Since a vocational orientation was found in the School Certificate examination, it was thought that the University was forced into accepting subjects of study, both for the purpose of University entrance and for introduction into the University curriculum itself, which are more useful to a Technical College or a School of Vocational study. This tendency appeared in countries which did not possess a tradition of University scholarship from which to derive intellectual inspiration. It came to be emphasised that the problems of the modern University in any country is its ability to adapt itself to the mutifarious needs and interests of modern life. This was very relevant a criticism which they made to emphasise the fact that the University needed a separate entrance examination.

The method of selection for admission to the University College was on the basis of the results of the London Matriculation Examination; exemption

[79] Ibid;p. B 13.

from it was sufficient to get admission. This form of admission was changed through the organisation of a separate University entrance examination in May, 1939. It was during this period that Prof. Marrs went on retirement after holding the post of Principal for more than eighteen years, during which period he was solely responsible for the organisation of the University College from its beginning.[80] In addition, he did an incredible amount of work for the future of the University; he contributed immensely to the preparation of the Report of the University Commission and the Draft Ordinance of the University. Before the formation of the University of Ceylon in 1942, many more changes took place in respect of both academic life and administration in the University College, and all these changes took place in the late thirties. The politics of the country, which came to be reflected within the State Council elected on the basis of adult suffrage (1931) made a major impact on the evolution of University policy during this period. Though all the developments cannot be catalogued, some reference is necessary to those key aspects which, as transitory developments, made a contribution to the final establishment of the University of Ceylon in 1942. In respect of History and Economics, the establishment of a separate Department of Economics in 1937 was a landmark decision; History and Economics, which hitherto functioned as a single department, was one of the largest department in the College and it made a major impact on the growing intellectual life of the College. The British Constitution, which was taught as a separate subject in the Department of History, became a part of the course in Economics which now had a course in Political Theory. S.A. Pakeman, as the acting Principal in the period 1938-39, made a plea for the teaching of Ceylon History; there was a special teachers' course in Ceylon History. Pakeman, in fact, stated that 'when the University comes into existence Ceylon History will form a very important part of the History syllabus both for the degree examination and for the entrance examination.[81] He, commenting on the teaching of Ceylon History in schools, stated that ''I have the impression that the teaching of this subject in schools is neither widespread or efficient enough. Stimulus by examination seems almost essential to most Ceylon students'.[82] Ceylon History was included in the examination for the post of District Revenue Officer; therefore it was hoped that it would be made an optional or compulsory subject for some other competitive examinations. It was in this form that an attempt was made to popularise the study of Ceylon History. Prof. Marrs, writing of the need to enhance the quality of scholarship and learning at the University College, spoke emphatically of the need to promote post-graduate work. While referring to the work of Professors and Heads of Departments, he, rather perceptively, stated that

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[80] Administration Report of the University College for years 1938-39,p. B 13.
[81] Administration Report of the University College for 1938-39,p.B 6
[82] Administration Report of the University College for 1927-28, p.B 14.

'they have risen to the task with noteworthy skill and devotion to duty and now have the reward, though the Honours classes, if conducting studies of sufficiently advanced nature to call forth from teacher and student real thought and scholarship'.[83] In other words, he wanted post-graduate courses in those departments which conduct courses for the Honours degree, where considerable amount of research is being already done. He specially referred to History and Oriental Studies, and he, with more academic acumen, stated that 'the special economic problems of Ceylon appear to offer the most fruitful fields of research in this country'.[84] S.A. Pakeman identified island's economic problems as an important area of post-graduate research. He, as Jennings on a subsequent occasion, referred to the absence of benefactors who could find funds for research. The benefactors in Ceylon did not have a definite idea of the manner in which their benefactions are to be used, and they might consider funding post-graduate research studentships at the College. In respect of Tamil, such worthy benefactions came from Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam who, through his last will, wanted to assist studies in Tamil. Prof. Marrs, making a tribute to the late Sir Ponnamabalam Arunachalam, stated that the College had never a better friend than Sir P. Arunachalam, who, through benefactions and endowments, encouraged Science and Oriental learning while he gave liberally towards the institution of a Hostel.

In the sphere of teaching, specially in relation to the teaching of undergraduates, the matter came to be examined with a view to enhancing the quality of learning at the College. Some of the issues were discussed in relation to the disadvantages and dangers of reading for the external degrees of a University situated in a distant country. Such a system allowed teaching, though efficient when judged by results, to 'stifle initiative and originality in the student'.[85] It was stated that 'it is comparatively easy to invent a system of instruction which will successfully meet all examination requirements and yet be remote from the truest ideal of University education'.[86] It was thought that the public should not view University education mainly as an avenue to a vocation, a tendency which still persists within the system today. The problem was inadequate space for large numbers to be admitted and provided instruction. The Oxford system, with its twelve or thirteen hours of classes a week including the hour with the tutor, was proposed but the question was whether it suited the local conditions. The authorities were of the view that a satisfactory compromise had to be devised to give adequate assistance and guidance to the student. Not much tutorial instruction

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[83] Ibid; P. B 14.
[84] Ibid;p.B.14
[85] Ibid; p. B 4.
[86] Ibid; p.B 14.

was possible due to the lack of adequate staff; tutorial work was continued and differed in no important respects from the tutorial work at Oxford and Cambridge. In fact, it was mentioned that the work of an academic officer in a University of whatever type is bound always to include a large amount of work other than lecturing, such as research, tutorial supervision, organisation of department of study, examinations and tests, and in the case of sciences, the maintenance of equipment and supervision of laboratory. In the University College of the period, a Professor was required to deliver 9 to 15 lectures a week at all levels of the subject from the Intermediate to the Final Honours classes. Tutors, as in Oxford and Cambridge, have no lectures except one or two tutorial classes. The determination of the type and extent of tutorial instruction depended on a number of factors - the type of University, the nature of the subject concerned, the degrees for which the student is reading, the quality of the individual student and the teaching resources available within the institution. The tutorial hour was very important from the point of view of the student as he was expected to make full use of this period to acquire knowledge with a view to proceeding further. Tutorial hour has, of course, its dangers in unskillful hands.[87] It, therefore, was stated that 'it can easily become an ill-prepared lecture or degenerate into mere coaching, a danger to which it is particularly liable if the student comes to the University with an inferior school education'.[88] This danger can take place in an institution which admits a large number of comparatively poor students. Tutorial instruction succeeds only when there is a genuine intellectual interest in the teacher and quality in the student. For instance, at Oxford, tutorial work is individual teaching as distinguished from lecturing. At Cambridge, the tutor has its meaning, signifying supervisor of studies, which again, was a kind of individual teaching. The individual teaching, for that matter, interfered with the independent, original research work on the part of the teachers. This kind of system could not be adopted in Ceylon due to a number of factors. Lord Chalmers, the former Governor, himself from Oxford recommended the Oxford tutorial system to the University College in Ceylon without taking into consideration the peculiar history of the College.[89]

The Calcutta University Commission, which examined the early Universities of India, looked at the formula adopted in respect of tutorials at Oxford

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87 Administration Report of the University College for 1926-27,P. B 12.

88 Ibod;p. B 12.

89 This University began before Colleges; the Colleges were in the first instance students' boarding houses and not a place of education. It was a place where students tended to herd together in Student Societies. Later heads of such institutions became Masters and began to teach the students who were resident of the place. In this way, the tutorial system of the Colleges became important.

in order to devise a workable scheme acceptable to a modern unitary University.[90] It was the view of the Calcutta Commission that 'a University of Colleges superficially resembling Oxford and Cambridge, and more closely, the reconstructed University of London cannot be planted in India, and the initial administrators of the University system in Ceylon were well aware of this criticism.[91] What was intended in India at that stage was to 'provide a large measure of freedom and responsibility called for in the teaching body of a teaching University, and stimulating a growth of a University system that would be more responsive to the needs of the community it served'.[92] This perception perhaps influenced the Ceylonese decision-makers at this stage; Prof. R. Marrs, in fact, maintained that 'the Calcutta Commission recommendations were closely followed in the proposals which we originally made for the future University'.[93] At the very beginning of University education in Ceylon, the problem was the lack of more room for academic officers, and it was this fact which interfered with the increasing of 'opportunities for personal and instructional association between teacher and student'.[94] Therefore the teachers were inevitably burdened with a quantity of instruction, both formal and informal, which militates against their effort to develop original work and research. It was mentioned that excessive teaching, which was the pattern due to the absence of enough teachers, hampers original research in their specialised fields. Such original research is one of the primary functions of a modern University. A University, which is newly-created, has to undertake a heavier burden of teaching than a long established fully-staffed University. The University College, as a new institution, experienced these difficulties, and most of the teachers of the period, accepted to undertake a heavy burden of work which was done with uncomplaining loyalty.[95] Especially, the Honours classes, which were central to the intellectual life of the College, imposed a severe strain on the academic staff of the period. For instance, the Professor of History and Economics was expected to conduct single-handed 'courses of instruction which are in large Universities conducted, by a numerous body of specialists'.[96] The shortage of staff was a major problem at the College; for instance, it had two lecturers for three languages-Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit. It was, therefore, mentioned that 'Pali alone, in those country in particular, merits appointment of a Professor. The special needs of the Ceylon undergraduates 'who come to us with what is on the whole a very imperfect command of the language from a scholarly point of view', demands

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90 Ashby, Eric. op.cit; pp. 113-143.

91 Ibid;p. 118.

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93 Administration Report of the University College for 1926-27,p. B 13.

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

more lectures. Individual attention to undergraduates became important, specially, in such subjects as Science, English and Classics. Such intellectual arguments were made because the University College did not possess the minimum essential staff in all departments for study.

A discussion on certain important aspects of the University College is incomplete without a reference to the question of accommodation of students in hostels. From the very inception of the College, it was agreed that it needs to be based on the residential principle. In fact, the early champions of the University movement wanted the University to remain unitary and residential. Therefore, the University College had to focuss attention on this matter which, throughout its period of existence, assumed the character of a major problem for both the policy-makers and the administrators. In the sphere of secondary education, there were public schools administered by the Christian Missionaries and other religious organisations, and they functioned as boarding schools. This was largely a British concept, which had a history and tradition. Ralph Furse, the Recruiting Officer for the Africa Civil Service, once stated that 'as to the Public Schools, they are vital: We could not have run the show without them. In England Universities train the mind; the public schools train character and teach leadership'.[97] These schools, as boarding schools, inculcated unique characteristics among its students, and it was this tradition which encouraged the University authorities to adopt the residential principle as most of the undergraduates came from the established boarding schools. Therefore, the University College, from its very inception, was compelled to find ways and means of arranging accommodation for the undergraduates. This question, based on the need to promote the residential principle, came to be focussed on two issues: the location of the College and the provision of hostel accommodation. Initially, the University College was to be established in the buildings of the Royal College. The initial proposal was to make use of the new Royal College buildings for the University College, but this was later abandoned. The land, north of the Royal College, was later utilised which was in the area around Thurston Road. The Regina Walauwwa was taken over and converted into suitable accommodation for the Arts classes.[98] In respect of hostels, the initial position was that the Government should not build hostels for the College, but at the same time it was emphasised that 'if the youth of Ceylon is to derive the full benefit of a university training, it is essential that the University College should be a residential one, and that every encouragement should be given

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97 Heussler, Robert Yesterday Rulers. Making of the British Colonial Service. Syracuse, 1961,p.82.

98 Correspondence Relating to the Establishment of a University College. Sessional Paper, IX,1920.p.5

to the different religious bodies in Ceylon to provide hostels for their students'.[99] It was the Roman Catholics who immediately agreed to this proposal. A Catholic and Christian Hostel came into existence; the Union Hostel had a non-religious character and it accommodated 60 to 65 undergraduates. A large number of Sinhalese students traveled from their own homes or stayed with relatives in Colombo. Therefore, the Union Hostel had more Tamil undergraduates; there was a preponderance of Tamil undergraduates in all hostels. The hostels continued to perform an important and useful function in providing residence for students from various parts of the country. It was the view of the authorities that' as many students as possible should be in residence in hostels or halls of residence'.[100] This was equally applicable to female students, and a Women's Hostel was to be opened before the end of the year 1932. It was argued that the establishment of a Women Hostel is bound to affect the number of women students entering the University College since parents in outstations were reluctant to send their daughters to Colombo for University studies in the absence of any Residential institution properly supervised'.[101]

The University College had a system of scholarships, exhibitions and studentships but they were inadequate to 'equalise educational opportunities either in terms of gender or class'.[102] In July, 1921 only 4 women students were enrolled; it was 3.5 percent of the total intake. In 1926, the female intake was 15, 4.8 percent of the total. In 1931, it became 33, out of a total of 355; this was 9.3 percent of the total. In 1936, the intake was 66 out of 666 students. In the academic year before the creation of the University of Ceylon, the intake of women had reached 69 out of a total intake of 645. It was in this form that internal gender equality was achieved at the University of Ceylon. The Women Hostel was established by the Representative Council of Missions. The religious orientation of the Hostels came to be emphasized. Prof. R. Marrs, writing in 1932, stated that 'the College authorities owe a large debt of gratitude to the religious bodies and associations which have administered the College Hostels. In a University institution whose members belong to different religions the proper place for religious elements' and atmosphere would seem to be its residential institutions. Our Hostels serve the two fold purpose of providing residential institutions conducted under conditions of Collegiate life whose importance and beneficial influence have been increasingly recognised and valued in modern times, and of ensuring that the

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99 Ibid.

100 Administration Report of the University College for 1932,p.b 10

101 Ibid;p. B 11.

102 Kiribamune, Sirima. 'Early Footfalls in the Groves of Academe Women at University College 1921-1942', in The Sri Lanka Journal of Humanities, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 & 2,1997, pp.2 9-158.

student during the University care shall not be entirely isolated from religious influences'.[103] In 1935, four Hostels provided residence to students in the following way.

Name	Number of students
Christian Hostel	32
Catholic Hostel	25
Union Hostel	62
Women's Hostel	14

The Union Hostel became the breeding ground for many students who later rose to important positions of public life in Ceylon, and they readily admitted the debt of gratitude to its Warden, Prof. C. Suntheralingam.[104] In 1937, the number of students resident in hostels was 139, and the official view was that 'residential life in a Hostel is one of the most important and useful features in a University students career', and it was on the basis of this view that the foundation was laid for the establishment of a unitary residential University in Ceylon in 1942.

This chapter needs to be concluded with a brief reference to the form of administration of the University College, which, in terms of its functions and objectives, was a Colonial University. A Colonial University had limited objectives and functions as observed by Jennings in his well known article on the Colonial University.[105] The University College, though based on the residential principle, was not an autonomous institution and its administration came to be built around a Government Department. The first Principal, though an acting position, was the Director of Education, from whom Prof. R. Marrs took over. The Administration Report for .the year 1925-26 stated that 'Prof. Marrs assumed charge of the University College, thus relieving the Director of Education of the control of the College'.[106] This was the nature of control over the institution by the colonial bureaucracy. Since 1870s, both the Ceylon Medical College and the Colombo Technical College functioned as Government Departments under the aegis of the colonial bureaucracy, and this departmental status, which was attached to the University College, interfered with its functioning as a proper academic

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[103] Administration Report of the University College for 1932,p. B 11.
C. Suntheralirigam functioned as the Warden of the Union Hostel for more than 13 years.
[104] Administration Report of the University College for the year 1934-35,p. B 12.
[105] Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly, Vol.16,1945,pp.228-244.
[106] Administration Report of the University College for 1925-26,p.4.

institution. All Principals, who provided both academic and administrative leadership to the University College, commented on its limitations. Sir Ivor Jennings, who was its last Principal, complained that the University College was no more than 'a Government department controlled by the Principal who was responsible to the Executive Committee of Education in the State Council'.[107] He went on to comment on this aspect and stated that 'it had an advisory council, but it was not at this stage clear what functions it exercised. Apparently the function of the Council and the Senate were exercised by the Executive Committee, a body of seven politicians.[108] The Principals, in their annual reports, mentioned that the College Council 'met six times during the year under review'.[109] The administration report for the year 1925-26, in fact, stated that 'a strong Council was constituted to advise the Government with regard to the general organization and administration of the College'.[110] It met five or six times in the year. This demostrated that in the period 1921-31, before the creation of the State Council with its Executive Committee on Education, the College Council was able to function effectively as an advisory body, but its efficacy as an advisory body suffered once it was brought under the Executive Committee of Education in the State Council. The University College Council consisted of 20 eminent persons, of whom 7 were members of the Legislative Council, and the same principle was extended to the State Council. Sometimes internal matters of administration came before the State Council through the members of the College Council; for instance, one member, Mr. N. Selvadurai, Member for Kayts, raised a matter pertaining to a student who was prevented from sitting an examination because he was involved in the University rag.[111] Under the Manning Constitution (1924-1931) the Principal of the University College was responsible to the Governor of the Colony, who was President of the College; evidence once again of colonial control over the institution.

In the case of the University College, its annual vote came under the Ministry of Education, and in the case of the Medical College, it came under the Ministry of Health. It was during this debate that matters relating to the College were discussed; once C.W.W. Kannangara stated that 'education now imparted is really of the type that is suited to the needs of the country'.[112] It was his view that examinations and subjects are superimposed from outside, and he demanded a

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[107] Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya. An Autobiography. Colombo,2005.
[108] Ibid; p111
[109] Administration Report of the University College for 1934-35,p.B.12
[110] Ibid;
[111] State Council Hansard of 1934, p.1946
[112] State Council Hansard, August, 1934

national University which will suit the genius of the people of this country. The purpose, as in India in the mid-nineteenth century, was to provide a direction of policy, and it was necessary in the absence of professional educationists who could guide the destinies of the new institutions of higher learning in the country.[113] It is necessary, in this context, to refer to what Lord Curzon said in respect of the administration of Indian Universities of the period; he stated that 'higher education ought not to be run either by politicians or by amateurs. It is a science - the science of human life and conduct - in which we must give a fair hearing and a reasonable chance to the Professor'.[114] This, was an attempt to officialise the Universities in India. Lord Curzon wanted to advance his vision of a teaching and residential University in India, and it, perhaps influenced Sir Ivor Jennings, who, in the later years, became the greatest champion of a residential University in Ceylon. Yet the University College, which came into existence in 1921, was regarded as a half-way house to a national University, though it formed the nucleus of such a University.[115] The conversion of this institution to a full-fledged independent national University took more than two decades, and the reasons for this long and undue delay in establishing the University was due to a wide variety of issues, the prominent of which was the failure to reach an acceptable consensus on a suitable location is popularly known as the 'battle of the sites', which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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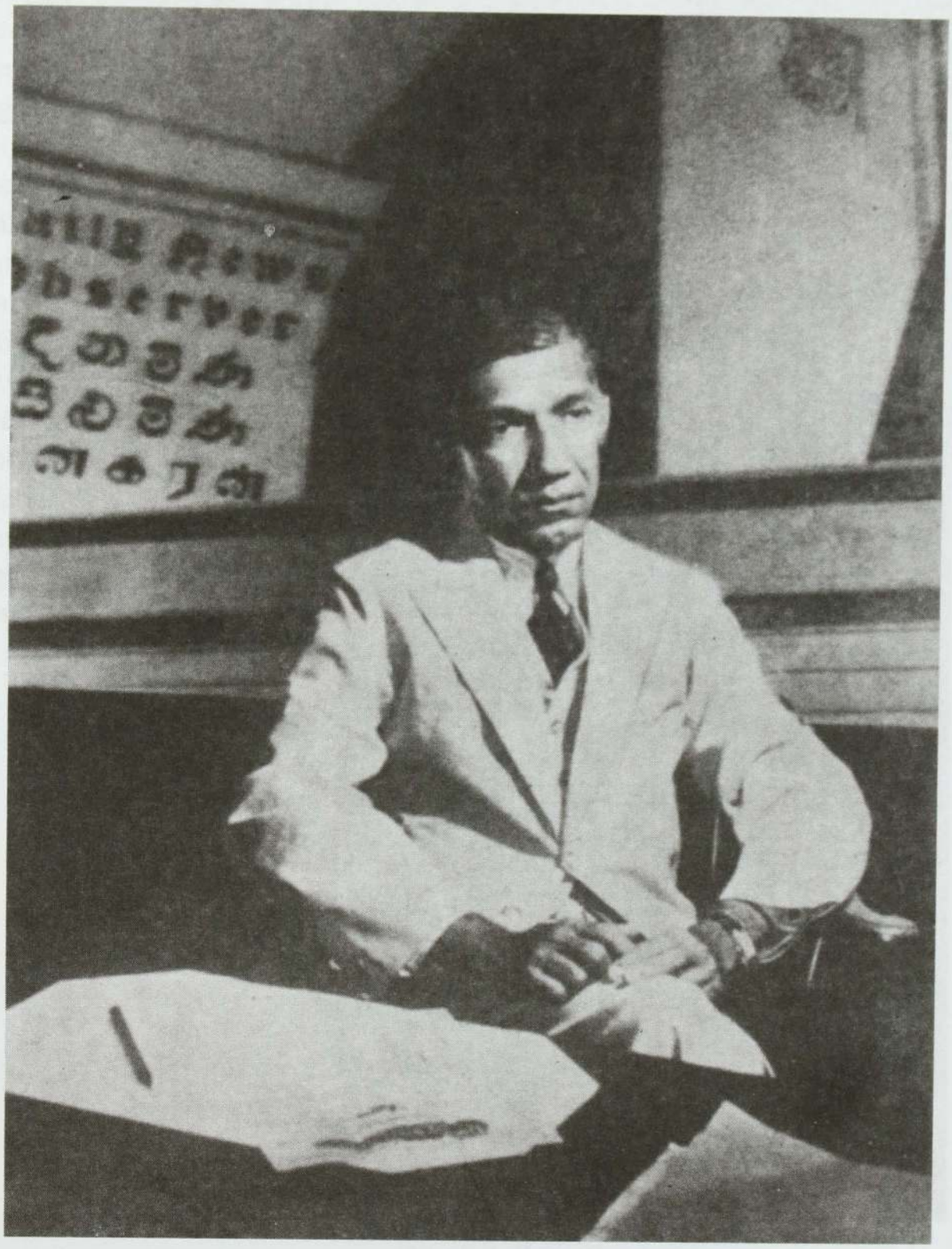
[113] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p.73.
[114] Ibid;p. 75.
[115] De Silva, K.M & Pieris, G.H. ed. The University System of Sri Lanka. ICES, Kandy, 1995, p.6.

Prof. Robert Marrs



D.R. Wijewardene

Chapter IV

The 'Battle of the Sites'.

It was the newly emerged English- educated Ceylonese middle class which made the first demand for representative government, and the next most important demand which they enthusiastically made was for the establishment of a residential University in Ceylon. This demand was made long before the emergence of the nationalist movement which made constitutional changes as one of the major platforms of their struggle.[1] Since the role of the Ceylon University Association, which inaugurated the famous and volatile 'University movement' has already been discussed, 'the battle of the sites' needs to be discussed as it came to be dominated by the members of the elite who, in an unique fashion, provided a pioneering leadership to the 'University movement' which indefatigably campaigned for the establishment of a single unitary University based on the residential principle. It became such a vociferous movement as the Ceylon university movement because it was the same group of educated Ceylonese who were involved in this battle as well. As the movement for the establishment of the University of Ceylon, this battle of the sites, though a fight for a location of the University, was again intellectual in its orientation. This, in itself, was a very unique feature of this struggle and it, perhaps, did not have a parallel in any other country. Yet another unique feature of this battle was that it was long drawn, and consumed a bit of time and labour of the Ceylonese elite who, as in the case of the movement for the establishment of the University, displayed much enthusiasm. It was this character of the battle of the sites which compelled certain writers to characterise it as an emotional movement; K.M. de Silva, in fact, saw it as an emotional dispute.[2] Therefore, in order to place the history of the evolution of University in Ceylon, it would not be inappropriate to enter into a detailed discussion of this issue as it highlighted the commitment of the educated elite to a proper form of University education in Ceylon. In addition, it had a direct impact on the evolution of higher education policy.

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[1] 'Role of the Western Educated Elite', in Community, Vol.4, No.l,1962.
[2] De Silva, K.M & Pieris, G.H. ed. The University System in Sri Lanka. ICES,Kandy,1995,p.61.

The most important physical facility in Universities and other institutions of higher learning is the site, where the University or the institution is to be located. A.H.Hommadi, writing in his work titled 'University Administration in Developing Countries'(1984) stated that 'the consideration of site' where the institutions of higher education be located, is an important variable for achieving or thwarting the purpose of these institutions. The many unsatisfactory locations stem usually from the lack of knowledge and understanding of the purposes and uses of the site and what these imply by way of space, topography and other site features. In considering the location of an institution, attention must be directed to two important aspects- accessibility and environment. The first has to do with the convenience and safety of students and others travelling to and from the building and the second one with the attractiveness of the surroundings of the school'.[3] In Britain, the impulse for the creation of new Universities came with the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution. The conditions that led to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century created both the demand for and the means of supplying new centres of University education, and they were established in locations close to industrial centres, and this relationship with the locality allowed them to flower into great centres of learning.[4] It is intended to make use of the above description as a preface to the examination of the debate on 'the battle of the sites', which unduly delayed the establishment of the University of Ceylon, though the process was to make use of the facilities within the University College to elevate its status to that of a full-fledged autonomous University.

It was in 1912, ten years before the founding of the University College, that issue with regard to the location arose, and the English Board of Education, in a reply to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, referred to the question of site. They, in fact, stated that 'the decision to locate the new College in buildings of the Royal College, Colombo would very possibly need revision'.[5] It was thought that in deciding on the location, one has to take into consideration the potentiality of the place for further expansion and development,

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[3] Hommadi, A.H. University Administration in Developing Countries. New Delhi,1984,p.95. 4.

[4] Green, V.H.H. British Institution. The Universities.Penguin,1969, pp.120-121.
The University of Leeds owed its existence neither to an individual philanthropist nor to civic patriotism but to a demand made in 1826 for the establishment of a university for the town. Ibid;p.114.

[5] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question. (undated), p.2.

and this objective influenced the establishment of new Universities in Britain.[6] The English Board of Education, discussing the matter further, mentioned that 'it seems likely that a University College intended to appeal to those interested in Eastern learning would be more suitably located in such a place as Kandy than Colombo'.[7] This was suggested on the basis of the argument that such a move would give opportunities for higher teaching in Arts subjects and in Science in a place which is probably more healthy, and more suited to student life and less expensive than residence in Colombo. Such a decision, initially, would demand a division of work between Colombo and Kandy, as both Medicine and Law cannot be shifted due to certain reasons. The Governor, Sir Robert Chalmers, disagreeing with the point of view expressed by the English Board of Education, adopted a different position on the question of locality; his view was that despite the advantages to be gained by combining the institution with the proposed College of Tropical Agriculture at Peradeniya, the University College should be located in Colombo. He was of the opinion that the new building erected for the Royal College could be utilised for the University College, which could be brought into existence without delay. The view of the Governor, in a way, represented the official position on the matter, though there were divergent points of view on this suggestion as well. It was in 1915 that an official decision was taken to acquire lands around Thurston Road and Serpentine Road; though this decision was taken in 1915, the authorities could not start the school till 1921, and the intervention of World War I was the main factor which interfered with its establishment. The site in Thurston Road, Colombo was chosen without any real consideration of its suitability.[8] It was a proposal which did not involve much expenses; it was only 18 ½ acres in extent; this was inadequate for the establishment of a University. It was in August, 1923, that the Principal of the College, Prof. Robert Marrs placed a resolution before the College Council, which included two proposals:

1) Both the new and the old Royal College buildings be appropriated for the purpose of the University.

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[6] Green. V.H.H. op. cit.

[7] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, p. 2.

[8] Jennings, Ivor. 'The Foundation of the University of Ceylon', in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. IX, No. 3-of 1951, p.156.

2) The site and buildings of the Lunatic asylum be adapted for the purpose of the new Royal College.[9]

The basis of the plan was that all the accommodation necessary for the University could be provided by the then existing Education Triangle; it also meant that additional buildings are not required. This arrangement was unsatisfactory for the Royal College, and the question still remained unsolved. Two Governors had two points of view on the matter. Governor, Robert Chalmers, though he supported the establishment of a University, 'completely neglected himself to ask where the University was to be placed and how much land it requires[10]. In contrast, the Governor MacIlum had contemplated the possibility of an affiliated University, and this, therefore, meant that it does not need much land for expansion. According to Prof. Marrs, the Government, by this time, had definitely resolved that the University should be situated in Colombo in and around the site of the University College.

Though this was the official position, a certain segment of the country's public opinion, who were in the forefront of the University movement, still regarded it as an open question. In other words, it meant that the matter was still subject to public controversy and no final decision had been taken on the question of the site. Prof. Marrs, who had eight years of experience in India, was a bit liberal in his academic approaches, and was of the opinion that the University should be located in Colombo, but he thought it necessary to obtain a piece of land large enough to accommodate a University. It was his belief that all the land available in the existing 'educational triangle', and the land between Race Course Avenue and Guildford Crescent would be sufficient to set up a University. It was in September, 1923, that the Government, at another Conference, where both Principals of the University College and the Royal College were present, came out with a formula of compromise, according to which the Royal College be shifted to the present site of the Lunatic asylum in the Bullers Road and its adjacent lands were to be assigned to a future University. The new buildings of the Royal College in the Race Course Avenue were to be given to the University College. There was no immediate decision on the matter, and after

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[9] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, p.3.
[10] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p. 159.

some difference of opinion, the University College Council agreed to examine further the possibility of utilising the land around the Lunatic asylum area. There was another conference attended by the Colonial Secretary, the Principal of the University College, the Principal of the Royal College and the Director of Public Works to work out an acceptable compromise. The Colonial Secretary, who was determined to push the official view on the question, wanted the Director of Public Works to investigate into the possibility of adaptation of the buildings at the Lunatic asylum for the site of the future University. The Director of Public Works, in October, 1923, submitted a memorandum, focusing on the relative merits of the Lunatic asylum site. The Director of Public Works, raising a couple of pertinent issues on the matter, stated that 'it appears to me that the advisability of locating the University on either site is very questionable. If it is to be in Colombo, would it not be better to locate it in some undeveloped suburb. The suburb would then grow round the University'.[11]

Prof. Marrs wanted a site, ranging from 45 acres to 50 acres, and the land value per acre was to be in the range of Rs.30,000. The Director of Public Works, in the alternative, suggested that it be put up at Kandy or Galle; yet another suggestion was to have a location between Colombo and Kalutara where land could be obtained for Rs. 1,000.00 per acre. The general opinion was that the site of the Lunatic asylum should be utilised and Prof. Marrs, who was probably agreeable to the proposal as he wanted the University situated in Colombo, consented to work out the basic minimum needs in respect of buildings. The University College Council also abandoned the idea with regard to the utilisation of the 'educational triangle', and concentrated on the cost of new buildings. W.J. Thornhill, the Director of Public Works, came out with a third option; the utilisation of the land south of Bullers Road where arrangements have been made to prevent flooding. Initially, it was thought that Rs.20 lakhs would be required to construct the new buildings on the new site. It was in 1924 that the Legislative Council passed a resolution, setting aside Rs.3 million from the surplus balance; they were to be used to form a 'Building and Equipment Fund' for the proposed University of Ceylon. Though there was approval for this sum from the Secretary of State, the issue of the site had not been finalised by the University College Council, which, in November 1923, appointed another Sub-Committee, consisting of such eminent persons as Sir Marcus Fernando, Sir James Pieris, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam and Dr. Rutherford

[11] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, p.2.

to report on the suitability of the site at Bullers Road where 95 acres of land were available. The College Council agreed with the recommendation of the Sub-Committee, and it was after this decision that the Legislative Council formally approved the sum of Rs. 3 million from the surplus balances. When the estimates for the proposed University came to be prepared, it was discovered that this sum of Rs. 3 million was grossly inadequate and another conference was convened by the Principal of the College to examine this question. The following resolutions were passed at this Conference:

(1) The Building and Equipment Fund of Ceylon University could not be confined to Rs.3 million; it needed to be increased up to four million five hundred thousand.

(2) There should be at the outset accommodation for 180 students, and these students should be under the direct control of the University authorities.

(3) The Governrment should give facilities to religious educational bodies to acquire sites in the vicinity of the University to build hostels.

The authorities were unable to estimate the cost of the buildings because they could not determine the size of the University. Once the Principal had suggested - or surmised - that the University would have 2000 students by 1950. Therefore the College Council, again, reiterated that the original allocation of Rs.4,500,000 would not be enough and suggested that another 10 to 15 percent should be added. The main requirements were listed as follows:

1. Convocation Hall for 800 persons.
2. Library for 60,000 volumes.
3. Arts Block for 300 to 500 students.
4. Science Block for 250 to 300 students.
5. Three Hostels - 60 students each.
6. Quarters for 30 servants.

While such discussions were going on as to the building requirements of the proposed University, the question of the site remained unsettled. The sites proposed, for

instance, the Bullers Road site, had been rejected by the experts. In addition, the question of cost too had not been settled when new sites were proposed, and the cost began to escalate, and finally reached the figure of 6 ½ million. Still the question of the type of University was not fully and finally settled. The basic question was whether it was going to be a purely residential or non-residential or whether it was partly residential. Yet another issue, which attracted attention, was the number of students going into residence, and how many hostels were to be built. It was in this state of affairs, the part of which was due to the prevailing confusion as to the status of the proposed University, that a Conference was convened of the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council for the purpose of fully reviewing the University project. Though the Colombo site, which included two sites – Lunatic asylum site with 65 acres and the Bullers Road site with 95 acres, was proposed, it was unacceptable to the University College Council and it, therefore, appointed a sub-committee consisting of Prof. R. Marrs, Sir Marcus Fernando, Sir James Pieris and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam to go into the question of the site. This, in other words, meant that the issue of the site came into full public focus and it even fore shadowed the movement for independence.[12] It became so useful to the Colonial authorities to de-accelerate the process of constitutional reforms; E.B. Denham, for instance, advised that the University movement should be kept alive in order to keep the people of Ceylon away from the growing nationalist movement. This was purely because of the fact that an important segment of the educated Ceylonese elite was more interested in the establishment of a University than in the constitutional reforms. In June, 1926, the Governor appointed 'the University Site Committee' with M .T. Akbar as the Chairman with the direction to consider the question of a site for the proposed University of Ceylon and to submit a report on the subject. This was a major step forward and it, immediately satisfied the educated Ceylonese who, by this time, had converted this issue into a major demand. This Committee was expected to focus its attention on three questions, and they were as follows:

1. Whether it is desirable to establish a University in Ceylon
2. The type of University most suitable to the conditions prevailing in Ceylon.
3. The most suitable site for the proposed University.

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[12] Gunawardene, R.A.L.H. ed. More Open Than Usual. University of Peradeniya,1992,p.4

It is not necessary to refer to the plethora of ideas and views expressed on the above three matters, which came to be thoroughly discussed.[13] The nature of the discussion and the arguments placed before the public demonstrated the intellectual commitment of those individuals engaged in the movement for the establishment of a University in Ceylon. It was mentioned that 'the purpose of a modern University is not merely to provide a place for the acquisition of higher learning, but also a place where the student has an opportunity for self-culture in its truest sense, where he will have an opportunity for a sound, physical, social, moral and intellectual training which will fit him to take his proper place in the life of the country'[14] In fact, the Sadler Commission (1917) report came to be studied, and its recommendations came to be utilised in the discussion of the subject; it was the Sadler Commission which examined the University of Calcutta, the role of which among such institutions in India was examined. Therefore, the protagonists of the Ceylon University, in fact, were so enamoured with some of the views expressed by the Sadler Commission that they quoted chapter and verse of it to prove their stand on the question. The following passage was quoted from the Sadler Commission.[15] 'A University. if it is to satisfy in full measure the requirements of the educated class must devote more than mere examination, must undertake more than mere control, must offer more than mere instruction. It must be an institution in which a true education can be obtained-the training of the mind, body and character - the result not a book but a man'.[16] The Akbar Committee probably was influenced by the Sadler Commission, which made a very thought-provoking study on the issue of Indian Universities.

In the meantime, the 'battle of the sites' which became much more vocal than the nationalist movement confined to the Colombo-based English educated elite, invited a wide variety of people to support the movement. The general public, as in the case of the movement for constitutional reforms, remained apathetic on this matter at its initial phase, but it now began to change. The University question, relating to the 'battle of the sites' divided the nationalist movement into two camps; in other words, the movement for independence came to be split on this matter, and this, from the point of view of the

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[13] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, pp.6-9.
[14] Ibid;p.6.

[15] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p 114.
[16] Ibid.

imperialists, was to their advantage. One reason for the split of the nationalist movement on the University question was the failure of the authorities to come to a final decision on the site of the University; there was no definite decision that the University should be established in Colombo on the Bullers Road site, but there was a report of the Sub-Committee of the College Council which was strongly in favour of the Bullers Road site.[17] D.R.Wijewardene, who owned the Lake House Group of Newspapers, strongly advocated the establishment of the University of Ceylon at Kandy, and his entry into this 'battle of the sites' brought in support of many a stalwart in the University movement. They included such prominent personalities as Andreas Nell (1854-1956), D.B. Jayatilaka (1875-1940), Dr. S.C. Paul (1872-1942), Dr. C.A. Hewavitaharana (1876-1929), H.A.P. Sandarasegara (1875-1940), W.A. de Silva (1869-1942), Rev. A.G. Fraser (1873-1962), Francis de Zoysa (1874-1942), G.K.W. Perera (1884-1956), and A.F. Molamure (1884-1951), The group of leaders, who supported the Bullers Road site included such reputed personalities as Sir James Pieris (1856-1930), Sir Marcus Fernando (1846-1936), and Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam (1851-1930).

The Sadler Commission, in its study of the University of Calcutta and the general problem of University education in India, made a number of perceptive assessments on the question of university reforms, some of which were very relevant to the discussion that was taking place in Ceylon. The Sadler Commission, in the context of Bengal in India, stated that 'the neglect of the ablest youths in the critical years of their lives is indeed not only the most disheartening, but the most dangerous feature of the educational life of Bengal. For the fate and fortune of a people depend upon the opportunities which it affords to its ablest sons, who must be the leaders and guides of the next generations in every field of national activity. If their minds are sterilized, if their intellectual growth is starved and stunted, the nation will as severely suffer as it will if it neglects the material resources which nature has bestowed upon us'.[18] In Ceylon, the educated elite made much use of this report on the Calcutta University.

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[17] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, p.7.

[18] Ashby, Eric. p.114.

The Daily News, owned by D.R.Wijewardene, came out openly in support of the site at Kandy, and raised the question 'whether it was expedient to persevere with the task of establishing the University within the bounds of the city of Colombo, or whether it would not be an act of foresight to shift the venue to an area outside Colombo, more capable of satisfying the demands of space and suitable environment'.[19] The opinion in the country, though it was not confined to the educated elite in the country, was that the University should be established in a site far removed from Colombo; the view was that a residential University of the unitary type could not develop or grow in the cramped confines of the city of Colombo.[20] Yet another argument was that the Colombo site could not be used for the establishment of a large residential University; in other words, they wanted the University to be shifted to a venue in an area outside Colombo, which was more capable of satisfying the demands of space and environment. The importance of the site for intellectual work came to be stressed; certain recommendations of the Sadler Commission were used to prove the point in favour of a suitable location. Sadler Commission, laying great emphasis on students' training, stated that 'one of the chief advantages of College system lies in the opportunities which it offers for the growth of corporate life, which is the best thing which University life has to offer a young man - daily contact with its ablest contemporaries when they are full of intellectual vitality, eagerly pursuing their own special interests and testing their young strength upon the problems of life and thought. This is an element of the training of a University which not the most admirable lectures or tutorial arrangements can replace'.[21] It laid the greatest emphasis on students' training; an important argument, based on the need to promote harmony and understanding among students of different communities, was stressed. It was stated that 'if the various races and communities are to be welded together into one community, and if the object is to eradicate any suspicions or distrust with which one community may look upon another, the only method is to insist on common residential system where teachers as well as students must live within the University and find their interest and the occupation of their days'.[22] It was on the basis of such arguments that the Dacca University Committee allocated a splendid site of about 450 acres and another area of

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[19] Dahanayake, K. 'The Daily News and the University', in Ceylon Daily News 1918-1943. Lake House,1943, pp.21-24.
[20] Ibid; p.22.
[21] A Short History of the Ceylon University Question, p.8. 22 Quoted in Ibid;p. 8.
[22] Quoted in Idid;p 8.

130 acres for the construction of the Dacca University. The congeniality of the location was a major factor which determined the location; Dr. S.C. Paul, writing to the Ceylon Daily News, emphasised that 'Colombo was too hot for intellectual work; especially higher studies and research work demand a more congenial climate'.[23] Sir Ivor Jennings, recounting the nature of the debate, had this to say in respect of the Colombo site, which was subject to controversy; he thought that in the period 1923-24 there was no plan to create an ideal University as explained in the Sadler Report with regard to the Universities in India. Jennings was of the view that the University College in Thurston Road could be shifted to a much larger and better site in Bullers Road.[24] He, rather sarcastically, stated that 'a University on 95 acres in Bullers Road was better than a score of Universities on paper'.[25]

The issue of the site came to a head-on clash in 1926. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council wanted to discuss the question of the construction of a new residence to the Governor in the same location in Bullers Road, and this was seized by those leaders to place before the Finance Committee the view that the Bullers Road site was not the most suitable for the proposed University of Ceylon. There were people, specially in the Ceylon Daily News, who wanted to prevent the establishment of a second- rate University in Colombo - not the large residential University envisaged, but a caricature of a University, a degree factory in the city turning out graduates unfit for a life of intellectual vigour and usefulness.[26] The Ceylon, Daily News entered the campaign to oppose the Colombo site, and the role it played in association with the stalwarts of the site movement needs further analysis and discussion. The Ceylon Daily News, with a series of brilliant articles and editorials, began its campaign for a residential University situated in a congenial environment. It called upon the Government and the legislators to consider the question of the proposed University in its entirety, and not to commit the blunder of planting a second-rate, shoddy institution in the city of Colombo.[27] It was in this scenario that Dr. Andreas Nell, Dr. S.C. Paul and D.R.Wijewardene prepared a strong memorandum to be presented to the Government and it was done in the light of the decision of the Governor, Hugh Clifford to

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[23] Gunawardene, R.A.L.H. Ed. Op.Cit; p.5
[24] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p.226.
[25] Ibid;p.228.
[26] Dahanayake, K. op.cit;p.22.
[27] Dahanayake, K. op.cit;p.21

appoint a Committee to go into the question of the site. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, which originally favoured the site at Colombo, changed its position, and the new Committee was now expected to submit a fresh report on the matter. The group of individuals who vehemently stood for the site in Colombo was of the opinion that they had lost the battle, and this was a victory for D.R. Wijewardene who, through the Ceylon Daily News and Observer, campaigned against the site at Colombo. The memorandum submitted by D.R. Wijewardene and others argued a case strongly in favour of a site at Kandy; they wanted a residential University of a unitary type outside Colombo. This memorandum, though not comprehensive one, certainly provided a basis for further discussion on the subject. It became the basis for a debate and discussion in the Ceylon Daily News, through which an agitation was mounted.[28] It was D.R. Wijewarderte, Dr. A. Nell and Dr. S.C. Paul who, through the agitation in the Ceylon Daily News, put the whole question into a melting pot. Immediately after this that the Governor Sir Hugh Clifford appointed the famous 'Site Committee' in June, 1926 to consider the question of a site for the proposed University and submit a report thereon.[29] This Committee consisted of M.T. Akbar, the Solicitor General, A. Francis Molamure, Sir Waitialingam Duraiswamy, D.B. Jayatilaka, H.A. Loos and W.E. Wait. Before the preparation of the report of this Committee, the 'site' issue began to assume the character of a major debate, at which arguments for and against Colombo were made, and a segment of the nationalist movement, the major focus of which was constitutional reforms, entered the battle in the form of protagonists of an intellectual movement. The Ceylon Daily News, probably at the behest of D.R.Wijewardene, provided space for this discussion and debate, and it stood ardently on the side of those who favoured a residential university outside Colombo. It placed its columns freely at the disposal of every shade of opinion, and the discussion in the newspaper columns showed how intense was the interest in the issue involved.

H.A.J. Hulugalla, writing in 'Life and Times of D.R. Wijewardene' stated that 'the bitterest controversy in which the Ceylon Daily News was involved during the life of its founder was over the site of the Ceylon University. Wijewardene championed a University of a residential type, situated away from the distractions of the capital city'.[30]

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[28] See Ceylon Daily News 1918-1943, p.23.
[29] Ibid;pp. 22-23.
[30] Hulugalla, H.A.J. The Life and Times of D.R. Wijewardene. Lake House, 1960, p.189

There was an array of educationists and public men, who fought hard for the establishment of the University in Colombo, and it was D.R. Wijewardene, with a few Ceylonese patriots, who wanted the site shifted to Kandy. This discussion on 'the battle of the sites' is incomplete without a reference to those who made a huge contribution in support of a site outside Colombo. Before we examine the report of the Akbar Committee, it would be appropriate to discuss the views of the educated Ceylonese who were engaged in the controversy. Hulugalla, in fact, stated that 'accusations were bandied about, questioning the motives of those engaged in the controversy'.[31] One important argument was that low country Sinhalese who lived in Colombo or the neighboring coastal towns did not want to lose the educational advantages which they had enjoyed over the rest of the island almost since the Portuguese arrived in Ceylon. Tamils preferred a non-residential University because it offered many advantages to them. Those who were in the forefront of the struggle to have the University in Colombo were largely the low country Sinhalese and Tamil leaders; the prominent individuals among them were Sir James Pieris, Sir Marcus Fernando and Sir P. Arunachalam. D.R. Wijewardene and his newspaper, Ceylon Daily News, were very critical of Prof. Robert Marrs, the Principal of the University College who was determined to have the University in Colombo. The Ceylon Daily News, therefore, carried a series of articles on the University question with a view to creating a strong public opinion against the site in Colombo. The title of the series in the Ceylon Daily News was 'should Ceylon have a shoddy University', and the articles pressed the point hard that a residential University be established in or near Kandy.[32] One important feature of the discussion was that it referred or often quoted the argument advanced by the Sadler Commission in respect of the Calcutta University. In the course of the debate on the site, Prof. Marrs too came to be criticised for his own personal views on the matter. Hulugalla, referring to Prof. Marrs, wrote that 'he was an empire-builder in the best sense of the word and had a bureaucratic weakness of thinking that anyone who did not agree with the expert must be a fool or a knave'.[33] Prof. Marrs did not agree with D.R. Wijewardene on the site of the new University, and he also failed to convince Wijewardene to accept the Bullers Road site, which was Prof. Marrs's favourite proposal. He, in fact, ignored the popular feelings on the question and he, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, stated that the matter was now finally settled. It was the view of Governor, Sir

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[31] Ibid;p.189.
[32] Ibid;p.194.
[33] Ibid;p.193.

Hugh Clifford, that 'the Legislative Council is the only body that can decide the questions connected with the University'.[34] It was in this background that the Akbar Committee was appointed, and the Committee was given a mandate to report on the matter within a short time. In the meantime, the controversy raged in the columns of the Ceylon Daily News, and meetings and counter meetings were held in Colombo with those who supported the Colombo site and others who favoured the site outside Colombo. It was this strategy of the Ceylon Daily News, supported by D.R. Wijewardene, which generated a discussion on the matter on the eve of H.T. Akbar Committee report. The Akbar Committee submitted a comprehensive and scholarly report in February, 1927; as the 'site' issue is the central issue of this chapter, a detailed analysis of the M.T. Akbar Committee report is essential.[35]

The Report of the Akbar Committee, in its first paragraph, stated that, 'although by the terms of reference we were only asked to report on a suitable site for the University, yet no decision can be given on this question till we come to a conclusion on the type of University which we consider is most appropriate for Ceylon'.[36] They were expected to sort out the most important question; whether the University is to be a purely examining body or whether it is to combine teaching functions with residential facilities or only teaching functions without residential requirements. In addition, the Committee was expected to give their opinion on whether a University is at all necessary for Ceylon. Therefore, the Committee was requested to examine the following three questions:

1) whether it is desirable to establish a University in Ceylon.
2) the type of University most suitable to the conditions prevailing in Ceylon.
3) the most suitable site for the proposed University.

In recounting the history of the University question, the Committee made use of the arguments which were put forward by various individuals as far back as a decade or two. Therefore, while endorsing the views on the desirability of immediately establishing a University, the Committee emphasised the fact that 'this step is necessary in the interest of elementary as well of secondary education. No progress in sound elementary education is to be expected until there is much more adequate provision for the higher education of the

[34] Ibid;p. 196.
[35] Report of the University Site Committee, Sessional Paper V,1927.
[36] Ibid.

colony'[37] The Akbar Committee recounted the entire discussion on the question in the past, and referred to the most important institutional aspects of the University College. The previous discussion on the site and the university buildings came to be examined; when discussing matters pertaining to buildings, the view was expressed that the University should be located in Colombo. The Akbar Committee, therefore, examined the arguments expressed by the Principal of the University College with regard to the Colombo site. The intention of the Government was to convert the College into a University, and this fact determined the matters pertaining to the site and the buildings. Though Prof. Marrs stated that 'I am personally of the opinion that the University should be situated in Colombo' he, at the same time, thought it necessary to make sure that the site chosen for it is large enough to contain all that will be required.[38] While referring to the variety of needs in respect of academic buildings and hostels, he referred to the incorporation of a Law Faculty in the future, and that it is certain to take a large share of the law teaching in the country. All the arguments of the Principal of the University College supported the Colombo site and the Akbar Committee examined them carefully in order to make a final recommendation. All correspondence on the matter and minutes at various meetings and conferences, including the views of senior members of the colonial bureaucracy were thoroughly studied for the purpose of reaching a final decision on the matter. They also studied the lengthy resolution, which was tabled in the Legislative Council; it contained a number of arguments, both academic and administrative, in support of the Colombo site. The Colonial Secretary stated in the Legislative Council that 'I earnestly hope that, if this resolution is passed, and if the foundation of the University is assured there will arise hereafter pious benefactors willing to endow one or more professional chairs, and that eventually the Ceylon University will, become an independent financial entity with, no doubt, support and subvention from the Government, but not being, as the University College now is a Government Department'.[39] This was a lofty ideal attached to the whole scheme for the establishment of an independent University. The Akbar Committee, in its report submitted in February,1927 stated that 'we have given most anxious consideration to the question of the site, and are of opinion that no better site can be found than the one in the Dumbara valley in the Kandy district. If the Government and the Legislative Council approve of our recommendation and the reasons we have given for them,

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[37] Idid.
[38] Report of the University Site Committee,Sessional Paper V,1927~p.6.
[39] Idib;p.10.

we suggest that the next step shall be for the Government to appoint a strong Commission to work out the University scheme in detail with the help of experts'.[40] The Akbar Committee kept in mind the recommendations made by the English Board of Education; it advocated a site in a cooler climate and preferred Kandy. The Committee quoted the report of the Sadler Commission with regard to the University of Calcutta; it stated that 'all Universities which are planted in great cities find themselves faced by problems of peculiar difficulty. The acquisition of land for necessary purposes is always costly in a great city and the provision for the students of healthy conditions of life and of opportunities for recreation and for social intercourse is surrounded with obstacles'.[41] The Sadler Commission report was copiously quoted in support of the site at Kandy.

The Site Committee, after taking into consideration most of the arguments in the Report of the Sadler Commission, stated that in Ceylon the only enterprise in which the island is interested, and will ever be interested, is purely agricultural; 'We have no great industries like the great dye works of other countries which will require special technological institutes to be planted near the industries which they serve'[42] The Akbar Committee also referred to the Agricultural College at Peradeniya and to the Botanical Gardens which, they said, will be of incalculable value to students of Botany and Agriculture. It was their view that all these advantages would be lost if the University were to be established in Colombo; they also quoted the views of Mr. Stockdale, the Director of Agriculture with regard to the 'best library in the tropics for Botanical and Agricultural sides of the University'.[43] Similar arguments were advanced in respect of both Medical and Law students. Dr. C.V.Aserappa, Assistant Medical Officer of Health, Colombo Municipality, had a different set of reasons to oppose the site at Colombo; he was of the opinion that the city of Colombo was prone to periodical outbreaks of epidemic diseases. Therefore, the Akbar Committee, after careful consideration of all aspects of the question, concluded that 'a University should combine possibilities, not only for an educational training, but also for a thorough moral, social and physical training of the students of the institution, and it is only

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[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Idib; p.10
[43] Ibid.

when these possibilities are brought together and adjusted to the quivering point of equilibrium that all effects can ever be realised. It is our honest opinion that this aim cannot be achieved in a University established in the city of Colombo'.[44] The report of the Akbar Committee was issued on November 19,1926; and the debate in the Legislative Council on the question of the site began on 27th October, 1927; the Legislative Council after a long and protracted debate, passed the following resolutions on March 7,1928 :

(a) The proposed University shall be unitary and residential.

(b) It shall be established in Kandy.

(c) The appointment of a Commission to work on the details of the proposed University.

Before we go into a discussion of Sir Walter Riddle Commission, it would be useful to examine the nature of the controversy over the site question. It was after the Akbar report that another spell of public opinion was generated on the matter. The Akbar Commnittee report divided the educated Ceylonese elite into two main groups; the low country elite, representing largely Christian interests, who vehemently opposed the Kandy site, and the leader of the group was Sir James Pieris. At a meeting held in Colombo on July 6,1927 Sir James Pieris spoke for nearly three and half hours in support of the Bullers Road site. The Akbar Committee came under attack and all types of arguments were advanced to justify the site at the Bullers Road. Sir James Pieris, making a thundering attack on the recommendations of the Akbar Committee, stated that the issue of the site was 'one of the momentous questions that had come before the public of Ceylon in recent times, and that it was an irregular procedure both on the part of the Government and of the un officials to support the Akbar Committee'[45] A resolution proposed by Sir Marcus Fernando was passed and it said that 'in the opinion of this meeting, if the University of Ceylon is to be of the greatest advantage to the people of the country, it should be located in Colombo, on the Bullers Road site already selected for the purpose'.[46] This meeting, presided over by Sir James Pieris, was attended by important people; including the Anglican Bishop of Colombo and several others from the hierarchy of the Church. Sir James Pieris, while attacking D.R.Wijewardene, drew attention to the fact that all the Universities of the British empire

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[44] Idib; p.10

[45] Gunawardene, R.A.L.H. ed. Op.cit;p.6.

[46] Hulugalla, H.A.J. op.cit.p.203

were built in large cities. Sir James Pieris's position was that the Government and the Legislative Council had taken a final decision on the site, and referring the matter again to the Legislative Council was not required. He wanted D.R.Wijewardene, who was vehemently opposed to the site at Bullers Road, to withdraw his opposition and to fall in line with the views of the group led by Sir James Pieris. The campaign of Sir James Pieris and the rest of the Low Country elite came to be challenged by D.R. Wijewardene who activated his associates and organisations which, in October, 1927, organised a meeting at the Public Hall in Colombo. Hulugalla, writing on this aspect stated that 'the battle of the sites now seemed to be going in favour of Wijewardene and his friends'.[47] What Wijewardene wanted was to enlist the support of people and organisations outside Colombo to support the Kandy site, and he made use of the Ceylon Daily News to obtain such support.[48] There was, in fact, a body of public opinion in the provinces, which were in support of the Kandy site; in other words, D.R. Wijewardene, unlike Sir James Pieris and others, did not want to confine this battle to the educated elite in Colombo. He broadened the popular base of the battle of the sites by getting the provincial leaders involved in this matter. The meeting in Colombo, which D.R. Wijewardene organized to counter the strategy of Sir James Pieris and Sir Marcus Fernanado, was chaired by Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike and the speakers at this meeting included such men as D.B. Jayatilaka, H.A. Sanderasegara, Issac Tambiah, Francis de Zoysa and Rev. A.G. Fraser. This meeting was used to make personal attacks on those who championed the Bullers Road site in Colombo. Even Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan was not spared. Francis de Zoysa, H.A. Sanderasegera and Rev. Fraser spoke vehemently against the site at Colombo, and they made use of the occasion to criticise those leading men who were in the forefront of the movement in support of the site at Colombo. In the meantime, Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan tried again to present a resolution in the Legislative Council seeking support for a site in Colombo, and this resolution was rejected by a large majority. It, therefore, showed that the public opinion in the country had undergone a change and the majority in the country wanted the University to be established in Kandy.

It was clear from the above discussion that the nationalist opinion, which, by this time, was very much involved with the struggle for constitutional reforms, was

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[47] Idib;p.203
[48] Ibid;p.205.

divided on the site for the establishment of the University of Ceylon. Sadler Commission, for instance, never gave examples of such a bitter struggle in the context of India. The Ceylon National Congress, which, in fact, was the most powerful organisation in the nationalist movement of Ceylon, expressed its own view on the question of the site. The Executive Committee of the Ceylon National Congress discussed a resolution moved by C. Ponnambalam in June, 1927, and it, again, focused attention on the report of the Akbar Committee.[49] The said resolution was as follows: 'That the Executive Committee of the Ceylon National Congress is of the opinion that the Akbar Committee report on the University site should not be adopted by the Legislative Council, and that the proposed University should be located in or near Colombo, as a University at the cost of the public revenue should be of benefit to as many citizens as possible'.[50] It was seconded by A.C. Chella Rajah, and those who spoke in favour of this resolution included such personalities as S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, J.P. John, S.H. Dahanayaka and C.D.A. Gunawardene. C.E.C. Bulathsinhala and R.R. Sadiris de Silva opposed the motion, and when voted upon, 15 voted for while 2 voted against and the motion was carried by a majority of 13.[51] This is ample testimony to the fact that the Ceylon National Congress, the premier political organisation of the period, was opposed to the site at Kandy.

The controversy generated by the report of the Akbar Committee became the major subject of debate among the educated community in the country, and the two factions, for and against the proposal to establish the University in Kandy, carried on a vigorous campaign with a view to influencing the Legislative Council to over-turn the decision. The resolution moved by M.T. Akbar, which proposed the establishment of a unitary residential University at Kandy, was debated in the Legislative Council in March, 1928. Sir James Pieris, the arch enemy of the Kandy site, presided over the proceedings of the Legislative Council in his capacity as the Vice President of the Legislative Council and he, violating the accepted forms of procedure, intervened in the debate to express his point of view on the matter; he urged the Council to vote against the Akbar Committee proposals.[52]

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[49] Bandaranaike, S. H.R.D. ed. The Handbook of the Ceylon National Congress 1919-1928. Colombo,-1928,p.849.

[50] Ibid;p.849 51 Ibid;p.849.

[51] Idib;p.849

[52] Hulugalla, H.A.J.op.cit;p.207.

His intervention in the debate could not influence the Legislative Council to pass the resolution. A strange procedure was followed and the motion was passed in three parts; the first referred to the unitary and residential character of the University, and it was passed with 38 votes against 5, and the second part referred to the location, Kandy, which was carried with 23 votes against 15, and the third part referred to the appointment of a Commission to work out the details, and this part of the resolution was carried by 25 votes against 16.[53] Thus ended 'the battle of the sites', which, due to the intellectual obstinacy of a section of the educated elite in the country, delayed the establishment of the University of Ceylon for more than a decade. The Kandyan interests were totally silent on the matter; even the Kandyan National Assembly expressed no opinion on the establishment of a University in Kandy. Sir Francis Molamure was one who supported the establishment of a University in a site at Kandy; Sir Francis Molamure was a member of the Akbar Committee.[54] It needs to be mentioned at this stage of the discussion that the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford adopted a very realistic view on the question. He took a keen interest in the steps taken to convert the University College into a University, and he was criticised by certain sections of the public for his support to the site at Kandy.[55] He, speaking on the matter, said that 'the controversy which has arisen on the subject of the best site has at any rate shown that opinions on the question are divided; and as the decision is a momentous one, which will affect the whole future and character of the University, I certainly was not prepared to begin building on the Bullres Road site until the Legislative Council has had an opportunity of studying the pros and cons and registering a final decision, which will settle the matter once for all'.[56] Though the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford favoured the Kandy site, he wanted the Legislative Council to take the decision. The final decision to shift the University to a site in Kandy, preferably the Dumbara valley, was supported on the ground that it would be close to the ancient capitol, Kandy, from which inspiration could be derived for a cultural renaissance in the country. According to Hulugalla, the Ceylon Daily News played an important role in order to bring the matter to a conclusion. The decision to establish the University in Colombo, for which there was substantial support among the Ceylonese educated elite, was completely reversed by timely agitation, for which D.R.Wijewardene and others gave astute leadership.

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[53] Ceylon Daily News 1918-1943. CDN publication,1943,p.23.
[54] Hulugalla, H.A.J. op.cit;p.199.
[55] Hulugalla, H.A.J. British Governors of Ceylon. Colombo,1963,p.177.
[56] Hulugalla, H.A.J. The Life and Times of D.R.Wijewardene. p.177.

With the appointment of Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddel Commission in 1928, the final stage of the question of the site came into the open again, and this, as expected, further delayed the resolution of the question of the site.[57] This Commission was appointed on the basis of the third recommendation of the Akbar Committee, which, in fact, was approved by the Legislative Council. It needs to be noted that the colonial authorities, with a view to avoiding conflicts on the matter, wanted the Legislative Council to take a decision on the matter, and this was a strategy adopted by the colonial authorities on the eve of the Donougrmore constitutional reforms. Since the 'site dispute' has been settled in favour of a site in Kandy, the Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddel Commission was expected to report on the establishment of a unitary and residential University; Riddel had-been the Chairman of the University Grants Committee in Britain and he, therefore, was an experienced person in University administration.[58] In July, 1928, the Governor Sir Herbert Stanley appointed the University Commission, headed by Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddel, and its terms of reference were as follows. It was expected to inquire into and report on the details of a scheme for the establishment of unitary residential University at Kandy, and the Commission was required to make special reference to

(a) Faculties which, should be established
(b) Number of staff, Professors etc;
(c) Number of Hostels and their cost;
(d) Provision for tutorial assistance;
(e) Bursaries for poor students;
(f) Status of the University, financial etc in relation to the Government; and
(g) Constitution of the University.[59]

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[57] Gunawardene, Rtxia R.A.L.H. ed. op.cit;p.7.
[58] The University Grants Committee of Britain was created in 1919.
[59] The Riddel Commission consisted of the following members.

Sir Walter Buchan-Riddel
The Controller of Reveenue
T.L. Villeirs
Sir Edwin Hayward

M.T. Akbar K.C.
Director of Public Works
Director of Medical Sanitary Services
Director of Education
Director of Agriculture
Principal, University College
Sir Stuart Schneider
W.S.P.A. Bandaranaike
W.M.K.J.C. Ratwatta

Prof. G.P. Malalasekera, writing later on this subject, stated that 'a very representative Commission was appointed with Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddel as Chairman and its report, issued in January, 1929 covered all aspects of the problem'.[60] The Riddel report, which was issued in the form of a Sessional paper, ran to 134 pages, and it contained eight chapters, including an introduction, which focused on the work of the previous Committees on the subject.[61] The Commission, though it did not invite public evidence, made use of Committees and Sub-Committees to obtain memoranda on different aspects of the University problem. Number of Heads of Secondary schools supplied the Commission with valuable information; the Council of Legal Education had been consulted. The staff of the Ceylon Medical College was consulted on the issue of Medical education, and the Director of Agriculture was consulted on agricultural education. With regard to Engineering Studies, the Commission made use of the Select Committee of the Finance Committee on Training of Ceylonese for Technical Departments. The reports of the Academic Committee of the University College were used. The Riddel Commission wrote that 'all these documents, with voluminous correspondence relating to other features of our inquiry, were placed at our disposal and have formed the basis of our discussion'.[62] K. M. de Silva, writing on the significance of the report of the Riddel Commission, stated that 'it was one of the most important State papers in the history of higher education in Sri Lanka'.[63] Therefore, a detailed and critical examination of this report is fundamentally necessary for our discussion on the evolution of higher education policy in Sri Lanka. This Commission had twelve meetings with the full participation of the Commission and it also had twenty two Committee

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A.C.G. Wijekoon
K. Balasingham
A.F. Molamure
Sir P. Ramanathan
T.B. Jayah
D.B. Jayatilaka
A. Mahadeva
G.A. Wille
W.A. de Silva

[60] Malalasekera,G.P.op.citjp. 874.
[61] 61Report of the Univers~ty Commission. Sessional Paper IV,1929,pp.lO-12.
[62] Ibidjp.ll.
[63] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris,G.H. op.citjp. 6

meetings. It made a thorough study of all the papers connected with the subject; there was a substantial amount of literature on the subject as 'the site' dispute had generated much discussion in the country. It, as mentioned earlier, was as important as the struggle for constitutional reforms and it, above all, involved the stalwarts of the nationalist movement. The Commission, on the basis of this background, tried to enlist the views of all organisations and persons concerned and it, therefore, interviewed various persons.

As far as the site of the new University was concerned, it was the view of the Riddel Commission that the University should be established at Dumbara Valley; but there were forces planning to upset this decision as well. Before we further examine the question of the site, it would be useful to examine some of the recommendations of the Riddel Commission as it laid the foundation for the establishment of the University. A draft constitution was included in an appendix to the Report, which was to form the basis of the Ordinance on the establishment of the University of Ceylon. The Riddel report, referring to the degrees, stated that 'all the University courses should lead to a first degree Bachelor of Arts. A degree should be accepted as a mark of a liberal course of study and as evidence that the holder has for a prescribed period had the opportunity of assimilating general character and influence of a University'.[64] In respect of students bent on studying Arts subjects, the Commission made a recommendation, according to which an Arts student could offer one scientific subject while the Science student could offer an Arts subject. The argument was that 'this provides some guarantee that a Ceylon University graduate had received a broad intellectual training'.[65] It was the view of the Commission that 'a candidate whose major interest lies on the side of Arts should be given the intellectual discipline of studying at least one scientific subject'.[66] The next proposal on the academic side was the emphasis laid on the study of languages of the country. Therefore, the Commission stated that 'no man can be considered to have received a sound and good education until he has mastered his own tongue and is able to speak and write it fluently and correctly'.[67] Similar emphasis was laid on the study of languages in India by the Universities which came into existence during the British period. The courses in the Indian Universities were biased in favour of languages,

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[64] Report of the University Commission. Sessional Paper IV,1929.(Riddel Commission Report)
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid;.p.12.

rather than science and technology. The Indian higher education system inherited what could be referred as a distorted and a dysfunctional system.[68] The system in Ceylon, too, inherited a tradition which showed an overt bias to Oriental languages and tradional disciplines which dominated the University curriculum for more than fifty years. The Riddel Commission, on the basis of the experience of the University College since 1921, thought that the University of Ceylon will establish itself as a centre of higher learning and organised research in those fields or knowledge in which Ceylon offers peculiar opportunities for advanced work. As mentioned, earlier, they expected the University to be a centre for the development of national literature, and it was hoped that both Honors and Advanced Courses suggested would result in promoting a serious study of the languages, the literature, history and philosophies of the country. The Commission, in fact, stated that 'we attach great importance to the study of the languages of the country'.[69] They recommended a competency test in the Sinhalese and Tamil languages; they also stressed the importance of English as well, and for which a compulsory test was recommended. This was to promote every undergraduate to use English correctly as a medium of study and expression.

According to the commission, the primary purpose of the University was to 'give a liberal education as well as some professional training to the young men who will in due course enter the professions or public life or engage in the industries of the country'.[70] In their view, this was insufficient; a University had to do much more and they wanted the University to become a center of higher learning. In addition, they recommended an academic year of three terms, and an undergraduate was expected to keep a minimum of nine terms of residence in order to qualify for graduation.[71] An entrance examination common to all candidates was recommended, and the graduation was to be on the basis of two examinations and it applied to both General and Honors students. There was a fairly long recommendation on the requirement of the entrance examination, and this subject in the context of India, came to be analysed by the Sadler Commission which wanted measures to arrest the decline in standards.[72] In fact, the low level of the entrance examination in Calcutta

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[68] Agrawal, Pawan. Indian Higher Education. New Delhi,2009,p.19.
[69] Riddel Commission Report,p.13.
[70] Ibidjp.13.
[71] Idid.,p.12.
[72] Ashby, Eric. Op.cit; p.p.68-72

was criticized, and such views probably influenced the Riddel Commission to formulate a set of strict criteria relating to the University entrance examination in Ceylon. They were guided by the need to produce graduates who have undergone severe intellectual training. The recommendations, in respect of this matter, were that the age at which a student should be allowed to sit the entrance examination after the completion of the 16th year, and no successful candidate should be admitted until he has completed the seventeenth year. It was their view that the age of admission to the University should be high enough to ensure that the students selected are competent to follow courses of University standard. The most important recommendation was that the standard of the entrance examination should be equivalent to that of the Matriculation Examination of the University of London. A person was required to offer five subjects, two comprehensives in English and a Classical language, which included Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, Latin and Greek. Others included elementary mathematics and the remainder to be chosen from Arts and Science subjects. The Commission, while recommending a number of degrees to be awarded by the University, proposed the establishment of five faculties - Arts, Science, Law, Medicine and Engineering. In respect of the study of Agriculture and Archaeology, a number of cogent arguments was advanced and it was up to the University to provide facilities for the study of those subjects. Making a reference to the study of Archaeology and Epigraphy, the Commission stated that there is abundant material for such studies; it wanted the Department of History and Oriental Studies to collaborate with Archaeological studies in the future. There was a comprehensive discussion on the procedure of courses, which was divided into three sections –

(1) Pass Degree of Bachelor of Arts

(2) Honors Degree of Bachelor of Arts

(3) Masters Degree.

The Medical, Law and Engineering courses were included in the discussion which, contained references to Agriculture, Archaeology and the Training of teachers. In this context, the experience of the colonial university played a significant role; for instance, the Universities in India provided degrees in the four faculties of Arts, Law, Medicine, and Civil Engineering, but later five subject groups came to be introduced and it corresponded failry closely to the programme at the University of London. In India, the language studies and history were carefully designed to fit into the special role of the Indian

University.[73] For the ordinary degree, it specified English and one other language which can be an Indian or western classical language, and it included a test of the candidates' spoken language. These ideas, expressed in the context of India, had an influence on certain recommendations of the Riddel Commission; Riddel, as the former Chairman of the University Grants Committee in Britain, was well aware of the changes taking place in India. The Bachelor of Arts consisted of two public examinations; the first public examination and the second and every candidate was required to pass in four subjects of which three should be drawn from either the Arts group or the science group. The Arts group consisted of subjects such as English, Sanskrit, Pali, Sinhalese, Tamil, Arabic, Latin, Greek, French, German, Philosophy, Psychology, History History of Ceylon -Law, Economics, Geography and Education. The Science group included subjects such as Chemistry, Physics, Botany, Zoology, Physiology, Anatomy, Geography, Mathematics, Agriculture, Engineering and Domestic Science. The Honours course, though had two examinations, was primarily based on the Final Honours Examination, which was taken at the end of the ninth or twelfth term, which, in effect, meant that a candidate was expected to remain at the University for four years. It was recommended that the Honours course could be conducted in fifteen Subjects, which included both Arts and Science subjects. The language studies offered a very wide choice, and this, again, was due to the influence of the ideas of the pioneers who wanted the Oriental languages to be given priority and importance. The recommendations of the Calcutta University Commission wanted the development of classical learning of the east, probably influenced by some of the proposals of the Riddel Commission.[74] The final Honours Course was to consist of (l) English Language and Literature (2) Sanskrit Language and Literature (3) Tamil Language and Literature (4) Pali, Sanskrit and Sinhalese, including Buddhist Philosophy (5) Arabic Language and Literature, including Islamic Philosophy and (6) European Classical Languages. The area of study included such subjects as Philosophy and Psychology, Politics and Economics, History, Ancient and Modern, including Ceylon History. There were eight subjects in the area of Science and Mathematics. In respect of post-graduate studies, the Commission recommended the establishment of a Master's course, both in Arts and Science. A Bachelor of Arts, two years after graduation, was allowed to proceed to a Master's degree, and the examination was to consist of (a) thesis, (b) a written

[73] Ibid;p.62
[74] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p.133.

examination and (c) viva voce, examination. The Report gave lengthy comments on such subjects as Medicine, Law, Teacher Training, Agriculture, Rural Economy, Rural Development and Forestry. In respect of both medicine and Law, detailed guidelines were provided for the conduct of the course, including the relationship between the Faculty of Law and the Council of Legal Education, under which the Ceylon Law College functioned. The need for teacher training at the University level was emphasised, and the University was to be associated with 'this important national work'; the purpose being to encourage the Ceylon university graduates to enter the teaching profession. The Commission, based on such considerations, recommended the establishment of a Department for the training of teachers, to undertake to provide a one year post-graduate course of training, and the admission was to be restricted to graduate teachers. In fact, details pertaining to the nature and content of the courses too were mentioned, including the form and supervision of training. Its relationship with the Department of Education in the Government was briefly mentioned.

The Commission devoted nearly three pages of the report to examine the influence of the University on rural development; it also referred to the need to develop agriculture and the utilisation of the resources in the rural sector. They wanted the University, as in India, to take an active interest in the lives of rural communities, and apply themselves to the social and economic problems of the people in the countryside. With regard to the subject of Engineering, the Commission was not ready to recommend the establishment of a Faculty of Engineering, and it gave a number of reasons as to why they did not recommend it. The question of recognition and the availability of employment opportunities was raised to support the argument against the establishment of a Faculty of Engineering. But the Commission, on the other hand, gave consideration to some of the positive aspects, and they, in fact, gave reasons; the Commission saw that 'there is a crying need for highly trained engineers in the country, especially in connection with the development of private estates'.[75] Therefore, the Commission stated that 'we consider that it would be most unfortunate if the new University were to make no contribution towards satisfying this demand. We see no reason why a properly equipped University Faculty of Engineering should not turn out students fit for employment in the Government Departments'.[76]

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[75] Riddel Report,p.25.
[76] Ibid; p.29.

The Commission, in Chapter V, made detailed proposals for the Constitution of the University, and it recommended the appointment of

1. Chancellor
2. Pro-Chancellor
3. Vice-Chancellor
4. The Court
5. The Council
6. The Senate
7. The Faculties
8. General Board of Studies and Research
9. Other Officers

This, in fact, represented the academic organisation of the University; in addition, there was the administrative structure in the University. The Riddel Commission report was very comprehensive and it dealt with various aspects of a University; therefore its chapter VIII discussed the building requirements, and this subject attracted the attention of all Committees which examined the University question. The provision of residence to the undergraduates was a matter which received attention at the very initial stage, as the University was a residential one. Therefore, the number of students and the availability of hostels depended primarily on the residential principle. The average student attendance, which approximately was 500, was taken into consideration in planning the residential facilities; the average annual admission to the University College for the last five years has been 144, and the average attendance in the last five years was 185. It was thought that 315 would be the probable number to enter the University annually in the future, and it was on the basis of this projection that the residential facilities were planned. The issue of hostel accommodation was examined in detail, and various recommendations were made.

The concept of the residential University came to be highlighted, and hostel accommodation was planned with a view to strengthening the residential principle. The Report, therefore, stated that 'the purpose of the requirement is to secure that the student

follows a continuous and ordered scheme of instruction given by recognised university teachers in the class room, the lecture hall and the laboratory'.[77] The recommendation of the Commission was that 'every undergraduate should normally be required to reside in a Hall of Residence throughout his University career'.[78] It was their view that this was more favourable to the moral and intellectual development of the undergraduate; they need to be a part of the corporate life of the undergraduate body if they are to get from the University the best that their mental or physical constitution permits'.[79] Yet another thing which attracted the attention of the Commission was the concept of the denominational histels - certain religious organisations allowed to run Hostels. Though there was practice in the past, the Commission, seeing their potentiality for divisive thinking, recommended that no residential accommodation should be provided wholly or partially by individual denominations. This was an attempt to introduce secularism into the residential life of the undergraduates. The recommendation, therefore, was that the University should undertake the entire responsibility for providing hostel accommodation. The idea was to promote residential life without impairing a common university life for the undergraduates. In fact, it was proposed that a Hall of Residence should accommodate only 75 students and other matters pertaining to the duties of Wardens and Tutors were also discussed in the report. One tutor was to be assigned to every twenty five students, and this was for the purpose of promoting intellectual-oriented corporate life. In fact, the location for buildings was mentioned in their report, and the required buildings were to cover an area of 340 acres. The cost of buildings, the availability of labour, the cheaper material like bricks and stone available in the area and such detail were referred to, and they assumed that the entire project could be completed within a period of ten years. They, at the same time, stated that the creation of the University should not be postponed on the ground that the buildings were not ready, and they, therefore, mentioned that 'there were strong reasons against an indefinite delay'.[80] It, further, stated that it would be uneconomical if the buildings first finished at Kandy were to stand empty and unoccupied perhaps for five or six years until the whole scheme was completed. The University could not function until the Arts, Physics, Chemistry and Biology blocks ware completed, and the suggestion was made that the first Vice- Chancellor needs to be appointed to provide the

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[77] Ibid;p.29.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid;p.29.
[80] A Short History of Ceylon University Question,p.20

necessary leadership. The plan was to complete half of the building' at Kandy before the beginning, and the remaining faculties and departments could be moved one by one along with the completion of the building at the site.

The constitutional changes, based on the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission, intervened and had their own effects on the question of the establishment of a University. Though the Ordinance for the establishment of the University was passed in the Legislative Council, it was dissolved and it now became the responsibility of the State Council which, as a semi-responsible legislature, was elected in 1931. As Jennings described, the responsibility for university education was placed in the Executive Committee of Education, consisting of seven members who rarely agreed.[81] It was discovered that more than five Ministers - five 'Executive Committees - were associated with the project, and this, as Jennings often complained, was the sole reason for the long delay. It was during this period that 'the battle of the site' was again revived as several sites in Kandy had been recommended. It was very strange that the question of the site and merits and demerits of the Thurston Road and Dumbara sites were discussed in detail in the State Council, and this went on till the first State Council was dissolved in 1936. It was in 1933 that a Sub-Committee, consisting of G.R. De Zoysa, W.H.D.S. Jayasundera and A. Ratnayake was appointed to examine the question, which, in fact, showed that certain interested groups were still maintaining the argument that the University should be established in Colombo. This Committee, however, did not want to reverse the decision of the Riddel Commission, and also the resolution of the Legislative Council, which recommended the establishment of the University in a site at Kandy. The Dumbara site was given preference but no action was taken for the establishment of the University of Ceylon. One reason for the delay was the impact of the great depression on the island's economy, and the University project, therefore, had to be delayed. With the appointment of the new Board of Ministers in 1936, the new Executive Committee for Education was expected to deal with the problem. George E de Silva, who represented Kandy in the State Council, moved that immediate steps need to be taken to establish the University in Kandy, and the Board of Ministers submitted to the State Council an estimate for the purchase of lands at Aruppola;

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[81] Jennings, Ivor. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. IX, Nos. 3 & 4, p.239.

this site, as anticipated, generated controversy, and the people concerned began to attack the choice of this site. It was both Dr. Andreas Nell and Dr. S.C. Paul, who submitted a memorandum to the State Council, urging that the Aruppola site be abandoned in favour of a larger and more salubrious site at Peradeniya.[82] It had taken more than ten years to reach the final decision on the matter, and this was unique because there was no example of such a debate on an issue like this in other territories of the British Empire.

It was in 1938 that the State Council was persuaded to purchase the site at Peradeniya, and the battle of the site was at last over. It was true that the prolonged battle of the sites, the constitutional changes and system of semi-responsible Government, the great depression and other factors helped the University College, established in 1921, to survive for another four years till the University of Ceylon was established in 1942. The Ceylon Daily News, writing on the occasion, stated that 'it is not merely that this University will play a leading part in the higher education and achievements of the Ceylonese people. Its establishment is a national landmark - symbol that, after nearly five centuries of intellectual darkness, this country once again take its rightful place as a centre of Oriental learning'.[83] The University college, as an institution which preceded the establishment of a University, came to be criticised by intellectuals and populist-oriented politicians. It was the view of Ralph Pieris that the University College did not live up to the expectation of those who campaigned for it; he stated that 'the high ideals of fusion of indigenous and Western cultures for which the pioneers of University education had contended early in the century were neglected when University College actually came into being, owing to the increasing Westernisation of the middle class availing themselves of University education'.[84] It was his view that the University College, in the twenty years of its existence, did not measure up to the ideals of those who had expected it to contribute to a renewal of indigenous Ceylonese culture.[85] G.P. Malalasekera was of the opinion that this was 'a harsh judgments' but agreed that it was 'not wholly off the mark'.[86] Malalasekera himself was a great champion who

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[82] Malalasekera,S.P. op.cit;p.875.

[83] Ceylon Daily News 1918-1943. Daily News Publication,1943,p.24.

[84] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p.445

[85] Ibid.

[86] Malalasekera, G.P. op.cit; p.875.

accorded the University College a role very similar to that of pioneers of the University movement. Therefore, it is necessary to examine whether the University of Ceylon embodied the philosophy of the pioneers of the University movement as well.

Chapter V

The Establishment of the University of Ceylon

It was in the preceding chapter that an attempt was made to partly examine certain important proposals of the Riddell Commission, which, according to many an intellectual in the country, was an important State paper in the history of higher education in Sri Lanka.[1] Therefore, the discussion on the establishment of the full- fledged autonomous University of Ceylon needs to be prefaced with a critical evaluation of certain recommendations of the University Commission of 1928, which were integral to the establishment of the University of Ceylon. It is intended here, firstly, to examine the views of the Commission on the constitution of the University, its relationship with the Government and the nature and content of the Draft University Ordinance; all these, in the end, influenced the final legislation as well as the institutions and the academic life of the University of Ceylon.

The Riddell Commission, as the Sadler Commission in India, made an exhaustive examination of the University question in the context of the Island, and made a number of recommendations, which laid a strong foundation for a unitary University in the country. It would be interesting to begin this critical examination with reference to the recommendations of the Commission with regard to the Constitution of the University. The chapter V of the report (pages 37- 41) dealt with this aspect; since it laid the foundation for the constitution of the University of Ceylon, it needs to be examined in detail as it would help make an analysis of the academic and administrative structure of the University of Ceylon. The need to establish a University, with an independent and autonomous status, was focused throughout the period of agitation for the establishment of a University in Ceylon. Again, the Calcutta University report came to their assistance, and they, as expected, adopted 'the definition of a unitary University laid down by the Calcutta University Commission'.[2] According to its definition, the unitary University was an institution

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[1] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p. 6.

[2] Report of the Calcutta University Commission, Chapter XXXIV, p.252. See also Ashby, Eric. op.cit.

where all the teaching is centralized under direct university control'.[3] It was discussed that the University system of Bengal was fundamentally defective in almost every aspect and to remedy the ills of the system, as well as to provide for the political and economic development in prospect, high quality teaching was seen as essential in India.[4] They conceived it as their main task to provide Bengal with a scheme for a unitary teaching University, with which the affiliating University at Calcutta was transformed. This recommendation of the Calcutta University Commission, from which the Riddell Commission derived close inspiration, wanted to adopt the term 'unitary' in the Ceylonese context, and it, as they themselves stated, was very liberally used. The Calcutta Commission, unlike others who derived inspiration from its recommendations, did not want 'to seek a solution to Indian problems in terms of shadowy approximation to Oxford or Cambridge'.[5] Though the architects of the University of Ceylon, undoubtedly, believed in the need to emulate the Oxbridge model, they were well aware of the fact that an adoption of a rigid definition would hamper the future development of the University. Therefore, the Riddell Commission was not prepared to recommend 'a rigidly defined constitution'.[6] They, justifying their position, wrote that 'our eventual aim is to devise a scheme within the limits of our terms of reference which shall admit both of the creation and the growth of an institution adapted to the particular needs of Ceylon'. In deciding on the unitary character of the University of Ceylon, the Commission made use of the experience of certain Universities in India, notably those of Lucknow, Allahabad and Dacca, which are all described in the Acts establishing them as unitary and residential Universities. It was thought that this kind of formulation would permit expansion in directions which cannot be exactly foreseen. They also envisaged a system where there was central control over academic matters, and this kind of centralized control was recommended for the course in Medicine. The Commission also kept the door open for cooperation with other countries, especially in connection with advanced work in Oriental languages.

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[3] Report of the University Commission (Riddell Report). Sessional Paper IV,1929,p.37
[4] Ashby, Eric. op.cit; p.115.
[5] Ibid;p.115.
[6] Riddell Commission Report,p.37.

In proposing the Constitution of the University, the Riddell Commission closely followed the standard form adopted by the Universities founded both in the East and the West in the last sixty to seventy years. In framing its Constitution, they did not want to deviate from the familiar and well tried models. According to the Constitution of the University of Ceylon, the Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, University Court, University Council and Senate were to be constituted as the main bodies, a detailed discussion of which will be undertaken along with the discussion on the Ordinance. In addition, they recommended five Faculties and two Boards of Studies. The officers, other than the Vice Chancellor, included the appointment of a full time Registrar; this appointment was to be made by the Council subject to the approval of the Chancellor who, in this case, was the Governor of the island. His term of office, as in other cases, was until the completion of the fifty fifth year, and the Council had the power to extend his services for a further period not exceeding five years. The other important appointment was that of the Librarian, who would be responsible for the administration and the conduct of the University-Library. The Commission, in the form of a guideline, stated that 'it would be important for the University to secure the services of a man possessed of wide literary interests and trained in the special techniques of Library administration'.[7] This shows that, as in India, the Commission was interested in devising a detailed scheme for transforming the overgrown affiliating University College into a viable teaching institution. While making recommendations on the institutional structure of the new University, they also dealt with matters of appointment, tenure and remuneration of the teaching staff. The Commission, as the Calcutta Commission, rightly stated 'the reputation and success of a University depends primarily on its ability to attract highly qualified staff, and this can be achieved on both security of tenure and adequate remuneration'. It was said that a fair proportion of the staff should be drawn from the people of the country. As in the Calcutta report, it was mentioned that all teaching posts should be individually filled by specially constituted Selection Committees. With regard to remuneration, their main recommendation was that salary scales in the new university should be on a Ceylonese basis, and the distinction between European and

[7] Ibid; p. 41.

Ceylonese with regard to remuneration was to be re-examined. The Commission recommended a Provident Fund, similar to those in the British Universities, and this was suggested in preference to a pension scheme. In addition, they gave a number of reasons in support of a provident fund scheme. This amply demonstrate the fact that this Commission, though its main mandate was to propose a University, went into all aspects of the University, and they, subsequently, became very useful for those who established the University of Ceylon in 1942.

Yet another important subject, which attracted the attention of the Commission, was the relationship between the University and the Government; this, in fact, covered both administrative and financial relations with the Government. It was in this context that the issue of autonomy was discussed, and it was their view that 'the largest practicable means of autonomy should be secured to the University'.[8] The Riddell Commission, probably going on the basis of the British tradition, made a strong case for academic freedom; Eric Ashby stated that 'each of the British Universities is an autonomous corporation, immune from directives from any central authority, and in former days with no obligation, indeed no desire, to consult its sister institutions over any decision it takes'.[9] Deriving inspiration from the established tradition relating to academic freedom, the Commission, through a strong statement, highlighted the value of autonomy; it, therefore, stated that 'no University, deserves the title of University which is denied freedom to determine the branches of learning in which it will provide instruction and promote research and the conditions of governing the appointment of its staff and the control of its students. It must be free to direct its academic policy independently of departmental regulations and of intervention by the legislature'.[10] The University College was a Government Department, which status interfered with the work of the College and the Commission was certainly aware of the role of the Legislative Council vis-a-vis the University College. The above statement of the Commission emanated, probably, from the need to totally break away from the experience of the University College. However, the exhortation of the concept of autonomy did not mean that the

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[8] Ibid;p.44.
[9] Ashby, Eric. Community of Universities. Cambridge,1963, p.l.
[10] Riddell Report, p.44.

Universities could ignore the national needs of a given country. The Commission, taking this fact into serious consideration, stated that 'it is the inherent duty of a Government to secure that a University claiming a national character should be conducted in conformity with national needs'.[11] In fact, they referred to the ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, which originated entirely independent of Parliament, which have been made, three times in the last eighty years, the subject of investigations by Parliamentary Commissions in order to satisfy Parliament that their resources were being applied to national advantage.[12] It was mentioned primarily to press the point that the Government of Ceylon, through its representative Assembly, would enjoy the right and duty of general supervision and ultimate control of the development of the University. This was because the University had to depend on the State for financial support; in Ceylon, the University Court and Council would include direct representation both of the Government and the Legislative Council, while the Governor, in his capacity as the Chancellor, could exercise certain specified powers as well as general supervision. A direct relationship was established with the Government and the legislature, and the greater part of its income came from public funds. It was through the control of the purse that the Government was able to exercise ultimate control over its affairs. The Riddell Commission, in fact, thought that University autonomy would be secured if the Government grants were given on two conditions: (1) a block grant which the University would be free to use at its discretion and (2) a statutory grant for five years. This proposal was based on two precedents operative in the Universities of Britain; it meant that the Universities receive a proportion of their grants from public funds, and the Treasury gives grants in the form of block grants. This method was followed in order to relieve the Universities from undue interference in its academic policy. This formula of providing grants was subject to two considerations; once in five years the University authorities could state their case for renewal of the grant and formulate policy for expansion, and secondly, the Government retained the right to investigate and review the position in relation to national needs.

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[11] Ibid;p.44.
[12] Ibid.

This kind of formula, therefore, demanded the Universities to maintain good relations with the Government as it, in the absence of private benefactors and independent endowments, was the sole provider of funds. In this context, it would be useful to discuss some of the experiences of Britain. In 1926, Lord Balfour, the Chancellor of Cambridge, stated that 'if the State gave massive financial backing to Universities it would be a natural and pardonable instinct on the part of the State to control and supervise the working of Universities'.[13] State, through the machinery at its disposal, could apply almost irresistible pressure to all Universities. The basis of confidence is the conviction that the State may not interfere because it was not based upon law but on a convention which provided an unwritten safeguard. Yet, as in Ceylon, there was some apprehension about the consequences of too much reliance on State support without other sources of income. The truth of the matter, specially, in the context of Asia and Africa, was that the Universities, created on the basis of the British tradition, had not yet learnt how to handle their new patron, who was no longer a queen, prince or a bishop, but the taxpayer, speaking through his representative in Parliament. Eric Ashby, referring to this new patron, stated that 'fresh techniques are needed to bring this new patron closer to the Universities he helps to finance'.[14] It was Sir Ivor Jennings, who explained his own experience in enlisting the support of the new patron; he stated that 'there was a large measure of autonomy in his University because of the Government of Ceylon maintained the convention which it was hoped would be established when the constitution was laid down. One reason is that the Legislature is given adequate representation in the Court of the University. The presence of elected members of the House of Representatives and the Senate of Ceylon in the Court enables those bodies to have adequate information about university activities. Therefore, strangely enough, the existence of those representatives in the Court of the University has contributed to University autonomy rather than the reverse'.[15] The position adopted by the Riddell Commission had been well vindicated, and this, again, showed that the Universities in the Commonwealth have reconciled to

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[13] Ashby, Eric. op.cit;p.44.
[14] Ibid;p.44.
[15] Jennings made this observation at the Congress of Universities in the Commonwealth 1948. Vide Ashby, Eric. Community of Universities. Cambridge,1963,p.46.

dependence on government grants. The Riddell Commission, based on accepted university traditions, recommended a system, under which the University's sovereignty resides in a predominantly lay governing body, and all the devices of the academia are used to persuade the lay governors that they must on no account govern, and to do so might constitute an infringement of academic freedom. A close examination of the evolution of the University of Ceylon would help make an assessment of this question, which, since 1942, had attracted the attention of both the members of the lay governing bodies and the academic community.

There was yet another question, incidental to the establishment of a University, on which the Riddell Commission expressed its opinion. It was the question of external degrees of the University of London; it was through this scheme of external degrees that opportunities were provided to the Ceylonese to obtain a degree. All 'affiliated' Colleges were engaged in this scheme, and the question arose whether the external degrees will be made available after the creation of the University. Though there were opportunities for candidates to get themselves registered as external students of the University of London since 1882, the formal system of registration and presentation of students for external degree examinations of the University of London began with the establishment of the University College in 1921.[16] Though this was not a matter on which the Riddell Commission-was expected to report, they recommended the continuation of the London External Examinations side by side with the examinations of the newly established University of Ceylon. In fact, the London University was consulted on the matter and they expressed their willingness to continue to hold examinations for their degrees if the Government of Ceylon wanted them to do so. In India, the position was that it was undesirable to hold the external degree examinations after new universities have been created. The continuation of external degrees would mean the existence of an alternative route to a university degree and this would deprive the new institution of its clientele. There were strong reasons in favour of terminating the external examinations. The situation in India was different as there were fifteen Universities whereas the situation in Ceylon was confined to a single University. Though it was

[16] Jayawardene, W.A. March Towards An Open University.Godage,2008,p.59

created out of the University College, which was in existence for more than two decades, the status of the new University was still not properly established. It was the view of the Commission that it would take some years to obtain an established status. Since residence is to constitute an essential qualification for a degree, the external degree examinations would continue to be of great value to those students who could not seek admission to the University. The Report stated that this would apply in particular to those who wish to obtain careers in medical, legal and engineering professions and also to teachers who might desire to qualify as graduate teachers. Yet another argument was the continuance of London external degree examinations which would offer a useful point of comparison with Ceylon University degrees. The main argument was that the University of Ceylon can resist 'any pressure which might be brought to bear upon it in the direction of adding an external system to its own examinations and degrees'.[17] Taking all these factors into consideration, the Report stated that 'we consider that individuals would be unduly penalized if they were debarred from taking the external degree examinations of London University, at least during the early years of the new University'.[18] The matter was kept open to the authorities of the University of Ceylon to take a decision in the light of its experiences. It was in 1945 that the question of external examinations was discussed in the State Council and S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike tabled a motion requesting the University of Ceylon to conduct external degree examinations.[19] However, no immediate decision was taken on this question on the ground that it would interfere with the concept of a residential University, and it was known that the Vice Chancellor, Sir Ivor Jennings was not in favour of an external degree programme.

The Draft University Ordinance, an ordinance to establish a University in Ceylon, was attached to the report in the form of an appendix, and it contained fifteen chapters and two schedules. The schedules contained statutes and they were to assist in the implementation of the Ordinance. The draft University Ordinance was a draft constitution, which, later became the basis for a Bill which

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[17] Riddell Report, p.61.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Hansard of the State Council. 6 June,1945, column 2986-87.
Jayawardene, W.A. op.cit; refers to this episode in pp. 60-64.

was read a second time in the Legislative Council before its dissolution. Before we start dissecting this draft Constitution of the University of Ceylon, it would be interesting to refer to what K.M. de Silva said of this report, which undoubtedly was a historic document. K.M. de Silva, writing on the early years of the University College, stated that 'hardly any official report has handled theme it was appointed to review with the thoroughness in its mastery of detail and the skill with which the detail was set within the delineation of principle than the Buchanan-Riddell report. Reading it today after it was written one is amazed by the understanding of the essentials of a national university, constructed de novo it demonstrated as well as the skillful identification of the pitfalls that lay ahead in implementing it'.[20] This statement is certainly a glorious tribute to the Riddell Commission, whose exhaustive and comprehensive report provided the necessary guidance for those who prepared the relevant legislation. Sir Walter Buchanan-Riddell, as a former Chairman of the University Grants Committee in Britain, had vast experience in the field of university education in Britain, and the Sadler report, which was issued a few years before this report, provided them with relevant information on British policy in exporting Universities to India.[21] The University of Calcutta was altogether a foreign plant imported into the country, belonging to a type that flourished in foreign soil; this was the view of Ramnanda Sunder Trivedi who placed his views on the university question, through a special memorandum to the Sadler Commission, and all his ideas were very much relevant in the context of Ceylon. He, referring to the Universities in India, stated further that 'the importation has an urgent necessity of the time, suddenly created by the abrupt introduction of new conditions of life with a new order of political situation; the founders of the new educational system had not the time to study the ideals and methods that were indigenous: the new system was introduced in entire ignorance and almost in complete defiance of the existing social order regulating the everyday life of an ancient people'.[22] Such devastating comments on the importation of Universities into India had an impact on the University Commission in Ceylon, and they, therefore, were cautious in preventing the mistakes which the British committed in India, and care was taken to see that

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[20] De Silva & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p. p.9
[21] Ashby, Eric. Universities. British, Indian and African. London,1966,p.47
[22] Ibid;p.47

local conditions and traditions are given due consideration. On the other hand, the experience of the University College, as a transitional body of higher learning, was available to the authorities who were involved in the creation of a University in Ceylon. In addition, the local educated elite, interested in the promotion of indigenous culture and Oriental languages, had already emerged as a powerful intellectual pressure group, whose presence and its ideas could not be ignored. Newspapers published articles, focusing on the Indian Universities with a view to promoting the idea that the University should be created on the basis of the recognition of indigenous characteristics.[23]

It was the view of many that Ceylon should not commit the mistakes, both regard to policy and methods, which the early Indian Universities committed within the past quarter of a century.[24] A new higher education policy was prepared during the period 1917 to 1942, and the Calcutta University Commission, presided over by Michael Sadler, emphasized the need for a unitary, teaching and residential universities in India with this policy, the older Universities, which, functioned as affiliating Universities, came to be modified. Naturally the experience of the Universities in India influenced the Ceylonese decision-makers, and the draft constitution of the University of Ceylon to a great extent, was based on this experience. This, indirectly, meant that there was a need to indigenize the Universities in the given cultural setting; though this principle of indigenization was not overtly articulated, the principle was slowly promoted specially in respect of the establishment of Universities as centres of higher learning. Yet another aspect of the same strategy was the need to build a University tradition of its own in the country where the University was being planted. The idea was to get the newly established University to become a repository of the highest traditions of the indigenous culture.

The purpose in establishing the University of Ceylon, as the preamble of the Draft bill stated, was 'for the cultivation of Arts, Sciences and

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[23] The Ceylon Daily News of December 9,1942 published a lengthy article on the 'Growth of Indian Universities' by S.E. Ranganathan, the former Vice Chancellor of Annamalai University.

[24] Ceylon Daily News of December 9,1942.

learning'.[25] It is intended here to make a comparative discussion of the Draft bill, which Riddell Commission produced in the form of an appendix to its report, with the Ordinance of 1942, which was placed before the State Council for final enactment. There was no much difference between the Draft Ordinance and the Ordinance of 1942, which was approved by the State Council in 1942. Still its salient features need to be analysed for the purpose of understanding the nature of the institution which was established as the unitary and residential University in Ceylon. As in the draft ordinance, the 1942 legislation stated that the seat of the University will be in Kandy, and this, in effect, meant that the issue of the site had been settled. The University was vested with power to acquire, purchase or hold any property which it needs for the construction of the University. The powers of the University, included in both documents, were very much similar, and the University was expected to provide

(a) instruction in such branches of arts, science, and learning as the University may determine, and also make provision for research and the advancement and dissemination of knowledge;

(b) to hold examinations for the purpose of ascertaining the persons who have acquired proficiency in different branches of study;

(c) to provide post-graduate courses;

(d) to grant and confer degrees, diplomas and other academic distinctions.;

(e) to admit graduates of other Universities and register them as graduates of the University;

(f) to confer degrees of the University on any person who shall be employed by the University;

(g) to confer honorary degrees and other distinctions on approved persons;

(h) to accept the examinations and periods of study passed by students of other Universities;

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[25] Vide Draft University Ordinance,1929.

(i) to institute Professorships, Readerships and Lectureships and any other posts or offices which may be required;

(j) to erect, equip and maintain libraries, laboratories and other buildings;

(k) institute scholarships, fellowships, exhibitions and bursaries;

(l) to manage Halls of Residence;

(m) to regulate and provide for the residences, discipline, and morals, mental and physical well being of officers, teachers and students of the university;

(n) to demand and receive fees as determined by the Act.

There was a clause in both documents which dealt with the secular nature of the University, and an attempt was made to devise a system of higher education suited to Ceylon's social and economic needs. Therefore, the University was opened to all persons of either sex and whatever race, creed or class, and it was not lawful for the University to impose conditions in relation to the religious belief of a person. It was emphatically stated that the University would provide places of worship for the undergraduates within the precincts of the University. All recognized teaching in connection with the examinations for the first degrees were to be conducted by the University. The organization of teaching, the courses and the curricula were to be formulated by statutes and regulations. The most significant features of this piece of legislation were that the responsibility for academic affairs was assigned to a hierarchy of academic bodies. It was agreed from the beginning that a larger measure of freedom and responsibility need to be given to the teaching body as such a measure would make the University more responsive to the needs of the community.

Some reference has been made to the structure of administration of the University; still it needs elaboration as this is crucial to the efficient functioning of the University as an institution of higher learning. In constructing this administrative structure, the authorities followed the traditional principle, according to which the scholars of the Universities were expected to protect their privileges and

to regulate their own affairs. The University was treated as a republic of free individuals who were entitled to have their say in the conduct of their affairs. This meant that from the beginning, the scholars, who constitute the University, shared freely in regulating their own affairs and were accorded a substantial degree of autonomy. Therefore, in drawing up the structure of the University, the Riddell Commission had concentrated on two main objectives: provide a large measure of freedom for the academic community, and to stimulate the growth of a University system that would be more responsive to the national needs. In fact, the same two objectives influenced the Commission in prescribing the system of governance of the University and they, in recommending a form of university government, derived inspiration from the experience and practice of the civic Universities in Britain. According to the Calcutta Commission, a University needs proper governance, bodies of three kinds; it needs a large body widely representative of all the varied interests which are affected by University work. Secondly, a University needs a small and efficient administrative body, consisting of men, with a wide knowledge of affairs, which will be responsible for finance and the conduct of general policy. The next essential element in the structure of a teaching University is a strong body or series of bodies, representing the teachers who can exercise independent powers in all purely academic matters.[26] The reference here was to the Court, the Council and the Senate; the Court was to consist of 159 members, and its quorum was thirty; it met once a year and there was provision for special meetings. In most modern Universities, the government is vested ultimately in the University Court, a large assembly, the majority of whom are not members of the teaching staff of the University. The Riddell Commission wanted the Court to remain representative of every element in the public opinion in the country; this was probably because of the fact that the establishment of a University in Ceylon generated much discussion in the country. To ensure wide and comprehensive representation within the Court, they recommended the inclusion of persons with ex-officio status. This was done in order to bring in definite categories of people into the Court. In practice, the powers of the Court have become formal and it meets once a year to review the financial account. The academic membership of the Court was confined to Professors and Heads of

[26] Ashby,Eric. op.cit;p. 119.

Departments. As the Draft Ordinance properly spelled out, the executive governing body of the University was the Council, very much smaller in size and responsible under the general supervision of the Court for finance and external relations. It was to consist of fourteen members. The Riddell Commission recommended a larger body but the Ordinance of 1942 reduced its size, and its quorum stood at seven. The principle adopted in respect of the British Universities was that three-quarters of the Council, should be non-academic and this was adhered to in the construction of the University Council. Both the Draft Ordinance and the Ordinance of 1942 listed its powers and functions; seventeen areas were identified for the exercising of the powers and functions of the Council. It, in addition to the Court, had to exercise a real influence and ultimate control over University policy, subject to the final directives of the Court. All appointments came within the purview of the Council. The principal academic body was the Senate, consisting of Professors and representative members of the staff, which moulded academic policy, and was responsible for teaching, examinations and discipline. Since much of what is done in the Court and Council is of a formal character, the Senate, with its professorial membership, was entrusted with the power and responsibility in moulding the academic policy of the University. The independent management of the academic policy was in the hands of the Senate, which, in any University, is the highest academic body. This, in fact, was similar to a supreme academic council which enjoyed full responsibility for academic affairs, and it collectively had a voice over curricula and examinations. As the Calcutta Commission mentioned in the context of India, the Senate was the real heart of the University, and it became the main pivot on which the teaching of the University rested. This shows that at the very inception of the University, the academic community, through the Senate, was given the right to control the academic affairs. The academic work, to which the Senate provides leadership, is organized through Faculties; the faculties began to evolve during the period of the University College and five faculties- Arts, Science, Law, Medicine and Engineering were to function at the initial phase. A Faculty was to be headed by a Dean elected from among the Heads of Departments of the Faculty; a Professor or a Reader could be appointed as the Head of Department who would be responsible to the Dean for the organization of the teaching in that Department. Though a detailed discussion of the structure of administration is not required, the institutions were

created in such a way so as to see that the University of Ceylon enjoys increased freedom in shaping the University policy. It was true that it virtually had ultimate control over University policy and it, as experience showed, was tied to the issue of autonomy and academic freedom.

It is now clear from the above discussion that the Court, Council and Senate are the principal organs of government within the University. As mentioned earlier, the Court is supreme; the Council is responsible to the Court and the Senate is subordinate to the Council. Those are the formal relationships, but the distribution of effective power and responsibility is different. Most of the powers of the Court are delegated to the Council as a working body. As in British Universities, the practice in Ceylon was to have a firm division of responsibility between Council and Senate, which made the Senate a partner rather than an agent of Council. All decisions on academic matters remained with the Senate and all its recommendations were accepted by Council without challenge or discussion. It covered such matters as the admission of students, the results of examinations, the appointment of academic staff and the establishment of new departments. On non-academic matters, such as financial control and apportionment of finance, construction and upkeep of buildings, property and investment and business and administrative affairs, the discussions and decisions took place in Council. This division of powers, between Council and Senate, was a working arrangement, based on a principle and a tradition.[27] In the University set up, a Department is subordinate to a Faculty, and a Faculty is subordinate to the Senate; the relationship is based on both conventions and regulations. The activities of a Department are regulated by the Faculty and the Senate in order to see that reasonable standards are maintained. Originally, each Professor was head of a department and occasionally a department was likely to be headed by someone of lower academic rank than a Professor. These principles and accepted traditions were followed in organizing the academic administration of the University of Ceylon; it followed the experience of the British Universities. On the basis of the above discussion, the role of the University of Ceylon needs to be

[27] Aitken,Robert. Administration of a University.London,1966,p.ll.

assessed to see whether it adhered to the ideals of the founders of the University movement.

The University of Ceylon, as mentioned earlier, was built on four Faculties - Arts, Oriental Studies, Science and Medicine, which together consisted of 17 Departments of Study.[28] Two new Faculties, the Faculty of Engineering (1950) and the Faculty of Agriculture (1953), were established; the departments of study too began to increase as a part of a programme of academic expansion. Since there was an interest in Oriental Studies, the joint Faculty of Arts and Oriental Studies began to expand and several new departments came into existence. The Departments of Study in Arts and Oriental Studies included Indo-Aryan, Tamil, English, Western Classics History, Geography, Economics and Philosophy. In 1943, Indo-Aryan, which remained an attractive field of study at the University College, was split up into three departments -Sinhalese Sanskrit and Pali, and these Departments, with Tamil, formed the Faculty of Oriental Studies This was in response to the need to develop such traditional disciplines within the University, and those disciplines, along with Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhist Civilization dominated the intellectual life of the University in its early period. The Faculty of Arts began with six Departments of Study, and the Department of Economics, with its different specialties, was to develop into a broad-based Department of Social Science.[29] Sociology was taught as a part of the Economics course; British Constitution was taught as a part of the course in History. The Chair in Economics was created in 1936, and this led to the break up of History and Economics into two Departments. Prof. S.A. Pakeman recommended the need for a separate Department of Economics in 1937, and it was in 1939 that the Economics was given the status of a separate Department. It now became clear that the changes in the academic structure followed the contemporary needs of the country. The same principle influenced the creation of new Departments of Study as well. It was felt that the curriculum should harmonise with the political and social aspirations of the country as it, during this period, experienced the impact

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[28] Jayasuriya, D.L. Development of University Education. The Growth of the University of Ceylon 1942-1965, University of Ceylon Review, Vol. XXIII, Nos 1 & 2, ,1965,p.79.

[29] Ibid;p.100. Academic developments have been comprehensively examined by D.L.Jayasuriya.

of such changes. It, in other words, demanded a change in the model of the colonial university, which, the British implanted in the colonies.

The University of Ceylon, though established in 1942, was still a Colonial University with limited objectives, and these characteristics, naturally, affected the development and expansion of the University. The concept of the Colonial University, as expounded by Sir Ivor Jennings in his well known article published in Political Quarterly (XVII,1946),was probably explained on the basis of his experience at the University of Ceylon.[30] The Colonial University was an institution planted by the British in the respective country, and it, therefore, was expected to operate on the basis of limited objectives; it was expected to fulfill the colonial objectives in colonial administration, into which they wanted to recruit local personnel. As Tambiah had stated, the administrative services had been the chief source of employment in the colonial territories and the higher educational institutions primarily catered to this demand.[31] Jennings's view was that 'Colonial University is not merely a university; it is also a National Gallery, British Musuem, Burlington House, Bloomsbury, Chelsea, Royal Society, London Library, Drury Lane and much more besides'.[32] According to Jennings, the fundamental characteristic of the Colonial University was that it had little cultural background, the implication being that culture had come from either the West or from the revival of indigenous culture in India. This kind of statement stirred the nationalists in Ceylon. Jennings, however, did not say that there was lack of a tradition of learning in the country, and referred to the literature of Buddhism. He wanted a revival of ancient civilization which would, 'in the process of re-development, absorb the best that East and West could produce'.[33] As Macaulay, in the context of India, Jennings did disparage the study of Oriental Languages and culture. Therefore, Jennings wanted the University to act as a major cultural centre.[34] In his view, he wanted it to become a centre of Western culture. But the subsequent popular view was very different. If

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[30] Vide Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly, Vol. Xv 11 , 1946.

[31] Tambiah,S.J. Ethnic Representation in Ceylon's Higher Administrative Services, 1870-1946,in University of Ceylon Review,Vol.3,1955,p.113.

[32] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p. 230.

[33] Ibid;.p.230.

[34] Ibid

the University were to become a centre of Western culture, a renewal of indigenous Ceylonese culture was not possible in the University as it had been set up promote Western culture. It was this orientation and emphasis, which later influenced the champions of Oriental Culture to demand recognition for those disciplines within the University. The importance of Oriental Culture and Oriental Languages came to be discussed even after the establishment of the University. Jennings, writing to the Ceylon Daily News, stated that 'it has been the desire of every person, from Sir P. Arunachalam onwards, that it should be pre-eminent in oriental culture'.[35] He quoted Arunachalam who, in 1906, stated that one need not be a prophet to anticipate that Ceylon is destined from its central position and its historical and religious associations to be a focus of eastern and western culture throughout the east and to exercise a great influence over the world's thought.[36] Jennings was making an appeal for fund to establish a centre of Oriental Culture and Learning at the University of Ceylon. This was considered the obvious sphere in which it was possible to specialize and one which lends itself readily for research.[37] Jennings made a special appeal for funds for a Library of Oriental Literature for the Faculty of Oriental Studies.[38] He wanted to acquire the catalogue of the Library of the late Sir. A. Grierson, the editor and compiler of the Linguistic Survey of India, which 'ought to be in the Library of the University of Ceylon worthy of the name'.[39] Jennings, in his capacity as the Vice Chancellor, offered life membership of the University to benefactors who were prepared to provide him with the funds to establish a centre of studies in Oriental Culture and languages. The pioneers of the Ceylon University movement, Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam in particular, 'conceived the idea that the University of Ceylon, by reason of its historical and religious association, should be the focus of' Eastern and Western Culture'.[40] The four major Faculties, around which the University was built, began to expand and by 1953 there were 43 Departments of Study. It was in the Faculties of Oriental Studies and Arts that this increase of Departments of Study took place, and this was in response to what was taking place

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[35] See article by Jennings, Ivor in Ceylon Daily News of July 9,1942. p-2.
[36] Ibib; p4.
[37] Ibid; p2
[38] Ceylon Daily News of July 11,1942,p.4.
[39] Ceylon Daily News of July 9,1942.
[40] Ceylon Daily News of July 9,1942

within the curriculum of the secondary schools in the country. In addition to the nine Departments in Arts and Oriental Studies, Arabic was given the status of a department in 1945. Sociology was separated from Economics in 1949; a Department of Education was established in 1949 and a Department of Archaelogy was created in 1959. While the Arts and Oriental Studies began to expand, the Faculty of Science continued with the same five departments of study began in 1942. Though there was so much of discussion about the establishment of a Faculty of Law, Law was given the status of a department in the Faculty of Arts. Since the incorporation of the Ceylon Medical College into the University, the Faculty of Medicine remained the dominant faculty within the University, and it created several new departments of study.

By 1952, 10 Departments of Study were established and by 1955, 12 Departments, came into being some of which later achieved the status of a Faculty, for instance, the Dental Sciences. The Faculties of Engineering and Agriculture were slow to expand; Veterinary Science was later converted into a separate Faculty and it still remains a small faculty. Though the need for a separate Faculty of Social Sciences was raised, no attempt was made to re-group the subjects with a view to achieving this objective. The faculty of Arts functioned as the faculty of Social Sciences because it had departments with a social sciences focus; the departments of Economics, Sociology, Education, Law, Mathematics, History and Philosophy while the Oriental Studies had nine language departments. It needs to be mentioned that the subjects were not properly grouped, and much thought had not been given to Social Sciences in the context of the changes that were taking place in the country. Though Sociology was given the status of a separate department, no independent course leading to a Honours degree was arranged till 1959.[41] The criticism was made from the very inception of the University that no attempt was made to teach Commerce. Jennings, writing in 1946, stated that the University is hindering the economic development of the island, because it has not created a degree in Commerce.[42] Accountancy was taught as a part of the Economics course

[41] Warnapala, Wiswa. Politics of Sri Lanka. Godage,2001,p.138

[42] Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly,Vol.16,1945,p.232.

in 1951; the Commission on Technical Education (1961) stressed the need for a course in Commerce. The need for a Faculty of Social Sciences was recommended by the University Commission in 1959; Prof. Frank Thistlethaiwaite, reporting on the establishment of the University of Colombo, suggested the establishment of a Faculty of Social Sciences on the grounds that the present grouping of subjects, with broad Faculties and narrow departments of study, interfered with modern scholarship. Still, Political Science, though certain aspects of it was taught in the Economics Honours Course, was not given the status of a separate department of study. The above discussion shows that the creation of new departments of study and their expansion did not follow a set pattern and this interfered with teaching, research and scholarship within the University, more about which will be said later.

Since some reference has been made to the Draft Ordinance and the Ordinance of 1942, the passage of the legislation to establish the University of Ceylon needs to be discussed in order to place the University of Ceylon in the proper political and economic context. The role of the Legislative Council, specially in relation to the establishment of the University College and the battle of the sites have been referred to; the recommendations of the Riddell Commission were made during the time of the Legislative Council but constitutional reforms of 1931 intervened, and no discussion was possible on the matter. It was now up to the State Council, which was created under the Donoughmore constitutional reforms, to debate and pass the Ordinance; since it dealt with such aspects as University governance and the relationship between the State and the University, they need to be made subject to a thorough discussion. There were a number of discussions in the Legislative Council on the question of the site, and all alternative suggestions in respect of places were debated in the Legislative Council which devoted a bit of its legislative time on this particular matter. Even at the very last moment, C.W.W. Kannangara tried to change the location and it was defeated. The substantive motion was in respect of the establishment of a unitary residential University and it was debated in the Legislative Council in March, 1929, and it was carried by 38 votes to 5 - five which included members of the Tamil community - E.R. Tambimuttu, K. Balasingham, A.

Cangaratnam, S. Rajaratnam and M.M. Subramaniam.[43] The real beginnings relating to the establishment of the University had to be made by the State Council, which was established under the scheme of semi-responsible government, and the responsibility for University education was placed with the Executive Committee of Education.[44] Though the autonomy of the University of Ceylon had been secured by making the University a body corporate and the University, as in the case of the University College (1921-42) was not to be controlled by the Minister of Education; in other words, it was not to function as a Department of Government, and the experience of the University College was such that it functioned as a Department of Government controlled by the colonial bureaucracy, and this feature interfered with the intellectual and academic role as an institution of learning. The autonomy, which the Universities enjoyed traditionally, was not there in the University College which, as the Ceylon Medical College, functioned as a Government department. Both these institutions had their own machinery of administration and financial control; they were subject to all colonial administrative and financial regulations. Jennings, as his comments revealed later, was not in favour of the departmental status in respect of internal governance, and he, as usual, criticized it on a number of occasions. Jennings, referring to both the University College and the Ceylon Medical College, had this to say; 'they were Government departments and this was not the result of deliberate policy: it just happened that way. The Government wanted Medical Assistants and so established a Medical College to train them; in due course its qualification was sufficiently improved to obtain recognition from the General Medical Council, but the College remained a Government establishment under the direction of the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services. The University College was established by the Department of Education though in due course it became a separate Department'.[45] Because of this historical orientation, the procedures followed were cumbersome and the University did not enjoy full autonomy.

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[43] Jennings, Ivor. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol,IX,No.3,1951,p.237.

[44] For a discussion of the Executive Committee system, see Weerawardene, I.D.S. Government and Politics in Ceylon 1931-1946 .Colombo, 1951.

[45] See Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya; An Autobiography. Colombo,2005

Jennings, as an admirer of university autonomy, criticized the decision to place the responsibility for University education in a Committee of seven members of the State Council- the Executive Committee of Education. Since he was engaged in the shifting of the venue to Peradeniya and construction of the University at the new site, he was expected to deal with more than one Executive committee, and this, though became cumbersome, was a source of irritation as it certainly interfered with the University autonomy. As Jennings pointed out, the members of the Executive Committee of Education, rarely agreed; they always disagreed and this was the experience of the Eexecutive Committee system in its first term (1931-36).[46] With regard to the construction of buildings for the University at Peradeniya, the responsibility lied with the Executive Committee of Communications and Works, and it rarely agreed with the Executive Committee of Education. There were four Executive Committees – Local Administration, Agriculture and Lands, Home Affairs, and Labour and Commerce, and all this, as Jennings often mentioned, interfered with the work of the University. In order to obtain money for the purpose, the sanction of the Board of Ministers was required; the Board of Ministers, as experience had shown, never functioned as a Cabinet of Ministers based on the traditional principle of collective responsibility. Therefore, the relationship with the Government was not based on the concept of university autonomy; it still remained embedded in the colonial departmental traditions which came to be imported inside the State Council as well. Jennings accepted that difficulties were certain to arise because the political leadership as well as the public bureaucracy, which has been moulded in the colonial tradition did not understand and value the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom. The University College, because of its inherent limitations and colonial characteristics, was not built on those great traditions of the British Universities. The academic freedom and university autonomy are two distinct concepts, and they impinge on each other at many points. Academic freedom was considered the very life of the University and autonomy included the right of the University to determine who shall teach what and whom. The Universities, according to A.H. Hommadi, were self-governing institutions and

[46] Weerawardene, I.D.S. op.cit; pp.79-103.

enjoyed four kinds of freedom.[47] Firstly, the selection of students, who are suitable and will profit by higher education is the primary function of a University. Secondly, the University must have the freedom of appointing its own academic staff. Thirdly, the University should be free to determine contents and standards of attainment of its education. Fourthly, the University must have the right to determine its size and rate of growth. These basic freedoms were necessary to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the University'. [48]

The question was whether a colonial university could adhere to such traditions and the experience of Jennings at the University of Ceylon amply demonstrated that interference by the Government was at its height. The University College, which was a Government Department, followed a procedure in making appointments, which, in Jennings's view, never recognized that the institution was an autonomous institution. Though the University College was a Government Department, it functioned as an institution of learning which was to be elevated to the status of a University. Jennings, writing on the nature of departmental rules and the manner in which the colonial bureaucracy handled university matters, stated that 'each Department had a cadre, depending as the Treasury thought, on the amount of work to be performed. If the Lecturer in Physics had split the atom, the only way of giving, him a Chair would have been to have proved, most solemnly, that the work had sufficiently increased to justify an increase in the cadre. The post then would have been advertised, and the Principal, the University College Council, the Executive Committee of Education, the Public Service Commission and the Governor, would all have discussed whether the Lecturer was a person most competent for the post'.[49] He gave some more examples, which need to be quoted, to show that the procedure adopted was very bureaucratic and it, to a large extent, depended on the concept of parsimony which, on all occasions, influenced the decisions of the colonial bureaucracy. Jennings, writing on this cumbersome procedure, stated that 'when I suggested on one occasion that a Lectureship ought to be created because the work had not increased (because the subject needed

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[47] Hommadi, A.H. op.cit; p.33

[48] Ibid;p. 34.

[49] Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly ,Vol.16, 1945,p.237

development though there were few students), the Treasury evidently thought me frivolous. On the other hand, if a post became vacant, the only person qualified was the holder of the senior post in the same Department'.[50] Seniority, not the quantum of research, became the criteria for promotion. Yet another thing was that if a Lecturer wanted to visit India for research or to attend a scientific conference, he had to get leave from the Chief Secretary, who was the Head of the Colonial public service. In addition, the teachers at the University College were subject to all the rules in the Manual of Procedure. There were several other limitations on their academic freedom. The teachers were not allowed to criticize government policy, to communicate with the press, to broadcast without the approval of the Chief Secretary, to take part in politics or to assist any candidate at an election. Jennings, in fact, mentioned that a Lecturer, if he wanted, could not lend a car to a candidate contesting an election. The University College, as far as its expenditure was concerned, was expected to remain strictly within the Government estimates, and if the Principal wished to spend more than what has been allocated in the Estimates, he needed to place a Supplementary estimate through the Treasury. The process was equally cumbersome and dilatory as the supplementary estimate had to go to the Executive Committee of Education, the Board of Ministers and the State Council. Jennings, therefore, wrote that 'the same process had to be followed to get a piece of apparatus'.[51] The Principal of the University College was expected to appear before the Executive Committee of Education to justify his action in respect of some matter, because the Principal was under the general direction and control of the Executive Committee. This kind of procedure interfered with both research and. administration; the entire responsibility was placed on the Principal, with the assistance of the advisory Council and subject to political control. Jennings, as usual, was critical of the membership of the State Council; he once remarked that `some of the State Councillors are ignorant men; they did not even pass Matriculation'.[52] Jennings was equally critical of the Departmental status of the University College; it was a Department which was responsible to the Executive Committee of Education of the State Council. Jennings stated that 'the University College had an advisory Council

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[50] Ibid;p. 258
[51] Ibid;p.232
[52] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p.232.

but was not at this stage clear what functions it exercised. Apparently the functions of the Council and the Senate were exercised by the Executive Committee, a body of seven politicians'.[53] This shows that the University College was not an autonomous institution.

Such experiences were explained as essential characteristics of the colonial university. The Commission on the Higher Education in the Colonies, to a certain extent, made use of the Ceylonese experience in University education, and made certain recommendations to prevent the Ceylonese precedent from being followed.[54] According to Jennings, the colonial university must cover a wide range of subjects, with a balance between academic and professional subjects.[55] It was accepted that in arranging syllabi, due attention must where ever possible be paid to local conditions. The most important idea which came to be stressed was the concept of autonomy. Academic policy should be in the hands of a Senate, and staff should also form a third of the University Council, which, in effect, was the major executive body of the University. Most of the mistakes, which Ceylon committed during the time of the University College, were entirely due to the transitional status of the University College. Such characteristics naturally interfered with the type of governance in the University of Ceylon. The University College, which functioned for more than two decades, was a hybrid institution; it was not an autonomous College organized like a University. In the period 1921 -1931, it functioned more in the nature of a semi-autonomous colonial institution. In other words, it, as a colonial institution responsible to the Governor, enjoyed some degree of autonomy. Under the Manning Constitution, the Principal of .the College was responsible to the Governor.

The situation changed with the introduction of the Donoughmore reforms, under which the University College was brought within the purview of the Executive Committee of Education, and this, in effect, meant more political control. It was this experience, which demanded more autonomy for the University of Ceylon when it was established in 1942. The University Bill was introduced in the State

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[53] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p. 6.
[54] Report of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies. CMD6647
[55] Jennings,Ivor. op.cit;p. 239.

Council in March, 1942, and the country was on a war footing; the civil administration in the Island had been placed under military control, because of which the State Council had accepted the need for Emergency Standing Orders for quick dispatch of legislative business. This procedure was used to enact legislation required for certain purposes, and the Emergency Procedure was used to discuss the University Bill in 1942.[56] C.W.W. Kannangara, the Minister of Education, introducing the Bill, gave reasons in support of the immediate passage of the Bill. The debate in the State Council on the University Bill was conducted amidst the threat of Japanese invasion. It was said that when the Bill was being debated, there were warnings of air raids and Jennings himself had to take shelter within the precincts of State Council. Jennings feared that the State Council would be adjourned without completing the third reading of the Bill; it was C.W.W. Kannangara, the Minister of Education, who moved the second reading of the University Bill in the State Council on 26th March,1942. It would be useful at this stage to recount some of the issues highlighted during the course of the debate. B.H. Aluvihare, speaking on the Bill, stated that the University needs to be an independent corporation, independent of political influences, as in the case of monastic Universities of England.[57] It was his view that the University cannot depend entirely on grants from the Government; he wanted the University to look for endowments and funds from the public. The dependence on the Treasury for all its finances was seen as interference with its independence as an institution of higher learning. The Bill, after it had been gazetted, was placed before the University College Council, and the new Principal, Sir Ivor Jennings told the College Council that they were merely an advisory body. The financial powers, which the University was to enjoy under the Bill, were seen as a fundamental weakness and it would render the University impervious to public criticism. Since the Government was expected to provide the funds, there was Government control at every turn and it, they anticipated, would interfere with autonomy and independence. Sir Ivor Jennings, who was expected to function as a full time officer, was criticized in the State Council. Jennings, according to some State Councilors', was 'a first-class propagandist, and as such the

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[56] See Jennigs, Ivor. The Emergency Procedure of the State Council, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. 1, April,1943,pp.8-24.

[57] Vide Ceylon Daily News of 27th March, 1942

very independence they asked for had been infringed'.[58] There was confusion over Jennings's role as the Deputy Civil Defense Commissioner, a war time position created by the Government. Therefore the question arose whether the Principal could also function as the Deputy Civil Defense Commissioner and yet devote time to the University as its Principal. B.H. Aluvihare, in fact, said that 'it seemed incredible that a man could do two jobs so arduous at the same time'.[59]

The appointment of Governor as the Chancellor of the University, and the Minister of Education as the Pro- Chancellor were seen as sources of political influence. Most of the State Councillors devoted their attention to the chapter dealing with the Government and finance; they were of the view that the Riddell report, by making the Governor Chancellor, and giving the Legislative Council some powers of supervision, did not envisage any interference with the autonomy of the University. Neither did they think that the grant of a block Vote once in five years would interfere with autonomy. Yet another criticism was the elite-orientation in the proposed University of Ceylon, which, as envisaged, emerged as an exclusive elite-oriented institution of higher learning. The colonial governments of this period faced the issue still central to educational policy in poor colonial territories, that of the balance between primary schooling for the greatest number on the one hand and a higher education for a fortunate few on the other.[60] The situation in Ceylon was exactly this and higher education institution, like the University College, was established to encourage the emergence of an indigenous elite, and therefore the higher education policy had been stigmatized as elitist. Dr. A.P. de Soysa, speaking on the Bill, highlighted this aspect, and stated that the architects of the University 'are trying to limit the education in the University to the small English-speaking class,and it would take ten to fifteen years before they could establish such a University to benefit the people'.[61] Sir D.B.Jayatilaka, who was closely associated with the movement to establish a University in Ceylon, was of the opinion that it was the Riddell report which made the fundamental contribution in

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[58] Hansard of State Council, March 26,1942.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Goldthorpe,J.E. The Sociology of the Third \Jorld. Dispartty and Development, Cambridge,1976,p.57
[61] Vide Ceylon Daily News of March 13,1942.

this direction, and its draft bill, which came as an appendix to the Riddell report, was not different from the Bill before the State Council. In other words, both documents were almost identical in most parts, and this, therefore, meant that Riddell report was given serious consideration in the final formulation of the university Bill. The question of autonomy, a concept traditionally linked to the form of governance, was raised again in the course of the debate in the State Council, and Sir D.B. Jayatilaka adopted the view that very composition of the University Court interfered with autonomy; his argument was that out of a total of 100 members of the Court, not less than 22 members came from the State Council. Therefore the question was raised as to how one can make the University autonomous. How can a University, controlled by the State Council, function as an autonomous body? The argument came to be expressed that the country's legislature should not be given too much representation in the governing body of a University. The entire membership of the Board of Ministers and the Executive Committee of Education were to be in the University Court, and this, in the eyes of certain State Councillors, was an overt attempt to interfere in the affairs of the University. Dr. A.P. de Zoysa opposed this provision, according to which both the Ministers and the members of the Executive Committee could become members of the University Court. Since 22 members of the Court come from the country's legislature, they could influence any question concerning the University, and this, in his view, was un acceptable. The Executive Committee of Education had also rejected the recommendation of the Riddell Commission with regard to the office of the Pro-Chancellor and had assigned that office to the Minister of Education. It was true that the Executive Committee of Education was not unanimous with regard to the constitution of the Court. Some members of the Committee were not happy with a large element of political influence in the Court; one argument was that the inclusion of a large number of State Councillors in the University Court would facilitate the passage of the Bill in the State Council. C.W.W. Kannangara, the Minister of Education, stated that a large number of State Councillors were given representation in the University Court because of the fact that practically whole of the funds of the University came from the State, and this, therefore, meant that the State Council should have substantial representation in the Court. Yet another reason was that some State Councillors thought that such substantial representation will not make the University an absolutely autonomous

body. In other words, they wanted to restrict University autonomy through this kind of representation in the Court.

In Kannagara's view, this kind of representation did not go against the spirit of the recommendations of the Riddell Commission which recommended that the Directors of various Departments be in the Court. He was not associated with the decision to make the Minister of Education the Pro-Chancellor, and it was the Executive Committee of Education which made this recommendation. It had been the practice in Indian Universities; Kannangara stated that he was prepared to introduce an amendment, which, according to him, should read 'The Minister of Education, except Mr. C.W.W. Kanangara, shall be the Pro-Chancellor'.[62] This was the attitude of Kannangara, who wanted to inform the State Council that it was not the Minister who was behind the move to make the Minister the Pro-Chancellor.

The State Council, on the basis of its procedure, went into the Committee stage, at which certain specific issues were discussed. The provision for the conferment of Honorary degrees was approved; the procedure to be followed in respect of this matter was mentioned. The clause pertaining to the conferment of Honorary degrees was amended to provide that all proposals for such degrees should be made by the Senate and submitted to the Council for approval. Before this particular amendment was approved, the position was that the proposal had to be submitted by the Council to the Chancellor for confirmation, and this section, therefore, was deleted. The salary of the Vice Chancellor was discussed, and it was pointed out that the position of the Vice Chancellor was higher than that of the Principal. The salary of the Vice-Chancellor was to be Rs.30,000 per annum, and this was to remain static for a period of five years. This provision came under attack, and B.H. Aluvihare thought that it was absurd to increase the salary to such an extent; he wanted the salary to be increased on the basis of a scale. The Financial Secretary, H.J. Huxam, took the view that the position of the Vice Chancellor of the University was slightly higher than the Principle of the University College. His salary should, therefore, be somewhat higher than the maximum salary of the Principal of the

[62] Ibid.

University College. B.H. Aluvihare, instead of a rupee salary, wanted the substitution of a sterling salary scale -from 1500 to 2000 sterling pounds - in place of Rs.30,000 per annum. This amendment was defeated and the original provision was approved. The salaries of the Librarian and the Registrar too came to be discussed, and the Minister of Education wanted the Statute 21 on the salaries and teachers amended. The matter was left to the Council; though a Ceylonese scale had been recommended, it was up to the Council to make the necessary adjustments. In other words, there were two scales a Ceylonese scale and a sterling scale. B.H. Aluvihare wanted this distinction abolished.

An academic issue was raised in the State Council, the issue being the appointment of a non-Ceylonese as a Lecturer in Economics. The University College Council sanctioned this appointment on the ground that it was in the interest of the students and the efficiency of the University College. The view expressed by Jennings was that the Department of Economics needed to be expanded, and there a person of Indian origin be appointed without thinking in terms of Ceylonising the staff.[63] In his view, this was in the interest of the students. Jennings always took the view that appointments to academic positions in the University College should not be based on the principle of Ceylonisation. Jennings was trying to get the best possible from England for the most important Department of the University College; by this· time the Department of Economics had emerged as one of the most important departments. The controversy arose due to the competing claims of B.R. Shenoy, whose term as an Assistant Lecturer has been extended, and the claims of a young Ceylonese. Some State Councillors were of the opinion that the Assistant Lecturer was quite suitable for appointment as a Lecturer. Thomas Amarasuriya, speaking on the subject, stated that 'they would be doing a great injustice to a young Ceylonese if they appointed an officer from abroad'.[64] The University College Council, which discussed this matter, was in support of the non-Ceylonese; the matter was referred to the Executive Committee of Education but the decision was in favour of the non-Ceylonese candidate. This, again, showed the extent to which the

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[63] Vide Ceylon Daily News of March 13,1942.
[64] Ceylon Daily News of March 13,1942.

Executive Committee of Education could interfere in the affairs of the University. The Executive Committee of Education decided by a majority of one vote that a non-Ceylonese should be recruited for the post of Lecturer in Economics. Both the University College Council and the Executive Committee of Education were influenced by a memorandum submitted by Jennings on the matter. He, with his experience at the London School of Economics, where he was a member of the academic staff, argued that the Department of Economics, unlike other departments, had a very unique place.[65] In fact, Jennings stated that the Department of Economics had been organized on a different footing. In the London School of Economics, students had the benefit of a galaxy of Professors and Lecturers who came from different disciplines. In other words, they wanted a person with wide experience. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, speaking on this subject of the Lecturer in Economics, stated that the issue underlying was the principle of Ceylonisation; his view was that if a Ceylonese was available, who could with reasonable efficiency perform the duties of the post, he should be appointed. A special debate on the appointment of the Lecturer was held in the State Council and a resolution by the Executive Committee of Education was discussed. The University College Council and the Principal, Sir Ivor Jennings recommended the non-Ceylonese - B.H. Shenoy - to the Executive Committee and Governor who accepted this recommendation. However, the members in the State Council disagreed with the view that there was no qualified Ceylonese; some of them, including S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike and George E. de Silva supported the candidature of F.R. Jayasuriya, who had an Economics degree from the London School of Economics. Jennings did not want to offer a teaching position to F.R. Jayasuriya on the plea of Ceylonisation. B.H. Shenoy, who had come on a three year contract, had superior claims to the position. When the matter came up before the Executive Committee of Education, they referred the matter to the Board of Ministers; the Executive Committee supported the non-Ceylonese with four of its members voting in favour of the non-Ceylonese and three opposing it. It was with one vote that the Executive Committee managed to pass the resolution, and this was a test case in which the legislature interfered with the autonomy of the University.[66]

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[65] See Sri Lanka Economic Journal,Vol.2,No. 2 of 1987 for a discussion on the teaching of Economics in the Universities of Sri Lanka.

[66] Hansard of State Council. Vol. 1:,1942,p.529.

Jennings submitted a memorandum against the Ceylonese whereas the Professor of Economics and the Head of Department supported the Ceylonese candidate; Jennings view was that F.R. Jayasuriya did not get a First Class at the London School of Economics, and a letter from the LSE was produced by Jennings to show that the Ceylonese candidate did not show much promise at the LSE. S.W.R. D.Bandaranaike made use of the occasion to attack Jennings. The resolution, which wanted the non-Ceylonese appointed, was passed in the State Council with 21 State Councilors supporting it and l4 opposing it.[67]

Jennings, in his suggestion to the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, commented on the legislation on the establishment of the University of Ceylon. According to him, the present Constitution of the University was drafted by the University Commission in 1928 on the basis, of a draft prepared by Principal, Prof. Robert Marrs and approved by the University College Council. Prof. R. Marrs was the Principal of the University College for nearly 18 years and his experience, in the context of Ceylon, probably went into the preparation of the draft constitution, which formed the basis of the final legislation. No major amendments were made in the State Council, though the functions of the Chancellor (the Governor of the Island) were so reduced that they have become almost entirely formal. Jennings was of the view that the Constitution had been prepared on the lines adopted by the Provincial Universities in England. The greatest weakness, which he identified, was the dependence of the University upon an annual grant from the State Council, and this was viewed as an interference with autonomy. The University Commission of 1928 recommended a five year grant whereas the Executive Committee of Education insisted upon a grant assessed annually, and the purpose was to see that the State Council exercised some control over academic policy. Jennings stated that the experience in 1943 was that the annual vote became

[67] They included such State Councilors as D.B. Jayatilaka, Gerad Vijekoon, W.A. de Silva, Le Goc, Mr. Wille, A. Mahadeva, Natesan, B.H. Aluvihare. T.B.Jayah. S.Balasingham, Dr. S.C. Paul and P de S. Kularatna. C.W.W. Kannangara stated that he did not influence anybody. The Lecturer concerned was F.R. Jayasuriya who took a degree in English and then switched over to Economics in order to get this post. Before he left for England, he functioned as the Principal of Dharmasoka College, Ambalangoda. For a detailed discussion of this episode, please see Hansard of State Council, Vol.l, 1942.

an occasion for a debate in the State Council; Jennings was in favour of a five year grant and he hoped that once the University had settled down in Peradeniya, the State Council would agree to a five year grant.[68] It was not desirable to establish a University Grants Committee as the United Kingdom, and such a body would provide another element of control. This showed that Jennings was keen to protect the autonomy of the University. It was his view that the control of the University College by the Executive Committee of Education lowered its prestige.[69] The College was autonomous when Prof. R. Marrs was responsible to the Colonial Secretary, and it was the Principal of the College who treated the College Council as a court of governors; the College Council was technically an advisory body. This situation, under which the University College enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy, underwent a change with the creation of the Executive Committee of Education, to which the Principal was expected to submit all his proposals. Jennings, as he stated in his autobiography, was not happy with this arrangement which he often criticized; therefore he wrote that `political control, though it was really quite light, had serious psychological effects. Both students and staff regarded the College not as an entity with a life and tradition of its own, but as a Government Department doling out courses for London examinations'.[70] In fact, the Principal of the University College functioned as the Head of the Department, and this, therefore, meant that the University College did not enjoy the status of an autonomous institution. It was unfortunate that the concept of academic freedom, which came to be highlighted in Germany during the time of Von Humboldt, was not known in Ceylon; Von Humboldt preferred to found a new University which enjoyed academic freedom, without which human education was impossible.[71] The great legacy of Von Humboldt was the recognition of academic freedom which was one of the proudest boasts of the German Universities in the nineteenth century.

Though the cooperation of the Court and the Council favoured the officials, the influence of the academics came to be felt within these bodies, resulting

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[68] Vide 'Suggestions by the Vice Chancellor, University of Ceylon'. A document available at the Library of the University of Peraleniya,Peradeniya.

[69] Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya. An Autobiography. Colombo,2005,p.97.

[70] Ibid;p.98.

[71] Peterson. A Hundred Years of Education.r.ondon,1963,pe170

in the recognition of the concept of autonomy. The election of the Vice Chancellor by the University Court from among the academic staff was a major safeguard and he was responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Court, Council and the Senate.[72] It was interesting to see that these three bodies- the Court, Council and Senate - enjoyed three different vital functions; the legislative authority and financial powers were vested in the Court and the Council was vested with the executive authority while the Senate, as usual, provided the leadership for all academic activities. There was lay representation in both the Court and the Council and there was also sizable academic representation. Members of Parliament were made members of the Council and a special procedure was followed in the selection of MPs to serve on the University Court, which at that time, was a source of prestige. The practice was to elect six Members of Parliament to the University Court, and the Speaker, Sir Francis Molamure, stated that a contest in regard to this matter be avoided, and he requested the political parties, represented in Parliament, to reach an agreement, on the names.[73] In all these three bodies, representation of academics was overwhelming and this, to a great extent, helped in the maintenance of both academic freedom and university autonomy. The Budget debate in the State Council came to be utilized to discuss the University, and certain back-benchers of the Executive Committee of Education thought that they have a right 'to poke their finger in University matters'.[74] The occasion was the vote on the annual grant of Rs. 930,000 and the position adopted by them was that the University was still semi-autonomous because the Vice Chancellor had to get the annual grant passed by the State Council; they argued that the University estimates were not placed before the Executive Committee. There were Ministers who argued that the control of the University is not vested with the State Council. There were others who stated that the concept of autonomy applied only to teaching. It was the Minister of Education, who explained the correct position, and according to him, the University Ordinance never intended that the University Budget should come up for discussion in the State Council. The preparation of the estimates was in the hands of the University Council;

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[72] Gamage, D.T. The Struggle for Control of Higher Education in a Developing Country: Sri Lanka, in Comparative Education,Vol.19,No.3,1983,p.330.

[73] Hansard.House of Representatives. VOl.l,1947.

[74] Vide Ceylon Dnily News of 29 August,1942.

subsequently the University Court passed them. There was also the provision for an annual audit by the Auditor General. The State Council as mentioned earlier was represented in the University Court.

The University College provided limited access, which, in effect, meant that it functioned on the basis of a restricted admission policy. The higher educational opportunities were available to a limited number of Ceylonese students and the University College, from its very inception, functioned as an elitist institution which, as time passed, wanted to emulate the characteristics of the Oxbridge combination. Therefore, a discussion of the academic policy and intake of students, including the access provided for higher educational opportunities in Ceylon, need to be discussed in detail. The official colonial policy demanded that all institutions of higher learning should operate on a restricted admission policy according to which both access and intake were restricted. The student enrollment for the University College came to be perused by the Riddell Commission (1928) which gave the following figures for the respective years.

Year	Number of students
1924	138
1925	127
1926	166
1927	125
1928	165
Source: Riddell Commission (1928) p.28.	

The average total number in attendance during the five years had been two hundred and eighty five. The actual number for the year 1929 was 315 of whom more than one hundred came from Colombo and its suburbs. This figure of 315 was used for the purpose of estimating the future intake, and there was a tendency for the numbers to increase as the secondary school sector began to coach students with a view to finding them a place in the University.[75] On the basis of this

[75] Riddell Commission Report,p.26.

estimate, the probable intake to the University of Ceylon was expected to remain within that range. This showed that the authorities still advocated a restricted intake with a view to protecting the elitist character of the University. Yet another reason was that the number of women students, who seek admission, would certainly exceed the twenty two at present; with the provision of special residential accommodation for women students, their numbers were certain to increase in the future. Yet another reason was the grant of bursaries to students of low income groups, and this would facilitate the entry of students of low income status. It was thought that the establishment of the University of Ceylon would lead to a reduction in the number of Ceylonese who seek a university education outside the Island. It was on the basis of the above reasons that the authorities thought that the initial intake to the University would be approximately around 500.

It is in this context that some reference needs to be made to the character of the institution which, according to W.A. Jayawardene, the former Registrar of the University of Ceylon, `was a copy book of the Oxbridge model'.[76] It was a university with compulsory residence of all students, and based on ancient traditions and ceremonials; therefore, it was intended to be an isolated teaching institution preparing a chosen few for traditional degree courses in selected disciplines and cut away from the people at large. The University of Ceylon, as most Universities of the time, remained rather isolated from the people at large, accessible to and concerned with only the elite of the social order.[77] This was the exclusive nature of the institution of learning which the Ordinance of 1942 brought into existence and it, as expected, began to operate on the basis of a restrictive admission policy. The University College Entrance Examination was held in 1942; 453 candidates were examined and 216 were selected; there was a high percentage of failures at the examination and this was attributed to poor general reading and the weakness of home education'.[78] It was agreed in 1943 to institute a Higher School Certificate Examination at the request of the Ceylon Headmasters Conference, and the Council and the Senate agreed with this recommendation thinking that such an

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[76] Jayawardene, W.A. op.cit;p.32.
[77] Ibid;p.32.
[78] Annual Report of the University Council,1942,p.4.

examination would improve the quality of those students seeking admission to institutions other than the University. The syllabus of this examination was similar to those of the University Entrance Examination. Yet another objective was to prevent drop outs after they had passed the Intermediate Examination, and this was one important reason for the wastage at the University College during this period. The University of Ceylon, when it began in July, 1942, admitted 904 students, out of which 250 was in Medicine; in the period 1942-1965, the unitary character of the University of Ceylon was disturbed and two Campuses, Peradeniya and Colombo, came into existence, and the student intake was increased from 904 to 10,723 in 1965. This according to Jayasuriya, was a phenomenal increase.[79] In two decades, University education in Ceylon had undergone a significant transformation and this was entirely due to the social-demand model of education, under which education was made free from kindergarten to the University. This was an example of a situation where there was a profound association between changes in social structure and the rise and fall of the elites.[80] It was the social forces which created new elites. The colonial policy on education began to change during this period, and the purpose of education was to train people for responsible posts in administration, social service, commerce and industry; and higher education, both general and professional'.[81] The Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, therefore, stated that 'the doors of advancement through higher education must be kept open for those who by ability and temperament show themselves fit to profit by such education'.[82] They emphasized that the provision of local facilities for undergraduate studies was equivalent to what the student would get in England. It was the view of the Advisory Committee that higher education of a general type rather than professional, needed the creation of an enlightened public opinion.[83] This again showed that 'the examining and affiliating' Universities, which the British established in the early phase of their rule, had changed; now they began to

[79] Jayasuriya ,D.L. op. cit;p. 84.
[80] Bottomore, T.B. Elites and Society. Penguin,1964,p.93.
[81] Mayhew, Athur. Education in the Colonial Empire. London, 1943,p.52.
[82] Ibid;p.51
[83] Ibid;p.52.

emphasise a teaching and residential University.[84] The link with the University was maintained till the University College was fit to ripen into a University.

Some reference to educational developments in the colonial period is necessary to discuss the impact of educational progress on the functioning and expansion of the University of Ceylon.[85] During the time of the creation of the University of Ceylon in 1942, Ceylon, unlike other countries in South Asia had a fairly developed system of primary and secondary education; the primary school system alone provided education for nearly one million children.[86] The secondary education, where the Missionary participation was strong, was relatively backward with an enrollment of nearly fifty thousand students. Despite the activities of both Christian and Buddhist religious organizations, the secondary education offered limited opportunities for education. The imbalance in the distribution of educational opportunities in the country was primarily due to a wide variety of reasons. Wealth, religion, location of residence and the socio-economic background of the parents had a relationship to student access to educational opportunities in the secondary education sector.[87] This kind of situation arose due to a number of historical reasons and they need to be referred to as the social-demand model of education, which came into existence in 1945, wanted to rectify the position by introducing the Free Education Scheme. The active involvement of the Christian Missionaries in educational activity gave them an early lead in the sphere of education; in 1868,65 percent of all children attending school were Christians and only 27 percent were Buddhists. The dominance of the Christian Missionaries came to be checked during the second half of the 20th century through the participation of Buddhist and Hindu revivalist organizations in the sphere of education. Though the Buddhist and Hindu agitation was successful in bringing about a change, the Christians receiving secondary education remained high. Most of the successful secondary schools were in the Western province and in the Jaffna region, because of which nearly 75 percent of the students at the University of Ceylon in 1948 came from the Western and

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[84] Littlehailes, R. Progress of Education in India, 19?2-27. Vol. 1,p.54
[85] Jayasuriya, J.E. Education in the Third World New Delhi,l98l,.p.17.
[86] Vide Education in Ceylon. A Centenary Volume. Colobo, l969.
[87] De Silva,C.R. Weightage in University Admissions. Standardization and District Quota in Sri Lanka 1970-75', in Modern Ceylon Studies,Vel.5,Ne. 2,1974,p.l5l.

Northern provinces. There was yet another feature; the mass of the population was provided with vernacular education, which bifurcated the population into an English-speaking minority and a vernacular speaking majority. According to Ralph Pieris, only 14.3 percent of the school going population was qualified to enter the ranks of the elite.[88] In 1928, only 50 percent of children of school going age were in school aided by government grants, and there were 51,000 in English schools and 46,500 in vernacular schools. W.G.A. Ormsby Gore, the Under-Secretary for Colonies, in his report, stated that `there is a tremendous range and variety of educational efforts of all kinds going on in Ceylon'.[89] Discussing the educational developments in the country, he wrote that 'in Ceylon, as elsewhere, the 'ladder' ideal had become firmly ingrained; the popular opinion had demanded that the elementary school must lead to the secondary school and the secondary school to the University, and thereby the whole course and aim of education became controlled by an English University course and a series of examinations designed to lead to that course, for example, the Cambridge Junior and the Cambridge Senior local examinations dominated the curricula and methods of all types of schools in Ceylon'.[90] He, in fact, stated that the most fundamental remedy would be to eliminate the external examinations altogether. In 1927, Ceylon had 1268 Government schools and 2222 Government assisted schools; there were 1005 unaided schools. According to the Report of Ormsby Gore, nearly 50 percent of the children of school-going age were receiving education. This, in fact, meant that only one-tenth of pupils were English-educated; in other words, only 5 percent of the school going population were eligible to get membership of the elite.[91] Ralph Pieris saw this as a great schism - a wide gulf between the English-educated and the vernacular educated. The Select Committee appointed by the State Council in 1946 to report on the question of official language, stated that 'it is possible to attain the highest post in the land, amass wealth and wield influence, without knowing a word of the national languages'.[92]

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[88] Pieris, Ralph. Social Development and Planning in Asia. New Delhi,1975,p.241.
[89] Ibid;p.241.
[90] Report of Ormsby Gore. CMD 3235,1928.
[91] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p. 241.
[92] Quoted by Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p. 241.

The information cited above, therefore, indicates that the educational policies of the period favoured primarily the formation of an English-educated elite, and the institutions of higher education, since 1870, encouraged this process of elite formation in the country. It was in this background that the historic free education scheme came to be introduced and it, as expected, had an impact on enrollment to the University, which still maintained elitist in character. The enrollment of only 904 students in 1942 increased to 2345 by 1955-56, and this phenomenal change in the intake was the direct result of the adoption of universal free education in 1945; this piece of legislation broke the monopoly of superior education in English which was available to the elite which was a microscopic minority of the population, and with this change, a process of democratisation of opportunity for higher education began in the country, resulting in the gradual expansion of the access to higher educational opportunities in Ceylon. The secondary education was still conducted in English, a language in which only 6.3 percent of the population were literate. This position, undoubtedly, favoured the more westernized groups in society; in other words, the educational opportunities were available only to the middle class and upper classes in the country, and it was this injustice which the Free Education Scheme intended to rectify. The following statistics show the nature of the change.

Students Intake to the University of Ceylon

Year	Number of Students
1942	904
1943	904
1944	997
1945	1,065
1946	1,302
1947	1,554
1948	1,612
1949	1,844
1950	2.036

1951	2,210
1952	2,232
1953	2,392
1954	2,434
1955	2,431
1956	2,534
1957	2,718
1958	2,950
1959	3,196
1960	3,684
1961	4,655
1962	5,117
1963	5,706
1964	7,183
1965	10,723

Source: Annual Reports of the Council of the University of Ceylon

The increase in the initial phase was gradual, and it was since the fifties that the pace of increase began to change. It was the impact of the Free Education Scheme which came to be felt; the switch-over to Swabasha -Sinhala and Tamil - as the medium of instruction doubled the enrollment by the end of 1950s. Since the introduction of the adult suffrage and with the grant of political independence in 1948, the need to expand educational opportunities on the basis of the equality of opportunity came to be emphasised. Simultaneously, there was an expansion of the secondary school sector, which, as expected, resulted in a phenomenal increase of student enrollment in secondary schools. In the period 1950-1960, the number of students in grades nine to twelve rose from 65,000 to 225,000 and this was primarily due to the network of Central schools which came to be established in the rural districts which hitherto remained neglected. G.C. Mendis, writing on Adult Franchise and Educational Reforms, referred to the probable

consequences of the educational reforms; he stated that the reforms advocated in the Report of the Special Committee on Education `are of such great political and social significance that, if effectively carried out, this would affect privileged classes and institutions and alter the entire structure of our social system'.[93] In the system, which existed before the introduction of the Free Education Scheme, the equality of opportunity in education was not guaranteed; English schools were established to get recruits for Government service, and this colonial objective did not change in the last hundred years. The English schools, as in the past, had adjusted to satisfy the needs of a government expanding its activities.[94] The vernacular schools continued to provide education to the rural poor and the whole system was based on narrow objectives and it favoured the growing middle and upper classes. J.E. Jayasuriya, commenting on the Free Education Scheme, stated that 'the masses continued to receive free the poor quality education that had all along free to them. The Central School idea represented a genuine attempt to extend the benefits of a good quality education, but the establishment of Central Schools could proceed only at a snails pace as the lions share of finance of government was taken up by grants of great liberality to the few prestigious schools which had been earlier fee-levying but had now become free'.[95] He made a harsh judgment on the free education scheme when he said that `the policy that had been accepted was free education from the kindegarten to the University. Education became indeed free for all, but what were free were a good education for the few and a bad education for the many'.[96] Therefore, what was needed was a national system of education which could guarantee equality of opportunity in education. It was in the wake of these proposals that 54 Central Schools were established in the country, and this, to a great extent, contributed to a reduction in the inequalities in educational opportunity, and the abolition of all tuition fees in almost all secondary schools and in the University led to a phenomenal increase in the enrollment.[97] The switch-over to Swabasha as the medium of instruction and the expansion of the secondary schools had an immediate

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[93] Mendis, G.C. Adult Franchise and Educational Reforms, in University of Ceylon Reviel Vol.2,1944,p.37.
[94] Ibid;p-39.
[95] Jayasuriya, J.E.op.cit;p.87.
[96] Ibid;p.87.
[97] Administration Report of the Acting Director of Education for the year 1951.Govt. Press 1952,p. A 18.

effect on the only unitary University in the country. By 1959, all Arts subjects were taught in the national languages, and Science too followed in the next four years, and now students instructed in national languages tapped at the door of the University of Ceylon, which, due to popular pressure, was, compelled to increase the intake. In other words, the recommendations of the Special Committee on Education, specially the introduction of Free Education, began to make the impact on University education, and the system, which hitherto remained built on the elitist Oxbridge model, came to be challenged. By 1965, the intake had experienced a phenomenal increase, with which elitism had paved the way for mass University education in the country.

Before a discussion of the attempt to destroy the foundations of a unitary residential University is undertaken, the most important factor which accelerated the process of construction of a federal system of University education needs examination. It was the expansion of secondary education in Arts subjects, which began in the fifties, and brought great pressure for admission to the Social Science and Humanities courses at University level. The Government responded by converting the seats of ancient Buddhist learning - Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas - as Universities in 1959, and by establishing a Second Arts Faculty of the University of Ceylon in 1963.This, in fact, was the beginning of the bifurcation of the only unitary University of Ceylon into two Universities, more about which will be said later.

Since the Arts intake was the single most important fact which contributed to the expansion of University education in the country, it needs further elaboration and detailed discussion in order to make an assessment of its impact on the expansion of higher educational opportunities in the country. The number of Arts Students increased from 436 - 49 percent of all admissions- in 1958 to 5345 - 84.1 percent of the total intake in 1965. Apart from its impact on employment opportunities for graduates, it created a number of problems within the University sector, which was now expected to look for new policy initiatives. Laksiri Jayasuriya, in his study of university developments in Ceylon, refers to the

significance of the increase in the Arts intake. The following statistics illustrate the point in respect of the Arts and Oriental Studies.

Arts and Oriental Studies Intake

Year	Number of Students	Percentage of total intake
1942	396	43.6
1943 1944	336	37·2
1945 1946	366	36.7
1947 1948	375	35.2
1949 1950	517	39.7
1951 1952	647	41.6
1953 1954	686	42.6
1955 1956	794	43.1
1957 1958	783	38.5
1959 1960	909	41.1
1961 1962	907	40.6
1963 1964	947	39.6
1965	994	40.8
	991	40.8
	1,017	40.1
	1,096	40.3
	1,239	42.0
	1,379	43.1
	1,678	51.5
	2,398	51.2
	2,620	51.2
	2,802	49.0
	4,150	57.8
	7,311	68.2

Source: Annual Reports of the Council. University of Ceylon.

Also see Jayasuriya, D.L. op.Cit; p.146.

The foregoing statistics show that the Arts intake progressively increased during the first two decades after the establishment of the University of Ceylon in 1942. Though the Science, Medicine, Agriculture and Engineering intake came to be increased gradually, it remained static below 20 percent, though there were comparable increases in different disciplines such as Medicine and Dentistry. Engineering, which began in 1950, remained very low from the beginning as it was the policy even during colonial times. It took sometime for the policy-makers to realise the need for expansion of the intake in respect of Engineering, and it was the reason for the small intake of Engineering students.[98] The result of the impact of the social demand model of education which came into existence in 1945 was the expansion of access to higher educational opportunities which demanded change in policy. The establishment of a second Science Faculty at Peradeniya and the inclusion of a category of students called 'non-residential external students' in 1961, led to the break-down of the unitary and residential character of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya. The very ideas, for which a galaxy of leaders fought for more than four decades, came to be overturned and challenged because the expanded secondary school sector prepared students to sit the University Entrance Examination in Arts subjects. This could be attributed to the number of schools teaching Arts subjects and the small number of schools with science classes; in other words, there was a major imbalance in respect of this matter in the secondary school sector, and this, even by 1970, had not been rectified. Osmund Jayaratne Committee, in fact, commented on this matter; it stated that `unfortunately while our needs changed, the educational structure, both secondary and tertiary, continued to be largely what it was in the past. The liberal arts tradition was continued and fostered in our schools, and only in recent times was any serious effort made to change the emphasis towards the scientific and technical fields'.[99] It was their view that with free education, the school system expanded fast but the old traditions remained. In the absence of more and more facilities for science education, the schools in the country continued to produce ever increasing number of students trained in the Arts and Humanities. The Universities are partly to be blamed for the failure to change the courses in keeping with the changes in the country, and they, influenced by the traditional ideas of those

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[98] De Silva,K.M. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit; p.158.
[99] Osmund Jayaratne Report on Re-organisation of Higher Education.Colombo,1971,p.l.

who championed the expansion of Oriental Studies, allowed the students to offer the same 'soft' combinations of subjects. The undergraduates in all Universities followed Arts oriented courses and the following statistics show the magnitude of the problem with regard to Arts graduates.

Students following Arts courses

Year	Arts percentage of the total intake
1966-67	77 %
1967-68	76 %
1968-69	73%
1969-70	70 %

Source: Osmund Jayaratne Report, p.2.

As mentioned earlier, the emphasis, from the very beginning of University education in the country, was on traditional disciplines, and even the early protagonists of University education demanded this as they wanted the University to become a centre of cultural renaissance. Therefore, not much attention was paid to the production of graduates who could participate in economic and social development. By 1970, the University of Ceylon had produced 19,521 Arts graduates; in 1951, the University of Ceylon reported that it produced 924 graduates in Arts and Oriental Studies out of a total of 2210 students.[100] As mentioned earlier, the elitist model of a unitary residential University came under constant attack, and the demand was for expansion. The developments in education, both general and higher education, were also guided by various external pressures, and Ralph Pieris, in fact correctly identified those pressures, which, in his view, were largely populist in character and orientation. The educational opportunities, after the introduction of the adult suffrage in 1931, were extended on the basis of electoral needs; the employment opportunities and social and economic development were not taken into consideration. In other words, educational opportunities came to be guided by constituency needs.[101] The relationship between constituency needs and public policy

[100] Administrative Report of the Acting Director of Education, 1951.p.A 23.
[101] Pieris,Ralph. op.cit;p.445.

formulation was seen in the parliamentary system as well. The politicians, guided by populist politics, always thought that the University of Ceylon was very exclusive and admitted only a few students. The popular demand was that it must be open to larger numbers of students, and this was associated with the introduction of national languages as the medium of University instruction. The pressure groups, both political and cultural, began to demand unlimited access to University education so that all young people could qualify for socially esteemed jobs which were limited.[102] It was in this background that the University of Ceylon was expected to expand, and it could not resist the populist forces which emerged in 1956, and they began to determine the content and direction of public policy making in the country. The language question, which surfaced in 1956 as the most powerful rallying point with its impact on mobilisation of public opinion, influenced a series of changes, including fundamental changes in the sphere of higher education which hitherto remained exclusively confined to a minority. On the basis of this populist upsurge, the Government came under great pressure to provide higher educational opportunities to thousands of school leavers educated in the national languages. The need was to break the exclusivity and the elitism of the University of Ceylon. The demand for expansion of the access was such that the secondary schools lacking science facilities were filled to capacity with arts students confined to a very few subjects, and they, as anticipated, aspired to get into the University. The majority of students offered Arts subjects, and they, in turn, became teachers in secondary schools in order to repeat the cycle; the over-production of graduates in such subjects started a process, and the restriction of the Arts degree to a few subjects, in turn, created a massive demand for University places from the rural sector. It was this demand for more places for Arts students which, in the end, paved the way for the bifurcation of the University of Ceylon into two Universities - Peradeniya and Colombo, more about which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Some reference to the development of Faculties is necessary, though this aspect has been comprehensively dealt in the study of Jayasuriya.[103] However, it would be useful in this context to refer to some salient features of Faculty development as it is necessary to explain certain aspects of University

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[102] Green, T.L. Education and Social Needs in Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.IV, 1952,p.4.
[103] Jayasuriya, D.L. op.cit;PP.99-125.

policy. As expected, the faculties of Arts, Oriental Studies, Science, Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, Dentistry and Veterinary Science developed during the initial period and they, from to point of view of development of the country, made a notable contribution.[104] The University of Ceylon, which was built around four faculties, expanded to cover six faculties with forty three departments. This was the situation up to 1965, and the changes, in the subsequent period, will be dealt with later. The expansion of Faculties and Departments represented an index to the changes in academic policy, and it happened in response to the economic and social changes in the country. It is necessary to mention that in all faculties, new Departments came into existence as a result of the need for specialization in certain areas of the subjects, and this, specially in Science, Medicine, Dentistry, Agriculture and Engineering was entirely due to new developments of international significance. It was in 1956 that the Arts and Oriental Studies which, since 1942, functioned as two faculties, were merged into a single Arts faculty which, through the creation of new departments of study, began to expand in the following decade. In the same way, the Faculty of Medicine experienced a rapid expansion with the creation of new departments based on new specializations. This trend was seen in all faculties during this period. The intake of students too expanded in response to changes; in the faculty of Science, the admissions have always been restricted by limitations of laboratory facilities, and this affected the increase in the output of Science graduates. In the earlier period, the expansion of higher educational opportunities was guided primarily by the employment needs of the country, and this, in fact, was based on the then prevalent colonial policy. This kind of emphasis began to change with populistic politics, the impact of which was mentioned earlier. In the United Kingdom, the expansion of Universities came to be studied in relation to economic and social benefits, and the Lord Robbins report in 1961-63 dealt with this aspect.[105] It looked at the relationship between economic policy and the higher education policy. In other words, economic consequences of education, specially higher education, came to be studied; no such attempt was made here in Ceylon except the brief attempt made by the Osmund Jayaratne Committee on Higher Education. In certain less developed countries, the charge is that there is persistent under-investment in primary education and over-investment in higher education. Since the

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[104] De Silva, K.H. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit; for a detailed discussion of this aspect

[105] Report of the Committee on Higher Education (Robbins Report). London,1963,pp.73-96

fifties, higher education has been the fastest growing part of the educational system, and this, to a certain extent, is applicable to the situation in Ceylon. Yet the capacity of the economic system to absorb educated people into employment came to be questioned; it, in a way, was due to the expansion of the secondary education and higher education without limits. Dudly Seers referred to this aspect and the lack of manpower planning but it was the need for social mobility which made a fundamental impact on the expansion.[106] The view expressed here was that the expansion of both secondary and higher education was not accompanied with the required changes in policy.

According to Chandrasegaram, the introduction of the free education scheme in 1945 enlarged the catchment area of education for all; even the `limited' free education scheme, which actually meant free tuition, facilitated a 'new section' of student population to enter the realms of higher education. It, in fact, increased the number of students seeking admission to the University of Ceylon and Universities outside.[107] The bifurcation of the University of Ceylon into two Campuses - Peradeniya and Colombo - was the immediate reason for the continued federalization of the system of University education in the country. Therefore, some reference to this process of change and transformation needs to be made before concluding this chapter. Several problems arose as a result of the establishment of two separate Universities out of the former University of Ceylon, and they came to be focused on the question relating to the status of each University; the question was whether there was equality of status.[108] It would, therefore, be necessary to refer to certain historical facts in order to place the discussion in the proper historical setting; it was only in October, 1952 that the Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies, consisting of 847 students, were shifted to Peradeniya. By 1953, the Faculties of Arts, Oriental Studies, Law and Agriculture were at Peradeniya, while the Faculties of Medicine, Science and Engineering continued in Colombo. The student population of the University of Ceylon was estimated as follows: Peradeniya 841 and Colombo 1385. With the provision of esidential facilities at Peradeniya, the intake of

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[106] ILO. Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations. (Dudly Seers Report) ILO,1971

[107] Chandrasegaram, P. Policies regarding Higher Education in Ceylon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, with Special Reference to the Establishment of the University of Ceylon. M.A. Thesis, University of London,1961,p.339.

[108] Report of the Committee of Inquiry. University of Colombo. Sessional Paper VIII, 1968,p.iii.

students began to increase; the Science faculty in Colombo was to move to Peradeniya in 1958, and with this, it was expected to expand the intake of Science students. All these plans, based on the projections made by the Vice Chancellor, Sir Ivor Jennings and the University Council, had to be altered because of the pressure of population and the benefits of free education. Therefore plans, were made for a second Science Faculty and a second Medical Faculty at Peradeniya; the first batch of science students came to Peradeniya in 1961 and the second Medical School started in Peradeniya in 1962 with 102 students. This showed that the whole scheme of the unitary residential University underwent a change within a period of ten years. The major problem was created by the Arts Faculty at Peradeniya; by 1958, there were 1232 students in residence though the Halls of Residence had been planned to accommodate 1200. There was already over-crowding of students and the residential principle came under attack as there was a continued increase in the number of students. Because of the growing demand for more and more residential facilities, it was decided to relax the rule regarding residence. The University of Ceylon found it difficult to stick to the residential principle as the political pressure was to accommodate more students. This led to an additional intake of students, who were allowed to live outside. By 1963, it was felt that the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya cannot accommodate the number qualifying for admission, and it was in this background that a decision was taken to establish a Second Arts Faculty in Colombo. Most popular subjects- Economics, Sinhalese, Geography and History- were taught in this Faculty of Arts, and the intake, as expected, increased and 1550 students were admitted, out of which 559 went to Peradeniya and the remainder was in Colombo. With this change, the total number of students increased to 5706, which came to be distributed as follows: Peradeniya 3154 and Colombo 2552.[109] As stated earlier, the original plan of the University of Ceylon, which was to function as an exclusive residential University with a restricted intake of students, came to be considerably altered within the first twenty year of its existence. In terms of policy, adjustments were not made to meet the challenges in the future. In 1965, the number of students in the University rose to 7182, Peradeniya and Colombo having 4292 and 2890 respectively. It was in this year that a decision was taken to do away with the University Entrance Examination for admission. It was thought that the adoption of this method would help the University to regulate the admissions on the basis of the

[109] Ibid; p.3.

results of this national examination; one single national examination was to determine the procedure of selection of students. This decision, undoubtedly, had a profound effect on the entire system of University education in the country.

It was with the release of the GCE (Advanced Level) Examination in 1964 that the University of Ceylon faced a serious problem pertaining to the admission of Arts students. The number of students seeking admission to the University of Ceylon 'was greatly in excess of the figure which the University could accommodate'.[110] The decision of the University Council was to admit all the students who had qualified for admission, and the lecture room accommodation for the additional intake was arranged in the buildings of the Ceylon Turf Club. On the basis of this arrangement, 2904 students were allocated to the faculty of Arts in Colombo. Yet another decision was to transfer the Faculty of Law to Colombo. As a result of these changes, the distribution of students between Peradeniya and Colombo became more or less even with Peradeniya having 5068 and Colombo having 5655 students. From the beginning, these ad hoc make-shift arrangements came under constant criticism from the press, and a derogatory designation was given to the University.[111] The idea was probably to highlight the undesirable features in the trend of events. But what in reality, happened was that such derogatory remarks created in the minds of both students and the public that an inferior status had been assigned to the Second Arts Faculty in Colombo. The whole scenario was against the very principle of University education; for instance, the lectures were delivered over a microphone to a large mass of students, and the consequent lack of student - teacher contact and the difficulties in finding suitable accommodation in Colombo created much unrest among students who, now, began to express their grievances. In was in 1966 that the new Higher Education Act, No. 20 of 1966 came into existence, and it, though needs a separate discussion, took a decision to convert the Colombo Campus of the University of Ceylon into a separate University, the University of Colombo in 1967. This was part of the policy strategy to coordinate University education in the country through various measures, including a common national admission policy. The reasons, which compelled them to take this decision, were in the Colombo Campus itself and some of them need to

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[110] 24th Annual Report of the Council of the University of Ceylon,1965

[111] The use of the Ceylon Turf Club provoked the local press to call it 'Asva Vidyalaya'

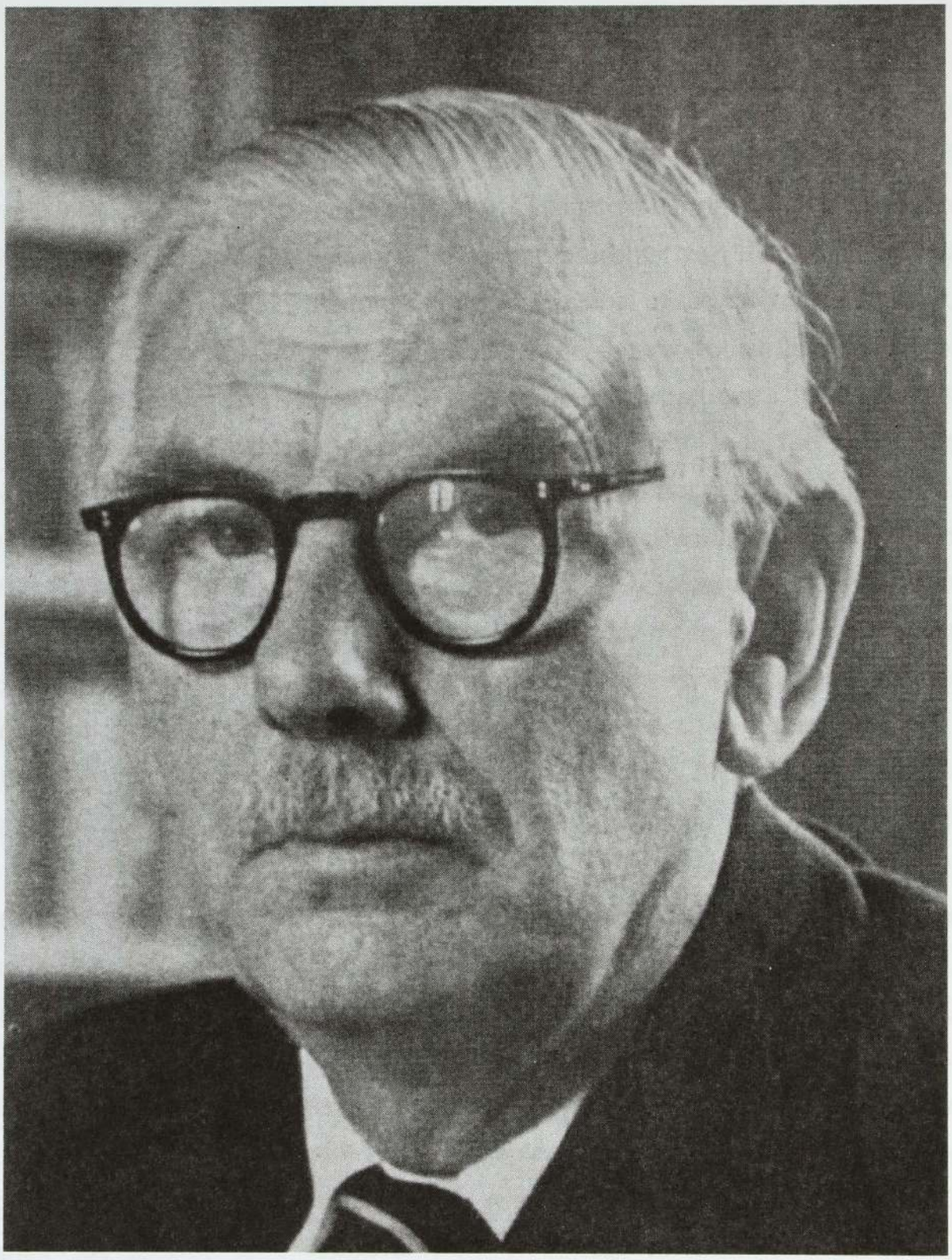
be recounted to understand the issues which interfered with the development of University education in the country. It was known that the University of Ceylon experienced immense difficulties in running the administration of two institutions in two different locations. As we saw in the preceding chapters, the decision was to have one single unitary residential University at Peradeniya, a plan under which all institutions in Colombo were to be gradually shifted to Peradeniya. This grand plan, for which all leaders invested their energy since 1905, came to be overturned, and an entirely new situation emerged; the need for a separate University in Colombo came to the forefront of the discussion. The academic staff of the Colombo Campus preferred the conversion into a separate University.

It was in 1967 that the final decision was taken to set up two Universities - the University of Peradeniya and the University of Colombo; the original plan was to re-designate the Peradeniya Campus as the University of Kandy. It was the Senate of the University of Ceylon which insisted that the University located in Peradeniya be called the University of Peradeniya. The change of names of the two institutions of higher learning created some stir within the student community in Colombo; they wanted the two Universities to be named as - University of Ceylon, Colombo and University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, for which designations, the Minister of Education, I.M.I.R.A. Iriyagolla did not give his concurrence. Instead the Minister agreed to make arrangements to 'enable the students who entered the University prior to its establishment to get the degree of the University of Ceylon'.[112] This proposal became unacceptable to the students, and the matter demanded the intervention of the Prime Minister. The question was which one was the premier University of Ceylon, and some thought that that status would go to the University at Peradeniya. The University Teachers Association in Colombo, in a memorandum, stated that it was unfair to allow Peradeniya to retain the title 'University of Ceylon'. As the battle of the sites of the earlier period, another battle, though not of the same magnitude, came to be launched on this matter of naming the Universities in Peradeniya and Colombo. The debate was over the removal of any vestige of connection with the University of Ceylon; the objection was that in doing so, any trace of their association with the former University is

[112] Report of the Committee of Inquiry. University of Colombo. Sessional Paper VIII,1968, p.iii.

obliterated; the matter, therefore, was a battle of prestige. The measures taken to convert the University into the University of Colombo did not interfere with the continuation of the old University. In the process, two questions arose and answers had to be found; did the names give equality of status to the two institutions, and had their respective status been affected. Such issues were discussed and the question of the heritage of the University of Ceylon too came to be examined. Some thought that University of Peradeniya would inherit the heritage of the University of Ceylon. The decision was to award parity of status to both institutions. This was how the issue was resolved and they worked out a basis for sharing the various assets and endowments. The most significant change was that the unitary residential teaching University came to be dismembered and the process of change, which began during this period, paved the way for a federal system of Universities.

In conclusion, it needs to be mentioned that the system of higher education, from colonial times, went through the stages of 'examining', affiliating, residential, teaching and unitary system, and the country experienced the essential features of each of these types of University. The University of Ceylon was a residential University, which, according to definition, was one in which an essential condition for membership of the University is residence at the centre or centres of the University. The 'teaching' University is one in which some or all teaching is not only controlled but also conducted by persons appointed by the University. A 'unitary' University is one, usually localised in one single place, in which the whole of the teaching is conducted by University teachers appointed by the University authorities. It has always been a teaching University though every teaching University is not a unitary University The concept of the unitary University, for which the early protaganists of University education in Ceylon fought for years, came to be buried in the late sixties, and a new process of change was initiated to establish a federal system of Universities in the country.



Sir Ivor Jennings

Chapter VI

The Legacy of Sir Ivor Jennings

The Project of a University of Ceylon, which dated back to the early nineties when the Ceylon University Association was formed by the late Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, materialised in 1921 with the establishment of the University College. As mentioned earlier, this College was formally opened on January 24, 1921, and it was at the beginning of its second academic year that Mr. Robert Marrs, MA (Oxon) C I E arrived and assumed duties as Principal of the University College, thus relieving the Director of Education, E.B. Denham of the control of the College, which, from its inception, was given the status of a Government Department.[1] It was the Director of Education, E.B. Denham (later Sir E.B. Denham) who took the initial steps to establish the University College on 18 ½ acres of land, and it was at this stage that Robert Marrs, who had seven years of experience in India, assumed duties as Principal in October, 1921 and remained in Ceylon for more than eighteen years. It was during his period that he successfully met the initial challenges with regard to the development and expansion of the University College; he, as a member of the Riddell Commission, made a notable contribution to its deliberations, including the preparation of the Draft University Ordinance, which came in the form of an appendix to the final report of the Riddell Commission.[2] Marrs spent nearly eighteen years in Ceylon and it was during this period that he did the ground work for the University College, which began as a semi-autonomous body, to get itself elevated to the status of a University. When he assumed duties as the Principal of the University College, the teaching staff consisted of a Professor of English, a Professor of Classics and Philosophy, a Professor of Modern History and Economics, a Professor of Physics, a Professor of Chemistry, Lecturer in English, a Lecturer in Botany, a Lecturer in Zoology, two Visiting Lecturer in mathematics, a Visiting Lecturer in Geography and a Visiting Lecturer in modern Languages.[3] It was left to Ivor Jennings, who came to Ceylon at the age of 38, to complete the process of switch-over from a College to a full-fledged autonomous

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[1] Ceylon University College Calendar for 1925-26,p.4.
[2] Vide Report of the University Commission. Sessional Paper IV,1929.
[3] Vide The Ceylon University College Calendar for 1937-38

university. He arrived in 1941, during the war which gave him extra responsibilities as well. His appointment to the post of Principal, which Prof. R. Marrs vacated, was seen by the colonial authorities, both here and abroad, as something essentia1 1y temporary'.[4] His principal task, as explained by K.M. De Silva, was to sit on the dissolution of that hybrid institution, the University College, and to establish in its place the University of Ceylon, the main features of which have been explained in detail in the Riddell Report of 1929. It was said that Jennings came to Ceylon thinking that he would be able to return to the United Kingdom in 1946 after establishing the University of Ceylon in a place close to Kandy, but he was compelled to stay in Ceylon till 1955, during which period Jennings, in addition to the task of building the first unitary residential University in Ceylon, got himself involved in many an activity, invited both praise and criticism from different strands of political and public opinion in the country. A section of the emerging political leadership became very critical of his additional roles; his role as the founder Vice Chancellor too came under attack from segments of the academic community for his very British and colonial attitudes and policy standpoints.

Before we venture into a discussion of his immense contribution to the development of University education in its formative years, it would not be inappropriate to refer to his scholarship and academic achievements. Since his autobiography, The Road to Peradeniya, published in 2005 with an introduction from Ian Goonetilleke, the former Librarian of the University of Ceylon (Peradeniya), deals with certain details relating to his early academic career, it is therefore not intended here to report the same.[5] Instead, it is proposed to focus on his excellent academic achievements as they made a major impact on the academic community and the English-speaking educated elite in Ceylon. It was in 1925-29 that Jennings began his teaching career at the University of Leeds; it was from Leeds that he shifted to the London School of Economics and Political Science, which, by this time was emerging as a great centre of learning where there was a unique kind of intellectual radicalism. It was the period of Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Graham Wallas, Harold Laski, Karl Popper and S.E. Finer at the London School of Economics; it was in 1926 that Harold Laski was appointed to the Chair of Political Science at the London School of Economics. At the inaugural lecture delivered at the

[4] De 3ilva, K.H. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit;p.12.
[5] Jennings,Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya. An Autobiography.Colombo,2005.

London School of Economics and Political Science on 22, October 1926, Harold Laski stated that 'the chair to which I have had the honour to be called is but the second of its kind in this country for it is only within recent years, that the right of political science to be studied as an independent intellectual discipline has been conceded'.[6] Jennings wrote in his autobiography that 'I was trying to get away from Leeds'.[7] With a salary increase, he decided to stay in Leeds, 'but no sooner had we settled down than I was offered a lectureship at the London School of Economics'[8] He stated that London was the obvious place for a constitutional lawyer. Jennings, enjoying his period at the LSE, wrote that the LSE was definitely the place for me as it had the only good Library of Public Law in England. Its Senior Common Room was a lively place where matters of moment were always under discussion. Morning Coffee, usually began by Laski and me, was an institution at which the day's news was dissected'.[9]

This was the nature of the intellectual atmosphere at the London School of Economics and Political Science, from which, at an early age, Jennings began his distinguished academic career as a writer on constitutional and political matters. Though he began his publishing career with a couple of publications on certain select aspects of British Local Government, his eminence as a great scholar was entirely due to his seminal publications on constitutional Law and the British system of Government; the Law and the Constitution appeared in 1933. Jennings, as Harold Laski, produced two classic studies on the British system of Government, and they were outstanding works on certain vital aspects of British Government. It was in 1936 that Cabinet Government, a classic piece of work on the theory and practice of Cabinet Government, was published and it, despite the works of Berridel-Keith and James P. Meckintosh, still remain the most authoritative work on the subject; it ran to 578 pages with fifteen chapters, and he began 'this classic study on Cabinet Government' stating that the Cabinet is the core of

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[6] Laski,Harold. The Danger of Being a Gentleman and other Essays. London,1940,p.32. See also Eastwood,Granville. Harold Laski.London,1977,p.25.

[7] Jennings,Ivor. op.cit;p.67

[8] Ibid;p.67.

[9] Jennigs,Ivor. op.citjp.67

the British Constitutional system'.[10] As Jennings himself mentioned, the companion volume on Parliament was published in 1938.

He, referring to this classic piece of study, Parliament, stated that it - reference was to Cabinet Government – 'was followed within two years by Parliament, which I personally consider a 'better book, though containing less original material'.[11] Parliament, running to 549 pages with fifteen chapters was, again, an outstanding work on the subject and it still remains a definitive work on the subject.[12] In the Law and the Constitution, which he published in 1933, Jennings attacked some of the postulates of Dicey; A.W. Bradley, in his study of Sir William Ivor Jennings, referred to 'Jennings's 'deadly' attacks on the wilder statements of Dicey'[13] Cabinet Government, as he explained, regarded the Constitution from the angle of the Government, whereas Parliament sought to analyse the parliamentary institutions of the United Kingdom as pieces of constitutional machinery. With regard to his ambitious project, a three volume study of Party Politics, Jennings wrote that 'by the end of 1940 a great deal of material had been collected for volumes dealing with electoral machinery and party but it was laid aside when I went to Ceylon. I am afraid that the publication of these volumes must await greater leisure than Ceylon allows me at present'.[14] The study of Party Politics, which he wanted to publish when he returned to ordinary academic life, was eventually published in the sixties. Though he trespassed the domain of the political scientist, he wanted to remain a constitutional lawyer. According to Bradley, Jennings' most fruitful period was the period at the LSE from 1929 to 1940; it was during this period that he displayed his intellectual prowess as an academic. While at the LSE, he produced two more important works, Constitutional Law of the British Empire (1938) and A Federation for Western Europe (1940). The book on the British Constitution (1941) was a text book which many generations of students from both Britain and abroad used in order to understand the swing of the pendulum in the art of British politics'.[15] The other important works

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[10] Jennings, Ivor. Cabinet Government. Cambridge,1951. The firs edition edition.of this work appeared in 1936, 28 editions have been published between 1936 and 1969.

[11] Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya, p.69

[12] Jennings, Ivor. Parliament Cambridge, 1951. This work has gone into 28 editions.

[13] Bradley, A.W. Sir William rvor Jennings, in Hodern Law Review, 67 (5) 2oo4,pp.716-733.

[14] See Preface to Jennigs,Ivor. Cabinet Government,1951,p.ix.

[15] Jennings, rvor. British Constitution.London,1941

included Queens Government (1954) The British Commonwealth of Nations (1948) Magna Carta and its place in the World (1965) Problems of the New Commonwealth (1958) and the Approach to Self Government (1956); there were number of studies on Ceylon, which will be discussed later.

Jennings, with this remarkable academic record behind him, came to Ceylon as a constitutional lawyer with a considerable standing in Britain; he was the author of several standard works on constitutional affairs. Therefore, Jennings came to Ceylon as the Principal of the University College of Ceylon on a five year contract. The University College, which came into existence in 1921, was intended to become the first unitary residential University of Ceylon, and it, above all, was to be shifted to the new Campus at Peradeniya, near Kandy, 72 miles away from Colombo. Jennings, compared to his predecessors in the post of Principal of the University College, was far above. He, as an untried administrator, was expected to provide leadership to the establishment of the first University in Ceylon and the creation of it in a different location, over which the Ceylonese educated intellectual community debated for more than two decades. The effect of this debate and the long drawn out discussion was still fresh in the minds of the elite, which included the emerging nationalist-oriented political leadership of the country. Jennings, as he expected in the very initial phase of his stewardship, was to face many a challenge which, as K.M. de Silva rightly stated, came in two areas where he was made subject to a rigorous test, and this involved largely the period of his career as the Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon.[16] It was just two years before his arrival in Ceylon in 1941 that the final decision had been taken on the site of the University of Ceylon; in other words, it was in 1938, after a long drawn out battle on the question of the site, that the decision was taken in 1938 to establish the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya. Jennings himself wrote in 1951 that 'the Battle of the sites, which began in 1926, thus ended in October, 1938 subject to a good deal of guerilla warfare which continues even in 1950. Strangely enough, the vote of the State Council which gave the necessary authority was passed in a silence and a unanimity so profound that some of the guerilla troops seem to think it never was passed. It was, however, passed as an

[16] De Silva,K.M. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit; p.12.

amendment to the Appropriation Ordinance on 20th September, 1938'.[17] Though a decision was taken to shift to a location near Kandy, the authorities struggled for a couple of years to decide on which location at Kandy; several locations had been suggested, for instance, Dumbara, Aruppola and Peradeniya. On this matter, as in the past, there was yet another debate which the official bureaucracy was involved, and on the basis of their influence, the State Council too got involved. It was a muddle and a 'Muddling through' exercise was necessary to resolve the situation, some features of which need to be discussed briefly.

A. Ratnayake, as a member of the sub-Committee appointed by the Executive Committee of Education, supported the Dumbara site; he was in the State Council as the representative of Dumbara. As stated earlier, the constituency considerations were given prominence; at one stage C.W.W. Kannangara wanted a location in the Kalutara district. As mentioned earlier, some members of the Colombo elite wanted the site at Bullers Road. The attempt to get the Bullers Road site was in the 'minds of a certain section of the political leadership till the last moment, and the Legislative Council. rejected a motion of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan who wanted the site at Bullers Road allocated; this motion was defeated with 26 voting against and 15 voting for it. It was M.T. Akbar who stood for the site at Aruppola, and numerous amendments were moved in the Legislative Council on this matter.[18] C.W.W. Kannangara moved an amendment in favour of a site at Kalutara, and it too was defeated by 29 votes to 9, and the motion in favour of Aruppola was carried by 23 votes to 18. The crucial site question, as noted by Jennings, brought a division within the ranks of the then political leadership, and it, above all, demonstrated the extent to which the educated elite was interested in the establishment of the University.[19] It was with the inauguration of the Dononghmore reforms that Prof. R. Marrs insisted of the need to bring about a settlement of the University question as a matter of urgency. In 1935, the sanitary conditions at Dumbara site came to be discussed. In the meantime, George E de Silva wanted the University established immediately in Kandy and this motion of his, probably

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[17] Jennipgs,Ivor. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Voll X, No.3,1951,p.249.
[18] Ibid, p.239.
[19] Ibid;p.239.

guided by immediate constituency considerations, was carried by 30 votes to 18.[20] All the ministers in the Board of Ministers except the Minister of Education were in favour of Kandy, and nearly all of the Tamil members voted for a location in Colombo. Therefore, the decision was taken to establish a unitary residential University at Aruppola and the health considerations of the site came to be examined. The question was whether this site at Aruppola was seriously affected by Malaria. It has been already decided to purchase the whole area of 340 acres, which included a part of the Aruppole village and Talwatta area. It was in 1939 that the Ministry of Health produced a report to the effect that the area was infested with malaria; in other words, malaria was endemic in the area, and the situation demanded permanent control measures. All steps were taken to acquire the site, and the Executive Committee, the Principal of the University College and the Minister of Education were ready to proceed with the acquisition when the question of the site was again raised by Dr. S.C. Paul and Dr. Andreas Nell, who submitted memorandum to the Board of Ministers asking for reconsideration of the site at Peradeniya; all advantages at Peradeniya were highlighted. The Principal, Prof. R.Marrs himself reported that Peradeniya had obvious advantages over Dumbara, and a full medical report on Aruppola was made available to the Executive Committee. C.W.W. Kannangara, who was determined to sabotage the proposal to change the location to Peradeniya insisted that the State Council had already approved the acquisition of the Dumbara site.

However, the Executive Committee of Education wanted to postpone a decision on the Dumbara site till the Peradeniya site was fully examined; the Peradeniya estate, where the University was finally located, was examined. J.L.Kotalawala, as the Minister of Public Works and Communications, strongly supported the site at Peradeniya; several important reasons were adduced in favour of the acquisition of this large piece of land at Peradeniya. The reasons were as follows: there

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[20] Those who supported it included the following: D.B. Jayatilaka, D.S.Senanayake, S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, G.C.S. Corea, W.A. de Silva, J.L. Kotalawala, E.W. Abeysundera, B.H. Aluvihare, C.Batuwantudawe, G.E. De Silva, Dr. A.P. de Zoysa, Francis de Zoysa, H.A. Gunasekera, F.H. Griffith, D.D. Gunasekera, R.S.S. Gunawardene, J.H.Illangatilleke, A.P. Jayasuriya, R.C. Kotalawala, K.R. Natesan Iyer, E.A. Nugawela, G.C. Rambukpoyha, A.Ratnayake, H.L.Ratwatta S.Samarakkody, Dudly Senanayake, R.C. Tennakoon, S.Vyathilingam and D.Wanigasekera. Those who apposed the resolution included C.W.W. Kannangara, H.W. Amarasuriya, S.O.Canagaratnam, Susasantha de Fonseka, H.R. Freeman, A.E.Gunasinha, D.P.H.Gunawardene T.B. Jayah, D.P.Jayasuriya, A.Mahadeva, S.Natesam, H.F. Parfitt, J.X. Pereira, Dr. N.M.Perera, A.E.de S.Rajapaksa, N.Sarravanamuttu, E.R. Tambimuttu and G.A. Wille.

was more land; acquisition would be easy because there was single ownership; no villagers would be displaced; expansion was possible; the site was open and healthy; water was available in the Hantana range and it was a more beautiful site. Jennings wrote that, in short, it was so admirable a site.[21] According to A. Ratnayake, it contained more flat land that is at Aruppola and a place of much scenic beauty. In the period 1926 to 1938, sixteen locations came under consideration.[22] This shows the nature of the battle of the sites, about which more details were discussed in the previous chapter. The above details were discussed primarily to highlight the importance of the Peradeniya site, and it was at this site that Jennings played his role as the architect of the first unitary and residential University of Ceylon. In addition to the 900 acres available at the Peradeniya Estate, Jennings thought that the University would eventually have more than 3000 acres without which a full fledged residential University could not be built.

This discussion is incomplete without a reference to the concept of the unitary residential University for which most of the champions of University education for Ceylon fought in the initial phase of the struggle to establish a University in Ceylon. Even in other parts of the world, the urban sites became unsuitable for even non-residential Universities. The ideas pertaining to the concept of the residential university, too began to change after the Report of the University Grants Committee in 1930. In fact, with the establishment of civic universities, the whole concept of the residential university was going through a process of transformation; what was central to the concept of a University was the pursuit of learning.[23] A University is not just an institution of higher education; it must be one of higher learning and actually be concerned with pushing back the frontiers of knowledge.[24] In other words, Universities are not simply educational institutions. It was on the basis of this realisation that advocates championed for a residential university for Ceylon. The old idea of a residential University was that it was an expensive luxury for wealthy students and this idea, as Jennings stated, was reflected in the battle of the sites.[25] For instance, the new Universities in Britain were

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[21] Jennings,Ivor. op.cit;p. 248.

[22] Seven locations were in Colombo; another seven locations were in Kandy, and other included Kesbewa and Kalutara.

[23] Hamlyn,D.W. The Concept of a University in Philosophy, Vol.7,1996, pp.205-219

[24] Ibid;p.214.

[25] Jennings,Ivor. op.cit;p. 235.

established to provide opportunities for the sons of the working or of the lower middle classes.[26] Jennings, though, saw some distinct advantages in the Civic Universities, which offered 'useful knowledge' to the poor students who traveled by train to their urban University. The view was that they, though obtained a good education, obtained it under difficult circumstances. In other words, the physical, mental and moral development of the students was not easily available in a non-residential University. The Colonial Office, since 1945, followed a policy, according to which they were favoured Universities which were autonomous, unitary and residential. Jennings was of the view that this change in policy was not properly discussed in Ceylon; the value of a non- residential University in Colombo was discussed at one stage, and Prof. C. Suntheralingam supported the idea of a non-residential University on the ground that it would help the poor students. Tamils preferred a non-residential University in Colombo.[27] The argument was that poor students from Northern and Eastern provinces could live with relations or club together in cheaper lodgings in Colombo. D.R. Wijewardene, adopting a position opposed to this standpoint, passionately believed in a residential University; he was of the opinion that the needs of Ceylon could not be met by a partially residential University. It was true that the University College attracted wealthier students from Colombo, Kandy, Galle and Jaffna. D.R.Wijewardene wanted a residential University, though he did not make a strong case for it.[28] Jennings, writing on this aspect, stated that the poor students need to be provided with opportunities; he stated that he is excellent material and a University can do much for him if it takes him out of his environment and put him into a Hall of Residence'.[29] Yet another argument against the adoption of the residential principle was the cost; a residential University is always expensive. Making a comparison between the site at Bullers Road and the site at Peradeniya, it was thought that a residential University at Peradeniya might not be more costly than a non-residential University in Bullers Road, Colombo. Yet another matter, which received consideration, was the number of students; till 1938 it was in the region of 500, and in 1938 it became 800. In 1940, it was 1,000 and Peradeniya was to accommodate 3,500. Jennings, on the basis of his own projection, wanted Peradeniya, as a residential University, to accommodate a maximum of 5,000

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[26] Green,V.H.H.op.cit;p.101.
[27] Hulugalla, H.A.J. The Life and Times of D.R. Wijewardene. Lake House, 1960, p.189.
[28] Ibid;p.129.
[29] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p. 250.

with which he wanted to preserve the elitist character of university education in Ceylon, and he, in the process, argued for a very restricted intake of students. All these positions, based on the Oxbridge formula, began to crumble in the subsequent decade.

Jennings's major argument, which he executed with great skill, was the creation of the University of Ceylon at the site at Peradeniya. Bradley wrote that Jennings, before his arrival in Ceylon, knew that the plan to shift to Peradeniya was a constructive one.[30] It is this assignment, which took more than ten years, which needs discussion in order to understand his outstanding contribution to the development of higher education in Ceylon. It became so personal to him that he did not hesitate to name his autobiography as The Road to Peradeniya; in addition, he produced yet another work titled The Kandy Road, which, rather indirectly, focused on the same subject, the establishment of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya.[31] The move from the London School of Economics to be head of a Government University College in Ceylon, as Bradley stated, 'was a remarkable career decision' for a brilliant scholar of the caliber of Jennings.[32] He did not have much skill and experience in managerial and administrative work when he was at the LSE. In his case, any doubts about his capacity for administration disappeared after he arrived in Ceylon, where he, as one whose services were much sought, got himself involved in many a task, and a few of those related to war time matters. Though Jennings lacked experience in administration, he was faced with two important issues; he was expected to deal with a set of politicians who, though elected State Councilors were very much constituency-oriented as members of the Executive Committees, seven of which formed the executive arm of the Government under the Donoughmore dispensation. He had to devise his own methods to handle the new coterie of politicians of this period. The other was the need to discover and adopt unique type of administrative practices in handling the tasks associated with the founding of a new university. There was no question that his outstanding intellectual achievements and his reputation as a scholar gave him the required strength to handle the matters, and they, equally, helped him in winning the support of the academic community, whose

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[30] Bradley, A.W. op.cit;p.728.

[31] Both these works -The Road to Peradeniya and The Kandy Road- were edited by Ian Goonetilleke, the former Librarian of the University of Peradeniya .

[32] Bradley,A.W. op.cit;p.727.

support was a vital requirement for the successful completion of the project of establishing a new University. There was support for his appointment within the academic community of the University College, but there were a couple of critics as well. One such critic was very vociferous and it was C. Suntheralingam, who later became a queer type of a politician in the country. He was Professor of Mathematics at the University College, and he as his subsequent political career depicted many a similar antics, resigned in protest at the failure to appoint a Ceylonese to the post of Vice Chancellor of the new University. Jennings, referring to this episode, wrote in The Road to Peradeniya, that 'I did not know until I arrived in the Island that there had been a Professor of mathematic named Suntheralingam, who had resigned because my appointment was 'an insult to Ceylon'.[33] Jennings, paying a tribute to Suntheralingam, stated that 'I know Mr. Suntheralingam well now. He is a remarkable young man of great ability who will do great things when and if, he gives up the impetuousness of youth.'[34] The principle on which Suntherelingam tendered his resignation was that a Ceylonese should be preferred to non-Ceylonese; the process of Ceylonisation, which began a few decades ago had been virtually completed. They wanted the same principle extended to the academic community and Jennings, on a number of occasions, resisted the appointment of Ceylonese, and the most publicised example was the post of Lecturer in Economics in the Department of Economics, over which there was much debate and dissatisfaction.

As mentioned earlier, the final decision on the location of the University of Ceylon had been taken; the Dumbara site, chosen earlier, had been abandoned in favour of Peradeniya. Jennings was well aware of the history of issues, including the battle of the sites; therefore, he knew that his main task was to create a University in the new site which had been approved unanimously by the State Council. Jennings was a strong advocate of autonomy, and his first task, therefore, was to see that impediments to the achievement of full autonomy are removed before he sets himself to the task of establishing the University. Eric Ashby wrote that both academic freedom and university autonomy 'are concepts which are essential to a University if it is to fulfill its

[33] Jennings,Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya. An Autobiography. Colombo,2005,p.98.
[34] Ibid;p.91.

function in society'.[35] Accordingly, to be autonomous, a University must be free to select its students and its staff and to determine the conditions under which they remain in the University. In other words, an autonomous University must be free to set its own standards and to decide to whom to award degrees, and must be free to design its curriculum. The most important one was the belief that Parliament should not inspect the accounts of the Universities. Such characteristics were not represented in the University College, which was run as a Government apartment under colonial oureaucracy. Jennings, therefore, had to start his work with the conviction that the first task was to get the authorities to recognise the concept of university autonomy. Before venturing into the task of establishing a new University, Jennings had to struggle to obliterate the impact of the Department -oriented University College which, for more than two decades, functioned as a non-autonomous institution of higher learning. Jennings, expressing his unhappiness over this experience of the University College, wrote that 'to one bred in the English University tradition, where political control of university policy was one of the deadly sins, the arrangement (control of the university College by the Executive Committee of Education) seemed not merely odd but vicious'.[36] The main contradiction was that the proposed University of Ceylon was to be autonomous whereas its ancestral institution, the University College, was non-residential. In other words, the marked differences between the two institutions, which represented a major contradiction in terms of its institutional character, had to be resolved and this, in fact, was the initial challenge faced by Jennings who, as an experienced academic, knew that academic freedom had developed in civilised countries as a specially protected corner of intellectual freedom.[37]

In setting his own objectives and priorities of his unique assignment in Ceylon, Jennings thought that his first step was to secure autonomy, without which he could not proceed because the traditions of the colonial bureaucracy and the attitudes of the members of the Executive Committee of Education were a source of constant interference. The University Commission, which more or less prepared the Draft Bill,

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[35] Ashby, Eric. Universities: British, Indian, African. A Study in the Ecology of Higher Education. London, 1966, p.290.
[36] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p. 86.
[37] Ashby, Eric op.cit;p. 290.

intended the establishment of an autonomous institution and Jennings, therefore, had to fight tooth and nail to prevent any deviation with which the Executive Committee of Education was to gain more control. This, in his point of view, was an attempt to stifle the concept of autonomy; he knew that without a large degree of autonomy he would not succeed with the politicians in Ceylon, who on the basis of the system created under Donoughmore reforms, were attuned to over-interference in matters of public policy. Jennings, therefore, prepared a memorandum on University autonomy, and it was to be circulated among the concerned, before it was leaked to the press. It needs to be mentioned that he, through the employment of various tactics, was able to stall all the attempts 'designed to impose serious limitations on the University's autonomy'.[38] Jenning's initial experience in respect of the need to restore autonomy, later, influenced the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the colonies, which, in its recommendations, argued against the imposition of political or official control over Universities, Colleges or autonomous bodies.[39] The Asquith commission appointed in 1943, considered university education to be one of the most important questions in connection with the post-war reconstruction and development of colonial territories, and Jennings thought that it was his report to the Education Advisor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies which led to the appointment of the Asquith Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies.[40] It was this Commission which saw the urgent and fundamental need to enlarge the facilities for higher education. The Commission, which was chaired by Sir Cyril Asquith, consisted of fifteen persons, among whom were A.M. Carr-Saunders, Miss Margery Perham, and Robert Marrs, who was in Ceylon as the Principal of the University College. The membership of this Commission was chosen on the basis of their standing and influence among the British academics.[41] It was this report which changed the character of the University Colleges in the Colonies and it, therefore, came to Jennings's assistance in devising a policy for the University of Ceylon. It was after the recommendations of the Asquith Committee that an inter-university Council for higher education in the Colonies was set up with representation from all British and Colonial Universities, and this was a body independent of the Colonial Office. Asquith

[38] De dlva, K.H. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit;p. 15.
[39] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p.95.
[40] Ibidjp.95.
[41] Ashby,Eric. op.cit;p.428.

Report insisted that Colonial Universities should be completely residential, and it was emphasised on the ground that a University, which has as its prime function education for leadership has an easier task if it is a residential University. It stressed broad general education instead of exclusive professional training. The other was that staff of the highest quality must be attracted to the Colonial universities. Throughout the Asquith report, it emphasised on the University as a seat of learning and research. Unless the Colonial University emphasised the importance of research, they would fail to recruit quality academic staff.

These ideas which emanated from the Asquith Committee strengthened the arm of Jennings who was able to plan and advocate the changes on the basis of those directions in respect of the Colonial University, about which he had his own ideas.[42] Therefore, what he wrote on the concept of the Colonial University in 1946 demonstrated that he owed something to the Asquith Commission; he, in an attempt to lay down the main objectives, stated that 'firstly, a University of Ceylon should be created. Secondly, it should be residential and concentrate heavily on providing a broad general education through all available instruments. Thirdly, it should so orientate its courses as to compel the students to relate his academic knowledge to his practical experience and for this purpose should engage in the research necessary to enable books having a Ceylon orientation to be produced. Fourthly, it should sweep away London matriculation as its entrance qualification. Fifthly, it should incorporate Faculties having a professional and technical bias – especially medicine, Agriculture and Engineering - so as to have a substantial body of students in direct contact with reality. It also should have a Department for the training of teachers'.[43] This was a large and ambitious programme, for which all the decisions taken before 1942 were taken in respect of a residential university were on the correct lines, and the execution of this ambitious programme fell on the shoulders of Jennings who, in a nutshell, explained the main characteristics of the Colonial University. The Colonial University must cover a wide range of subjects, with a balance between academic and professional subjects. It must be residential. In arranging the syllabi, attention where ever possible must be paid to local conditions. The importance of research was stressed. The University should be autonomous in the same

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[42] Jennings, Ivor. Universities in the Colonies, Political quarterly, Vol.17,1946, pp.228-244.
[43] Ibid;p.236 44 Ibid;p.240.

way as a University in the United Kingdom. Academic policy must be in the hands of the Senate, and the staff should have adequate representation in the Council.[44] Jennings was very keen to avoid the mistakes which Ceylon committed during the period of the university College; he, in other words, wanted to avoid a repetition of the controversies of the past, which, in his view, delayed the establishment of the University.

It became the sole responsibility of Jennings to create a University on the lines laid down by the Riddell Commission, and the other important task was to shift the university to Peradeniya; though the decision was taken in 1938, it had still not been shifted. Therefore, it was left to Jennings to implement the proposal which, in fact, became the most important assignment of his career, and he was so closely attached to it that he titled his autobiography The Road to Peradeniya. Therefore, it is proposed here to examine in detail the nature of Jennings's enterprise and the manner in which he singularly applied to this great task, with which the Campus at Peradeniya came into being. The transfer to Peradeniya could not be effected due to certain events which were beyond the control of the authorities; war time problems created numerous difficulties. During the war, Jennings was entrusted with additional responsibilities; he was the Chairman of the War Publicity Committee, and later the position of the Deputy Civil Defense Commissioner. It was during this period that he came in close contact with Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and D.S. Senanayake, and it was this triumvirate which acted for nearly five years to achieve independence.[45] The war_time_situation kept him away from the main task of transferring the University to Peradeniya. The original scheme at Peradeniya envisaged a University of 1000 students and a University park of 363 acres. With the increase of students, this scheme had to be modified again to provide accommodation to nearly 4000 students within an area of 2400 acres. Jennings was of the view that a residential University at Peradeniya should not allow the student population to exceed 5000. In other words, he did not envisage an expansion as a result of the Free Education Scheme; he deliberately avoided this aspect because he was an advocate of the elitist Oxbridge character, Though the University project faced problems pertaining to the

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[44] Idib;p.240.

[45] Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya, p.128.

establishment of the University at the site in Kandy, the preparation for the construction of buildings began with the appointment of two Consultant Architects. Professor Sir Patrick Abercrombie and Clifford Holliday were invited to formulate a site plan in consultation with Prof. S.A. Pakeman, the acting Principal of the University College. This was just a year before Jennings was appointed. The site plan was accepted by the Executive Committee of Public works and Communications. It was during this period that the first stage of University development at Peradeniya was discussed and finalised, and the plans for the buildings were based on the recommendations of the Riddell Commission The initial building programme was to cover 320 acres and it was entrusted to the Department of Public Works. Jennings was able to discuss matters with the Consultant Architect, Sir Patrick Abercrombie, and made certain modifications to the proposed Convocation House, the Library and the Lecture Theatres. Jennings was able to do all this because he read the published reports of the University Commission in England; he, in fact, stated that most of its proposals were admirable.

Jennings faced numerous problems in implementing the plan to transfer the University to the chosen site at Peradeniya. It was no secret that in addition to the issues of policy, the controversy over various sites naturally delayed the implementation of the project. The transfer to Peradeniya demanded the construction of buildings and as Jennings often mentioned, this involved the participation of a number of Executive Committees in the State Council. Jennings, referring to the Donoughmore system of government, stated that 'this complicated the problem, for the very odd system invented by the Donoughmore Commission placed the responsibility for university education in a Committee of seven members who, so far as can be judged, rarely agreed'[46] The complication was due to the division of responsibility among different Executive Committees; for instance, though the subject of University education came within the purview of the Executive Committee of Education, the responsibility of planning and erecting a University rested with the "Executive Committee of Public Works and Communications, which rarely agreed with the Executive Committee of Education. The acquisition of land for the University was with the Executive Committee of Local Administration while the responsibility for Medical education was vested in the

[46] Jennings, Ivor. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. LX, No.3,1951, p.239.

Executive Committee of Health. In addition, no money could be obtained without the sanction of the Board of Ministers'.[47] Jennings, making a reference to the manner in which policies were formulated under the Donoughmore Constitution, stated that in the Executive Committees, policy was decided by casual majorities, often without much relevance to the expert knowledge and experience available in the public service.[48] This was primarily due to the fact that the members of the State council were independent; the kind of procedure was largely true of the Committee for Education. It was because of this that the university project got delayed; Jennings saw two major difficulties. The transfer of the University College to Peradeniya was a separate task while the conversion of a non-residential institution into a residential one was yet another separate task. In his view, both these changes could not be effected simultaneously. There was the need to change the teaching environment from London syllabi to Ceylon syllabi. In other words, the creation of the University of Ceylon and the transfer to Peradeniya were essentially two separate tasks, and Jennings, rather realistically, saw the necessity to provide an interval of four years between these two major changes in order that the academic changes are completed before the physical transfer to Peradeniya. In other words, his position was that if the University is created in 1942, the transfer to Peradeniya would be effected in 1946. It took sometime to get the full university organisation in to place, specially the regulations relating to examinations. It was only in 1946 that the process was completed.

Meanwhile, the University Park became the temporary camp of the South East Asian Command, and the delay in the building programme, therefore, was inevitable. Jennings knew that even a part of it could not be shifted to Peradeniya before 1948. The transfer to Peradeniya was postponed from 1948 to 1950 and then to 1952 due to delays in the building programme. In 1951, only three Halls of Residence - Arunachalam, Jayatilaka and Marrs were completed. The Tenth Annual Report of the Council, 1951, in fact, stated that "though considerable progress was made in 1951, the work has not proceeded as fast as had been hoped, and nearly all the buildings were

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[47] Weerawardene, I.D.S. op.cit;p.p. 78-103

[48] Jerinings,Ivor. The Ceylon General Election of 1947,in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.VI,No.3, 1948, p.134

behind schedule'.[49] The main reason attributed to this undue delay was the fact that certain building materials had to be imported. Yet another reason was that they adopted a system whereby building is let out in comparatively small contracts. Therefore, a decision was taken in 1948 to give the whole scheme to a single contractor but the Government, though rejected this suggestion, agreed to let the major works given to selected contractors. By 1952, considerable progress had been made with regard to the construction of buildings; in 1949, 27 students reading Agriculture moved into residence at Arunachalam, and the Faculty of Arts and Oriental Studies was transferred in 1952. On 6th October, 1952, 820 students of the Faculty of Arts and Oriental Studies came into residence at Peradeniya; the Faculty of Agriculture came into existence in 1953, and now three Faculties at Peradeniya existed with 931 students. Three faculties functioned in Colombo. The Students were not equally divided between Peradeniya and Colombo; of the 931 students at Peradeniya, 360 were women whereas Colombo had a total 1461,of whom 248 were women. The Report of the Council (1953) stated that Peradeniya had 32 percent of men and 60 percent of women, and this was because of the availability of residential facilities at Peradeniya.[50] The official opening of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya was held on 20th April, 1954 during a visit of the Queen Elizabeth 11. In declaring open the University Building, the Duke of Edinburgh said that 'it is not easy to open a University because once established it is always open. However, like the shopkeepers of London during the bombing, I can declare this place to be 'more open than usual'.[51] This historic function was performed from the balcony of the Senate building, and nearly 2000 guests were present, and it included 700 students.

It was in 1954 that several important events took place with regard to the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya. Sir Ivor Jennings was elected Master of Trinity Hall in June, 1954, which, in fact, meant that his career in Ceylon came to an end. He was appointed Principal of the University College in October, 1940, and it was in June, 1942 that he was appointed the first Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon. In 1942, he was appointed for a term of five years and in June, 1952 for a further term of five years. He resigned from the post of Vice Chancellor on January 17, 1955, and this,

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[49] Tenth Annual Report if the Council, 1951, p.34
[50] Twelfth Annual Report of the Council,1953,p.1.
[51] Thirteenth Annual Report of the Council, 1954, p.l.

therefore, meant that Jennings spent more than 15 years in Ceylon. The Thirteenth Report of the University Council (1954), paying a glowing tribute to Jennings, mentioned the contribution which he made for the development of higher education in Ceylon. Jennings, as the Principal of the University College, 'assisted the Government in bringing to fruition the plans which had long been prepared for this development in the history of higher education in the country'.[52] It further stated that 'the step was taken at a time when the international situation brought so many preoccupations to the Government made the achievement more notable and Sir Ivor's high abilities and unremitting zeal contributed much to the achievement'.[53] As described earlier, Jennings, as the first Vice Chancellor, faced the formidable and unenviable task of welding two Colleges of University rank which had been virtually Government Departments into an autonomous entity and of infusing into the University the traditions of research and learning.[54] As a committed defender of academic freedom, he had to fearlessly oppose all attempts to interfere with the freedom of the University - an ever recurring factor in the early years. This kind of stand with regard to both academic freedom and autonomy made him the target of criticism and vilification both by academics and politicians. It was with regard to the task of establishing the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya that Jennings displayed extraordinary zeal and he, despite postponements, delays, administrative red tape, and difficulties in construction, was able to transfer the University of Ceylon to Peradeniya in October, 1952. The Report of the Council, therefore, mentioned that 'with untiring energy he completed the plan for the transfer and supervised the transfer himself. This was a bold step but he made it. The difficulties consequent upon this transfer were immeasurable but with characteristic enthusiasm and hard work he overcame these difficulties and the machinery for the smooth and efficient running of a residential University was established'.[55] This was his singular achievement. K.M. de Silva, writing on Jennings, stated that 'Jennings period of office as Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon 1942-1955, was in every way the heyday of this institution. Thanks to Jennings, the concept of an autonomous University found wide acceptance'.[56] It was under his astute leadership that the University of Ceylon was established at Peradeniya; but the

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[52] Idib;p.3
[53] Ibid;p.3.
[54] Ibid;p.3.
[55] Ibid; .p .3.
[56] De Silva,K.H. & Pieris,C.H. op.cit;p.21.

completion of the entire project took more than a decade. It became impossible to complete the project during his period of office as the Vice Chancellor but the fact remains that it was Jennings who successfully executed the decisively important functions during the early stages of the transfer to Peradeniya.

Jennings autobiography, The Road to Peradeniya, and The Kandy Road, bear testimony to the fact that Jennings was idealistically attached to the location of the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya. He, undoubtedly, was interested in establishing an ideal University which Ceylon's independent status required and the intelligence and good honour of her people deserve.[57] He was so attached to the location that he wrote in his autobiography that 'there is not the slightest doubt that if the University is worthy of its location it will be one of the finest small Universities in the world. I should feel sure of my own judgment in the matter even if the whole world denied it. In fact, though those with knowledge of Universities who inspect the scheme invariably confirm my judgment'.[58] Jennings, in order to prove his point, quoted a Swiss Professor who visited Peradeniya; what he said of the University at Peradeniya has been mentioned with some pride. The following is the description of the Professor, which Jennings included in his autobiography. 'I feel urged to write you a few words of congratulation and appreciation after having seen the new University of Ceylon under construction. The site of this new highest school of your country as well as its architectural shape-at large and in details – aroused my enthusiasm and almost envy. There is nothing like it in continental Europe. May this great institution which was so generously planned by your people be the heart and brain of the free nation of Ceylon and prove a great blessing to your country'.[59] Jennings was very conscious of his task in developing a tradition in the University, so as to make it a 'fraternity of masters and Scholars engaged in the production, advancement and dissemination of knowledge.'[60] He knew that three components of the traditional corporation, Chancellors, Masters and scholars, are a part of a tradition, and he, therefore, expected 'the components of the modern University to work for the preservation, advancement and dissemination of

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[57] Jenning, Iver. The Road to Peradeniya, p.156.
[58] Idid; pp 183-184
[59] Idib.
[60] Ashby, Eric. Masters and Scholars. Oxford, 1970, p.4

knowledge'.[61] Therefore, in addition to his involvement with the establishment of the institution, he devoted most of his time and energy to implant traditions so that the University can flower into a great centre of learning in the Commonwealth. As Jennings stated, the opinion in England was that best education is given in a residential University in an attractive environment.[62] Jennings, though held the prestigious post of Vice Chancellor, was much more than a mere administrator of an academic institution. His publication, The Kandy Road provides ample testimony to this assessment.

The Kandy Road, which displays his abiding affection for the people and the country in which he spent more than fifteen years as an architect of many a thing, was presented to the University Library just before resigning his post in January, 1955. The text, which Ian Goonetilleke edited, is a reflection of the extraordinary zeal he expended in accomplishing the historic task of establishing the University of Ceylon in 1942, and it, ten years later, was shifted to 'one of the most beautiful environments in the world'.[63] Jennings, as mentioned earlier on a number of occasions, arrived in Ceylon in 1941, and by this time, most of the ground work for the relocation of the University at Peradeniya had been done. With a view to establishing a great centre of learning in a very scenic environment, Jennings had to travel up and down the Kandy Road for more than eleven years, personally supervising the construction work at the University premises at Peradeniya. It was during these numerous trips up and down the Colombo - Kandy Road that Jennings, as a very perceptive intellectual, made use of the occasion to study the socio-economic and historical importance of this major highway. According to Ian Goonetilleke, the bulk of the material in The Kandy Road had been compiled before he took residence in Peradeniya in late 1952.[64] In his preface Jennings wrote that 'those visitors who call upon me, and they are fortunately many, expect me to speak for it; and since many of them want to drive up the Kandy Road, I have for ten years delivered lectures on the people and things that can be seen by the wayside'.[65] The Kandy Road, contained six chapters, which dealt with different aspects of this historical road, which, in fact, from colonial times, was the main link between Colombo and Kandy. In fact,

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[61] Idib.
[62] Jenning, Ivor. op.cit;p.198
[63] Ibid.
[64] Jennings,Ivor. The Kandy Road. Peradeniya,1993,p.xix.
[65] Jennings,Ivor. op.cit;p. 1.

Jennings himself, mentioned that 'the opening of the Kandy Road thus broke down the isolation of the Kandyan Kingdom'.[66] In chapter IV, Jennings, with the unusual curiosity which an intellectual displays in a setting like this, saw, some of the key milestones which he explained with a peep into history. They were important landmarks about which there was published data, and he, in the course of highlighting the importance of the locations, gave his own interpretation of the historical facts. In the section covering a part of Sabaragamuwa, he did not refer to all the important locations; he may have seen the Bell Report on the Kegalla district which refers to locations of historical importance along the Kandy Road. Though it was sketchy in terms of its details and description, it provided a guide for people who wanted to travel along the Kandy Road. Above all, it amply demonstrated his attachment to the location where the University was to be established.

Cardinal Newman, writing in his celebrated work The Idea of a University, stated that 'a University may be considered with reference either to its students or to its studies; and the principle that all knowledge is equally important when we direct our attention to its students'[67] Jennings, in planning the University and its other organisations, took into consideration that students were central to the whole process of learning which needs elaboration The word 'scholar' has changed its meaning since medieval times, but its present meaning certainly includes those students whom we now call undergraduates. When a freshman enters a University, he becomes "civil universitatis' a citizen of the University.[68] It was once said that 'the aim of the Oxford don, as Mark Patterson put it, to produce 'not a book but a man'.[69] The curriculum was used deliberately to fashion a man in a certain tradition, to tailor him to a certain style of intellectual life, even to persuade him to adopt a certain pattern of conformity. All admirable aims for a stable society, and all in accord with a platonic theory of education; but which aims could not be achieved unless the scholars submitted themselves to a discipline which covered their conduct outside the class room as well as inside it'.[70] In all Universities, specially at Cambridge and Oxford, and in many a Continental University,

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[66] Ibid;p.20.
[67] Newman,Cardinal. The Idea of a University New York,1852,p.127.
[68] Ashby, Eric. Op.cit;p.2.
[69] Idib;p.13.
[70] Idib.

Rules and Regulations were introduced to require a student to behave modestly and becomingly, and rules forbid them to gamble, having dealings with money lenders, give parties exceeding fifteen people without permission. The experience was that these edicts were not faithfully observed but they had an effect on general student discipline. Jennings, understanding the culture of the country and knowing well the social background of the students introduced similar Rules and Regulations to maintain discipline within the Campus.

Before we go into a discussion of those measures introduced for the purpose of maintaining discipline, it would not be irrelevant to examine his policy on admissions. From the very inception of the University of Ceylon, it was to function on a very restricted intake of students; for that matter the original Peradeniya scheme was planned for 1000 students, but once the University was established this number would increase very substantially; Malalasekera wrote that 'during Jennings's administration, the University's admission policy was conservative if not actually restrictive'.[71] It, in fact, was guided by the need to preserve the elitist character of the University which, even during the College days, evolved as an elitist institution, and the other reason was the familiar colonial argument that educational needs should not go beyond the employment needs of the country. The country was aware of the fact that the University College produced just over 500 graduates within a period of 21 years, and the output of licentiates from the Ceylon Medical College was between 15 and 25 per annum.[72] This showed the nature of the output of the two institutions and this, in the eyes of the critics of the period, was grossly inadequate. The University authorities, probably at the behest of Jennings who steadfastly clinged to the exclusive elitist character of the University, looked at the increase of the number of students from a colonial point of view. The Report of the University Council for 1949 stated that 'the question is not only one of cost but also of the number of graduates required for employment. Since his education is at the expense of the State, however, and the expenditure on education generally is now very heavy, it would be difficult to justify the provisions of university education beyond the employment needs of the country'.[73] On the basis of this position, the Senate of the

[71] Malalasekera, G.P. op.cit;p.879.
[72] Report of the Council of the University of Ceylon,1948, p.l.
[73] Eight Report of the Council of the University of Ceylon,1949,p.6.

University of Ceylon adopted the view that it would probably not be possible to admit all those who reached prescribed standard'.[74] This question came up again in 1954 and the need for a restricted intake was again emphasised; the Report of the Council, reiterating the earlier position adopted in 1949, stated that for the past ten years, the entry into the University has been stabilised around about 500, partly due to the restricted accommodation and partly due to a desire to relate the output of graduates to the demand for graduate employment.[75] While making this kind of comment, the Report also stated that 'no restrictions were placed on entry and every candidate who reached the minimum standard prescribed for admission was admitted'.[76] The need to relate university education to the availability of employment opportunities was a part of a deliberate policy, and this was certainly a conservative approach to the problem. But, as Jayasuriya mentioned, this kind of policy was guided by the need to produce 'well rounded gentlemen scholars' for the emerging administrative elite in the country.[77] In other words, the University of Ceylon, as all Universities in the Colonies, was expected to train the administrative elite the country required and admission to this elite was necessarily restricted. Therefore, the restricted admission policy for the University had its integral relationship to the need to produce limited administrative elite. This, in fact, was the basis of the colonial system of education. Though a restrictive admission policy had followed in the initial period of the University of Ceylon, it, as an institution of learning, was built on a solid foundation, and it, therefore, came to be consolidated as an institution which maintained high academic standards. Through its teachers, students, research and traditions, the University of Ceylon was able to achieve an enviable reputation among the Universities in the Commonwealth.

Jennings saw the student community as the bulwark of the University, and the Vice Chancellor, through lectures and publications, strived hard to build traditions and norms of behavior among the undergraduate community. The paternalistic tradition in British Universities, under which there was the dominance of the Masters over scholars, influenced Jennings to introduce rules and regulations to maintain

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[74] Ibid.
[75] Report of the Council of the University of Ceylon,1954,p.20
[76] Ibid;p.20.
[77] Jayasuriya, D.L.op.cit;p.117.

discipline among the undergraduates. But, at the same time, he did not totally deviate from the Humboldt formula, according to which the relationship between the teacher and student had undergone a change. 'The former does not exist for the sake of the latter. They are both at the University for the sake of science and Scholarship'.[78] Jennings, in addition to his numerous responsibilities as the Vice Chancellor, found time to lecture in the Departments of Economics and Law; he had an abiding interest in the welfare of the student, and it was this commitment which impelled him to produce the Student Guide to University Education in Ceylon' in 1948. This publication, which came in the form of a Handbook for Students, contained fifteen chapters with two Appendices, and the publication itself ran into 109 pages. Though this publication was not reprinted, it, according to Ian Goonetilleke, 'remains an undergraduate vade mecum of some historical distinction'.[79]

Before we subject this publication of Jennings to a detailed analysis, it would be relevant to examine some of his ideas which he expressed at the inaugural address to medical students on July 21, 1942.[80] He, in the course of his long address, stated that 'medical students, because of their greater maturity of outlook, ought to be a great help in setting the tone of University life'.[81] It was his view that Medical students gave stability to an undergraduate body; the older medical students are normally far more mature than the general run of the undergraduates. Jennings, speaking further, said that 'nobody even objects to certain amount of foolishness from undergraduates. They have to pass through that stage just as they have to pass through the stages of teething. I am always amazed at the rapidity with which the transformation takes place even though I know that it is one of the tasks of the University to effect that transformation'.[82] According to Jennings, this transformation was effected mainly through the senior undergraduates. Thirty years back, the great majority of under graduates were carefree sons of wealthy parents, and they could fool around for years without passing on examination. On the other hand, their careers were ensured and it made no difference to them whether they did any reading or not. During the last twenty years a change had

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[78] Ashby,3ric. op.cit,;p.17.
[79] See Introduction to The Kandy Road, p.xvi.
[80] Vide Ceylon Daily News,22 July,1942.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

occurred. Referring to the rag, Jennings said that rag occurred in England when occasionally a really witty student brought off a clever piece of buffoonery. In his view, more often the rag was an affair organised with the assistance of the Police to raise funds for charity. The change, he stated, was due to a change in the character of the undergraduates. Jennings, in fact, stated that 'they were no longer people intent on having a good time. Most of them had to fashion their own careers and they would neither destroy those careers by fool hardy acts nor allow other students to do so'.[83] Jennings expected the Medical students to mix with other students; he, therefore, stated that 'possibility of contribution depended upon one's ability to mix with the students of all Faculties'.[84] Jennings, who had spent four years at the University of Leeds, gave an example from Leeds where 'the Medical students regarded themselves as ordinary members of the University in spite of the fact that the Medical School was in close proximity to the hospital and the rest of the University'.[85]

It was at this function that Jennings referred to certain difficulties of the transition stage of the University which, according to his own estimates, may not reach its full status till 1960. Yet another question which he asked was why admission to the Medical profession should be limited to the sons and daughters of wealthy men. In November, 1942, certain incidents among students compelled the Vice Chancellor to request for the collaboration of the members of the University to 'secure a fitting standard of behavior among the University's undergraduates'.[86] The Board of Residence and Discipline of the University (BRD) considered certain incidents, which in its view, were calculated to affect adversely the reputation of the University, and decided that steps should be taken to put a stop to such behavior on the part of the students. The Board of Residence and Discipline, which was in charge of the maintenance of discipline within the University, stated that all undesirable practices of this nature should be stopped by the pressure of the public opinion, and that the academic staff of the University should use their influence on the students who injure the reputation of the University. Jennings took the view that the undergraduates 'could do far more to create a University spirit by

[83] Ceylon Daily News of 22 July,1942.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

pressure of opinion than the Board could do by the exercise of its disciplinary powers'.[87] The unseemly behavior on the part of the undergraduates was the practice of shouting, hooting and whistling at meetings held in the University premises and the use of obscene language in the presence of women. Jennings, with a view to maintaining discipline among the undergraduates, stated that he would have no hesitation in requesting any undergraduate who makes a nuisance of himself to leave the University. He treated the students as adults and new students were addressed as ladies and gentleman, to give them the impression that they were adults. Though it was not a formality, it was deliberately used to indicate to the student that they were regarded as ladies and gentlemen.[88] In other words, the University authorities expected them to behave as such.

The Students Guide, though dealt with most of the aspects of university education affecting the students, was a comprehensive compendium of information which, if rightly utilised, would have helped the freshman to understand the University as an institution of higher learning. The Students Guide, in addition to the many admonitions mentioned in it, contained instructions as to how a student should make use of the University, specially during undergraduate days. It dealt with all the important aspects of university education, including all the characteristics of the University. It, rather, authentically, referred to all the rules and regulations. The Appendix 11 of this publication dealt with Residence and Discipline, under which the issue of breach of discipline or conduct prejudicial to the good name of the University became punishable, and five such punishments were listed: (a.) a fine (b) suspension for a definite or indefinite period (c) exclusion from privileges (d) withdrawal from any university examination and (e) dismissal from the University.[89] There were a number of strict regulations, which are today blatantly violated by the students. No club or society could be formed among students without the prior permission of the University; no subscription could be collected without the permission of the University. No newspaper or handbills could be sold or distributed in the premises of the University except with the permission of the Vice Chancellor, and no communication may be made to the Press, on

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[87] Jennings, Ivor. Student' Guide to University Education in Ceylon. University Press, Colombo, 1948,p.16

[88] Idib; p.107.

[89] Ibid;p.107

any matter affecting the University, without the consent of the Vice Chancellor. Before the publication of the Students Guide by Jennings, such information was made available to students through 'General Information to Students' and this was done during the period of the University College as well.[90] In 1926, there were 15 such regulations, and there was another set of regulations governing Scholarships. From the inception of the University College in 1921, Students Unions were allowed.

Jennings made his own interpretation of student discipline. According to him, discipline at the University was quite different from discipline of a school, because it was almost entirely self-discipline. The powers, relating to discipline, are used only when necessary, but the University is compelled to use them when acts prejudicial to the good name of the University are committed by the undergraduates. Jennings adopted the view that discipline of the University is a part of the education which the University gives; it is designed to produce responsible citizens. Jennings wrote that 'most of the students come straight from school, where they have been treated as boys and girls. It is our task to help them convert themselves into men and women'.[91] Jennings, in his own way and also based on his own experience, spelled out the purpose of university education; he was aware that university education in Ceylon came to be interpreted in various ways, and he, therefore, wanted to make his own interpretation and assessment in the context of the unique ciramstances of the country. In his view, the fundamental task of University education is to 'produce educated men and women in the fullest sense of the phrase men and women who are capable of fulfilling any function in the world that may fall to their lot, citizens of high intelligence, complete moral integrity, and possessing energy, initiative, judgment, tact and qualities of leadership'.[92] The sixth Annual Report of the Council (1947) wrote that 'the general behavior of the students during the year has been excellent. There was some apprehension lest the unusual event of a general election should produce some excitement among those who are unable to temper their enthusiasm. Possibly the fact that the election was spread out over four weeks, of which 17 days were during the vacation, helped to lower the temperature'.[93]

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[90] Ceylon University College Calender, 1925-1926, p.10

[91] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit; p.15.

[92] Ibid;p. 8.

[93] The Sixth Report of the University Council, p.17.

He, anticipating some incidents, warned the undergraduates that 'complete liberty given by the University imposed on the students an obligation not to involve university in any controversies they chose to raise'.[94] What an undergraduate is expected to do too was addressed; in focusing on this aspect, Jennings said that 'a good student has to read around his subject in order to master it, to acquire some knowledge of cognate fields, and indeed to spread his interests very wide'. While recommending the formation of all types of organisation and societies, the need to maintain discipline too was stressed. He encouraged student activities through different societies and wanted the students not to get involved in activities which damage the good name of the University. Jennings, supporting his contention, wrote in the Students Guide that 'the superiority of the residential university arises from the more numerous opportunities for conversation and for common action in societies and games. Naturally this element becomes more important at the higher levels of education, but it is important at all levels'.[95] It was on the basis of this policy that he prepared the Students Guide in 1948; which, in fact, laid the basis for good behavior among the students. In the year 1949, there were more sports activities among the students.[96] Though a report mentioned that the work of the Board of Residence and Discipline has been light, there were aspects of student behavior which could be improved. This report mentioned the existence of 'ragging' freshmen, and that there were too many complaints of bad behavior.[97]

By this time, the University had 27 societies, the activities of which at the beginning of the academic year were vast, In 1950, this number rose to 29 with the creation of an Engineering Students Union and the Biological Society.[98] The Union Society which was founded in 1921 when the University College was functioning, remained very active and it was in competition with the very active Political Society, which was the largest voluntary society in the University with a membership of 800 members, of whom one quarter were women.[99] There were other societies associated with different disciplines, such as the Sinhalese society, Tamil Society and the English

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[94] Idid;p.17
[95] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit;p.30.
[96] Eighth Annual Report of the Council,1949,pp.20-22.
[97] Ibid;p.24
[98] Ninth Report of the University Council, 1950,p.28.
[99] Ibid;p.29.

Society. In 1942, a Medical Students Union was formed, and its membership had been made compulsory to those who entered the Faculty after 1943. The Third Annual Report of the Council commented that university societies are run by different persons every year and every society therefore runs into a patch of bad administration. Professor E.F.C. Ludowyke had a disagreement with the Committee and tendered his resignation.[100] The Tenth Annual Report of the Council (1951) was critical of the Union Society, the existence of which came to be discussed by the Council. It was decided that the organisation at Peradeniya should be based on the Halls of Residence where students would elect the representatives of the Students Council; this meant that there will be Hall Societies. A Constitution was prepared for the Peradeniya Union Society, which consisted of responsibilities of the Halls of Residence; it followed the Colombo traditions in its initial phase.[101] In addition to the Political Society, there was the Socialist Society (Marxist) which had a good start in the first term. The Economics Society, according to the Eleventh Report of the Council, saw a deviation from its previous policy. It abandoned traditional 'rag' for which Economics Society was reputed.[102] This was the only indication of organised rags during the period. Jennings was highly critical of 'ragging', though it was not as endemic as today; he was not ready to accept that it was a tradition.[103] He, in fact, said that he taught in Western Universities for 15 years and never saw a rag; apart from ragging, he saw rowdiness among undergraduates, which, he attributed to social immaturity.[104]

Jennings, writing on the role of the undergraduate, once stated that University was not a place for rowdy rags. He asked the question how it could be treated as a University tradition. Jennings came to Ceylon to undertake the establishment of a residential teaching University of the Oxbridge model where the student community was

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[100] Third Report of the University council, 1944, p.13.

[101] Tenth Report of the University Council,1951,p.31.

[102] Eleventh Report of the University Council,1951,p.25.

Both the Economics Society and the Socialist Society had Marxist leanines; the Economics Society was associated with the Trotskyite, LSSP and it professed the ideology of Trotskyism while the Socialist society, which maintained links with the Communist Party, professed Stalinism. Students associated with these two societies debated ideological issues.

[103] Gunawardene,R.A.L.H.op.cit;p.44. 104 Ibid;p. 44.

[104] Idib;p.44.

influenced by anti-colonial agitation and radical political activism.[105] Jennings, though experienced the radicalism of the London School of Economics, was no radical, and his characterisation of the Mraxist student politicians proved it beyond doubt. He, in fact, mentioned 'the rise and fall of the student-politician'.[106] His view was that six or seven hundred students drawn from the comparatively wealthy sections of the population give the impression of being left wing or leftist. The student-politician, in his view, was dogmatic and over-enthusiastic. Jennings, in an attempt to ridicule the student-politician, wrote that 'much more interesting nowadays is the student-politician who does not know that he does not agree with anybody. He cannot accept any of the dogmas, nor can he accept any of the practical proposals. He is well aware of the social and economic ills from which the country suffers, but he also knows that he has no specific solutions to offer'.[107] He was critical of the Marxist parties, whose supporters were student-politicians; he wrote that 'the only heroes in Ceylon were the Communists and the SamaSamajists, though the Communist thesis was found puzzling when overnight 'the imperialist war' turned into 'a war in defense of democracy'.[108] His article on 'the Post-War Undergraduate', which he contributed to the New Lanka in October, 1949, mentioned that the British Universities produced a tradition, according to which the undergraduate was a gentleman. Jennings had his own ideas about a national university; he wrote that one has to be particularly wary of those who talk about a 'national university', and they do not know what they mean, but their specific proposals would require teaching some sort of dogma as eternal truths. If a University is concerned with truth it cannot be national, for nationalism at best is but a convenient hypothesis adapted to an imperfect society'. [109] Jennings recognised the undergraduates' desire for knowledge and it was his view that each must find the answer for himself, making use of the accumulated wisdom of the age. According to Jennings, the profound scholar, who knows everything, is really of little use to a University. He, in fact, stated that 'classical scholar who has some of the broad humanity of Aristotle is of far greater value than the authority on the Greek particles. They do no harm but they do not help the

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[105] Jennings,Ivor. The Kandy Road, p.xv.
[106] Jennings,Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya, p. 107.
[107] Ibid;p.109.
[108] Ibid;p.108.
[109] Jennings,Ivor. The Post-war Undergraduate', in New LanKa,Vol.I,No.l,1949,p.11.

undergraduate'.[110] He advocated the concept of the residential university because it was only in a residential university that the undergraduates can educate themselves.[111] For the undergraduate to benefit from a residential teaching university, it needs dons who possess a broad humanity, an enthusiasm for knowledge in the broadest sense, an ability to follow an idea to its conclusion, a set of principles which they are prepared to defend in all humility, which Jennings wanted established in Ceylon for the benefit of the undergraduate. Therefore, he wanted the undergraduates, while looking for knowledge and wisdom, to behave as ladies and gentlemen, as they are no more school children.

During Jennings' period at Peradeniya, there was a serious breach of discipline, and the Twelfth Annual Report of the Council, 1953, referring to the incident at Jayatilaka Hall, stated that the 'second outbreak arose out of a demonstration in Kandy on the night of 11th August, 1953, which led eventually to a fracas outside Jayatilaka hall when a Police sergeant was seriously injured. A plaint was filed against six students. The charges against three of them were dismissed by the Kandy Magistrate while others were committed to the Supreme Court on charges of attempted murder, unlawful assembly, riot and etc'.[112] This was the famous Hartal incident at the University, and it was a part of a major working class uprising against the Government organised by a combination of Marxist parties in the country. The incident within the Campus, when compared with student violence of the University College days, was unprecedented in term of the scale of violence; in addition, it occurred within a year after the transfer of the University from Colombo to Peradeniya, and this fact gave some additional significance to the event. The students involved in the incident were active sympathisers of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), whose Trotskyite ideological leanings made them participants of the hartal which was organised in the form of an all island protest. As far as the students were concerned, it was a student demonstration where 200 to 500 students, wearing black armbands, assembled near the Central Bus Stand in Kandy. The participants were batton charged near the Kandy Police Station and the crowd was dispersed. Again they reassembled near the Peradeniya Road, and they became unruly, resulting in another

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[110] Ibid;p.13.
[111] Ibid;p.14.
[112] Twelfth Report of the University Council,1953, p.52.

assault on the students. The Police, either to take revenge or to teach a lesson, followed them up to the Galaha road junction at Peradeniya and came up to the first Hall of Residence where the major incident took place. It was a clash between the students and the Police and the virtual fight between the two groups lasted for more than half an hour. In the course of the fracas, several persons sustained injuries but the serious casualty was the Police sergeant who sustained a serious head injury. This incident took place in the absence of Jennings; the acting Vice Chancellor was Sir Nicholes Attygalle. The significance of this incident was that it established a convention that the Police would not enter the premises of the University unless explicitly summoned by the Vice Chancellor. This convention, on the other hand, became a safeguard for students to indulge in violence, knowing well that the Police may not intervene; the Police also made use of this convention to say that they cannot go inside the Campus.

This convention that the Police needs prior permission to enter the university premises became a convenient cover for students to indulge in violence; there were instances where the failure on the part of the Police to intervene resulted in murder, violent assault, arson and destruction of university property. Jennings, in a letter to the Warden, James Pieris Hall on 23rd November, 1953 - two months after the Hartal incident. in August, 1953- explained the position of the undergraduates vis-a-vis the laws of Ceylon. Jennings, with a view to debunking this theory that laws of the land are not applicable within the University, stated that 'I do not know what it means. It seems to suggest, however, that students in residence in James Perris Hall either have or ought to have immunity from the Laws of Ceylon or from the consequences of breaches of them of the Laws of Ceylon, which other persons do not possess. This is apparently defended on the ground of an alleged immunity said to be possessed by the students in the universities in England and elsewhere'.[113] Jennings referred to the University property, and his position was that both in England and Ceylon, the University property is treated as private property, and the laws which apply there are similar to those apply to private property. If an offence has been committed in any University building in England, the Police and private citizens have the same rights and duties as if the same offence has been committed in a technical college, a hotel or a private house. No distinction was made,

[113] Vide Jennings's letter dated 23rd November,1953. Ibid.

depending on the location where the offence was committed. On the basis of this argument, Jennings stated that it applies equally to the James Pieris Hall. The details depend upon the nature of the offence.[114] Referring to the riotous behavior of students, Jennings stated that in Ceylon as in England, the Police have the right and the duty to enter private premises (James Pieris Hall) in order to prevent such behavior or where it has already occurred, to put a stop to it.[115] It is the practice of any University to 'endeavor to maintain discipline among students, including the observance of the 'general laws, without requiring the assistance of the Police'.[116] In other words, what Jennings meant was that it was up to the University, through its laws, regulations and rules, to maintain discipline among the university community, without the assistance of the Police. The Police in Ceylon, as in England, help the University 'by drawing attention to any threat against the laws of Ceylon of which they become aware, in the hope that the university will be able to prevent it'.[117] What was emphasised by Jennings in his letter was that this practice does not, however, deprive the Police of the right and the duty to take steps as may be lawful for dealing with actual or threatened breaches of laws.[118] It was this aspect which Jennings emphasised as a vital requirement, remained a dead letter for years, and students as well as the University authorities were of the view that Police cannot intervene unless they are explicitly requested by the Vice Chancellor.

There were numerous examples of many a breach of law by the undergraduate community, and with the expansion of the Universities, this convention gave protection to students to commit offences with impunity. The University of Ceylon, from its inception, adopted the traditional Marshalls system for the maintenance of discipline among the undergraduate community; therefore, Jennings wrote that there is no conflict between the powers of the Police and the powers of the Marshalls; in short, both institutions are entrusted with the vital responsibility of maintaining law and order, and in the context of the university student community, it is maintenance of discipline. Discipline, in this context, covers quite a number of things; students rights need to be combined with their responsibilities and the general public should take an interest in the

[114] Ibid.
[115] Idib.
[116] Idib.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

rights and responsibilities of students.[119] Student behavior should never be based on 'the belief that he is entitled by his status to any additional license'.[120] According to him, one of the major responsibilities of students is to act as a conscience-of society, and students, as a class, bear collective responsibilities towards the community. Jennings, through his speeches and writings, tried to inculcate such ideas in the minds of the then undergraduate community, the most prominent feature of which was its elitist status. Jennings, through the Reports of the University Council, annually described social and religious background of the students; he, writing on Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon (1944) attempted to provide any data which may be useful for sociological investigation.[121] He justified this kind of investigation by saying that the practice of the University College to collect statistics of races and religions was done because the figures were of considerable sociological value'.[122] It, undoubtedly, represented the nature of the social structure and index of social change. This kind of information, Jennings thought would be useful in running the administration of a highly elitist residential University. It was from this social class that Jennings wanted to produce 'the gentleman' undergraduate who would not indulge in breaches of discipline. The view was that the undergraduates drawn from a social class of the elite may not create problems for the administration. This interpretation, however, is subject to debate and controversy.

The fact remains that Jennings, by writing the letter to the Warden of the James Pieris Hall, wanted to impress upon the undergraduate community that the law of the land is applicable to the University. According to his letter, there cannot be any conflict between the powers of the Police and the powers of the Marshalls. He was very forthright and specific in saying that 'the undergraduate in Ceylon as in England, has to obey the regulations of his University as well as the general law, and the Galaha Road has nothing to do with it'.[123] This he mentioned because the undergraduates were of the

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[119] Ashby, Eric. Masters and Scholars, p.52.

[120] Ibid;p.55. It was in 1940 that the first Charter of Students was published. in England.

[121] Jennings, Ivor. Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon , in University of Ceylon Review,Vol.ll,1944, pp.1-13

[122] Ibid.

[123] Vide Jennings letter dated 23rd November,1953.

opinion that the Police has no authority on the side of the Galaha Road, which, in practice, meant that the Police have no power to operate along the Galaha Road, and this, in the form of an informal convention, gave undergraduates the license to misbehave as well as to indulge in breaches of discipline with impunity. The duties of the Marshalls, as officials engaged in the maintenance of discipline, have been defined in the Peradeniya Act, because the legal responsibility remains vested in the Vice Chancellor. On the other hand, the Peradeniya Act provided that 'it shall be the duty of the Marshalls to give such assistance to an officer or constable of the Ceylon Police Force as may be lawful and requisite to prevent a breach within the University radius of the law of the island'.[124] This is very specific to the applicability of the laws of Ceylon within the University Campus. Jennings, making an admonition to undergraduates as to how they should behave inside the University, stated that 'the simplest and the best way for the students of James Pieris Hall to keep the Police out of this Hall is for them all to do their duty as citizens and observe the laws of the island'.[125] He also stated that it was the duty of the decent citizen in the Hall to inform the Wardens in order that suitable action may be taken by the University, and here the undergraduates were referred to as decent citizens. This was deliberately done, and meant that the student, though an undergraduate of a residential university, has to behave like a citizen who, both in theory and practice, have rights and obligations by the State. 'Therefore, because of a request from the University or because of their general duty under the laws of the island, it becomes necessary for the Police to enter a Hall of Residence and it is the duty of any student to assist the Police in the execution of their duty. It is the obligation of the University to give the Police every assistance and in no circumstances it will condone or excuse breaches of the laws of Ceylon'.

This letter of Jennings, which according to its contents and the stand taken on the issue of Police intervention, correctly spelled out the position of the University vis-a-vis the laws of the land, was not given much prominence and publicity by the University authorities, But it, more than any document, clearly explained that the undergraduates, irrespective of the fact that they reside inside a special enclave called the

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[124] See Ordinance, No. 20 of 1942.

[125] Vide Jennigs's letter of 23rd November,1953.

residential university, are expected to observe the laws of the land. Despite the existence of this letter in the files of the University of Peradeniya, it was not used to justify the intervention of the Police whenever there were breaches of the laws of the country.

Jennings, from the very inception of his career in Ceylon, was very receptive to the need to establish traditions at the University of Ceylon, and this search and need for traditions applied to all areas of University activity. He, as an accomplished researcher in politics, government and constitutional affairs, wanted the University to maintain its research profile; he, therefore, wrote in his autobiography that he was faced with the 'problem of developing a tradition in the University itself, so as to make it a fraternity of 'Masters and Scholars' engaged in the advancement, production and dissemination of knowledge'.[126] He remained embedded to the traditional view that the University, the administration, faculty and students -who are the three important components of the modern university - work towards the same end, and the university was to be treated as a community dedicated to the preservation, advancement and transmission of knowledge.[127] A new University was expected to maintain traditions concerned with the search for truth for which men have laid down and have been asked to lay down their lives in different parts of the world. Jennings, in his efforts to establish traditions for an essential function of bringing together, face to face in living intercourse, teacher and teacher, teacher and student, student and student, wanted to promote research in all areas of academic disciplines; he, showing his ability in his own areas of academic interest, undertook research, which, in course of time, provided the required direction for research.

It would be useful at this stage of the discussion of the legacy of Jennings to discuss some of his pioneering pieces of research which, subsequently, provided the necessary guidance for further research in those subjects. As mentioned earlier, Jennings referred to certain types of information available in the University College reports, and their sociological importance, and it was on the basis of such information that he began to undertake certain studies on the social structure of the country. It is intended here to make a brief analysis of studies which he undertook as the

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[126] Jennings, Ivor. The Road t to Peradeniya, P.198.
[127] Ashby, Eric. Masters and Scholars, p.41.

Vice Chancellor of the University and thereafter to make an assessments of their impact on the development of a research culture at the University. In addition, the way in which his studies made a pioneering contribution to the academic life of the country would be critically examined in order to highlight the fact that Jennings, though remained a busy Vice Chancellor engaged in the establishment of a new University, never neglected his enthusiasm for research and intellectual activity. It is in this role as an intellectual giant that Jennings stood far above his contemporaries of the period, and this legacy of his, in addition to his role as the chief University administrator, is unique a contribution in the development of University education in Ceylon. He made use of every possible publication in the University to promote his thesis that a University needs to get itself engaged in intellectual discussion; he even contributed to the University's student Magazines with a view to encouraging them to get themselves involved in intellectual intercourse, and Jennings, in this way, laid a strong foundation for the development of the intellectual enterprise in Ceylon.

The tradition of reporting comprehensively on matters pertaining to University education began with the Report of the University College. The Calendar for 1925-26, which began with a section on the history of the College, contained information on many a matter, including those of students.[128] Even the reports of the University College for 1937-38 followed the same pattern, and it too contained a section on the history of the College.[129] It was in 1942 that the authorities began to include data relating to the background of students, though this formula provided a wealth of sociological information on students. In addition to the increase in the numbers, which was annually provided in the reports, it provided information relating to the racial, religious and home residence background of students. The number of students distributed among faculties on the basis of such divisions - race, religion and place of home residence - were given, and this type of statistical information came to be provided annually. As subsequent writings of Jennings probably explained, he wanted this kind of information included in the annual reports of the University of Ceylon as they could provide useful information for the researcher to make an analysis of the newly emerged university educated elite in the country. As Jennings anticipated, Laksiri Jayasuriya made full use of this data for his

[128] The Ceylon University College Calendar 1925-26,p.11.
[129] The Ceylon University College Calendar 1937-38,pp.2-5.

substantial study which, in fact, was a study of university developments from a strict sociological point of view.[130] As Jayasuriya mentioned, it was a sociological investigation into certain important characteristics of the University development in Ceylon.[131] Though Jayasuriya expanded the analysis pertaining to those aspects of the students who entered the University of Ceylon, he followed the same pattern of analysis found in the annual reports; Jennings expected them to be used in that form by the future sociologists and he expected this kind of research studies from the Department of Sociology once it was established in the University. It is in this particular context that some attention needs to be paid to study on Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon.[132]

Before a discussion of all publications relating to the University are undertaken, it would be useful to look at the way in which the student community saw and perceived the founder Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon. A student, writing in 1956, stated that 'As for me, I like to remember him for the little things of more importance in my eyes than his authority and his learning, the way I saw him mend a fence one evening, or the love of nature so strange in a man of law books and constitutions that made him count the varieties of birds that he found visit the Campus. I think he had known twenty four kinds, may be more'.[133] It was this kind of love of nature and environment which encouraged him to take a personal interest in the landscaping of the University Park at Peradeniya, where he wanted the trees planted in locations of his

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[130] Jayasuriya, D.L. op. cit;pp. 83-155.

[131] Ibid;p.84.

[132] Jennings produced a number of articles and reports on the University of Ceylon. They are as follows.

(1) Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon, in University Ceylon Review,Vol.II,1944,pp. 1-13.

(2) The Foundation of the University of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.IX, No. 3, 1951, pp.147-151.

(3) Universities in the Colonies, in Political Quarterly,Vol.17, 1946, pp.228-246.

(4) The Post-War Undergraduate, in The New Lanka,Vol.l,No.l,October,1949,pp.9-14.

(5) The University Moves to Peradeniya, in Ceylon Today, No.1, 1952.

(6) University in 1951-52, in Ceylon University Magazine, March, 1953.

(7) The University in 1947- 48, in Ceylon University Magazine, 1947-48, pp.117-123.

(8) The University in 1948-49, in Ceylon University Magazine, 1949, pp.21-25.

(9) Message from the Vice Chancellor, University of Ceylon, in Ceylon University Magazine 1942-43.

(10) The University in the Island's Economy, in Ceylon Economist, Vol. l, No.3, pp.272· 279.

[133] Catullus, A Vice Chancellor and Gentlemen, in the University of Ceylon Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1942-92, p.19

choice. In 1962, when he arrived at Peradeniya before his death in 1965, he was so pleased to see the large trees in the same locations which he chose, and they, as he often stated, justified his characterisation that Peradeniya has 'one the most beautiful environments in the world'.[134] He was one Vice Chancellor who, through his writings and speeches, made a noteworthy effort to understand the student, and it was perhaps this perception which motivated him to compile the Student Guide which, though written in 1948, still contain very valuable information for both the academic staff and the student community. It is very unfortunate that neither the academic community nor the student community is aware of the existence of this valuable piece of work, excepting perhaps a few research-oriented academics. Therefore, students of the period, irrespective of his towering intellectual personality, liked him; once a student wrote that 'above all, he understood the student, and no one better, for he himself still carried the heart of a student. In his calling as Vice Chancellor, he always preserved the University administration from political interferences while never encouraging or frowning upon the political freedoms of the undergraduate'.[135] The same writer, referring to the 1953 hartal incident to which reference has already been made in the preceding pages, stated that 'I remember him say that students had a right to do whatsoever they liked and he the right to punish them for it. But the way he said it was enough to make you stand up and cheer'.[136] This was the gentleman Vice Chancellor who undertook numerous studies of the University, and he, in the course of his studies made a special attempt to understand the student community.

Jennings thought that gathering information on various aspects of the undergraduate community made administration of the University easy. It became possible because the University of Ceylon, under Jennings' leadership, followed a restrictive admission policy, under which university education was made available to a select group of students from the elite. The sons and daughters of the English-educated elite came via the established elite schools in the country, and Jennings, with a view to highlighting the source of recruitment of the emerging elite in the country, studied the social background of the undergraduate. The practice of collecting data relating to race, religion and social

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[134] Jennings, Ivor. The Kandy Road, P.xxii.
[135] Catullus. Op.cit;p.19.
[136] Ibid;p.19.

background of the undergraduates began during the days of the University College, and the information, which it collected since its inception in 1921, became very useful to the University Commission of 1928 to make certain recommendations. On the other hand, certain Universities in the Colonies, for instance, the University in Malaya, followed this practice, because the nature of the formation of the elite in those countries was a crucial factor for the continuation of British rule. As mentioned earlier, the collection of such data was of considerable sociological value. Though Jennings made an analysis on the basis of the figures made available to him on the basis of the census data of 1921, he discovered that the Kandyan Sinhalese and Indian Tamils or Indian Moors were hardly represented; it was the low country Sinhalese and Ceylon Tamils which dominated the University in the years 1942, 1943 and 1944 and he, through such an analysis, explained the imbalance within the undergraduate community The reason for this was historical; the absence of educational opportunities due to the biased colonial policy on education was the sole reason for the educational backwardness in the Kandyan areas, which the Kandyan Peasantry Commission highlighted in 1951.[137] In terms of religion, the Christians were represented much above their proportional strength in the island. This was primarily due to the impact of the Missionary schools. J.E. Jayasuriya, in his study of Education in Ceylon, gave an interesting set of figures which explained the root cause for this imbalance in the area of educational opportunities. It, in fact, proved the absence of equality of opportunity in education. The Christians constituted 4.3 percent of the population and enjoyed 75.2 percent of the Government grants to denominational schools, while Buddhists and Hindus, constituting 95.7 of the population, obtained 24.08 percent of the Government grants.[138] Jennings, in his study, wanted to show that the university does not in fact draw equally from the whole island but certain sections of it are more strongly represented. The information supported the view that a very few students came from the Central, North Central and Uva provinces, and the vast majority of students came from Western, Northern and Southern provinces.

Yet another feature was that most of the undergraduates came from the urban areas, and this, therefore, meant that the rural children were not given the

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[137] Jayasuriya, J .E . Education in Ceylon 1930-1968.Colombo,1968,p.3.
[138] Jennings, Ivor in University of Ceylon Review,Vol.ll,1944,p.3.

opportunity to enter the University. It is in this context that literacy in English becomes important and relevant; for instance, all Christians were found to be English speaking and the fact that they received education in English became a fact of considerable importance as it offered additional opportunities. This, again, was strictly related to the availability of English schools. In order to further substantiate his argument that certain provinces are strongly represented, he included the statistics pertaining to the Home Residence of students; in 1942, 503 out of a total intake of 904 came from the Western province, and the corresponding figures for 1943 and 1944 were 514 and 548 respectively. The next largest number, 152 for 1942 came from the Northern Province and the Southern province came third with an intake of 116. Jennings, with a view to showing that the University was multi-cultural in orientation, gave figures relating to race and religion based, again, on the place of residence. On the basis of such data, he was trying to do a comparison of the intake with the nature of English literacy, and the result was that the low country Sinhalese and the Tamils dominated the University. While attributing various reasons for under representation of certain communities, it was his view that the University was interested in race and religion from the angle of academic sociology.[139] Jennings, on the basis of the useful data which was included in this article, took the view that a University must respect the social conditions in which it exists'.[140] However, the post-war developments, which came to be represented in the Education Act of 1944, under which education was made free and compulsory, began to change the situation and educational opportunities were provided for people from all classes to climb the educational ladder. Jennings, who came into the Committee as the Principal of the University College, did not sign the Report of the Special Committee on Education in 1944; 17 members of the Committee signed it and Jennings, producing a dissenting report, stated that he came in as a member of the Committee at its 30th meeting, and by that time 'the main principles of its recommendations had already been laid down'.[141] This, in fact, meant that Jennings was not associated with the initial recommendations and he, therefore, produced a dissenting report, in which he supported the idea of a fee levying system up to the primary stage. Though he agreed with the proposal that education be made free from kindergarten to the University, Jennings was of the view

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[139] Jennings, Ivor. Op.cit, p.11
[140] Idib.
[141] Vide the Special Committee Report on Education.

that 'the consequences of the decision need more consideration than the Committee has given to them.[141] Jennings claimed that he wrote about two thirds of the report. 'At the last moment the Committee decided that it had not been ambitious enough and decided on a new scheme, miscalled 'free education' I could have no possible objection to free education, because my parents never paid a penny for my education. I was therefore quite willing to sit and work out a new scheme'.[142] He was of the view that Ceylon, as England, needed a system where education would be made compulsory up to 14, supported by a scholarship system for students who are above the age of 14. In other words, his recommendation was that secondary education needs to be a fee levying system; this, in effect, meant the continuation of an elite school system from which the students of the elite would enter the University and help maintain the University as an elite institution. The Special Committee on Education rejected Jennings' proposals; he, in the alternative, thought that the Special Committee placed so much emphasis on compulsory education and scholarships. His views on the recommendations of the Report and his subsequent views on free education gave him a reputation as one who opposed free education, which, according to Jennings, 'will provide only a slightly increased representation of the lower middle class and will wholly fail to bring to the University any of the pupils from the labouring classes'.[143] This statement of Jennings, when analysed from the point of view of the changing socio-economic background of the student community in the post-1960 period, has been belied by subsequent developments.

It was entirely due to the impact of the free education scheme, which, as expected, reduced the inequalities in educational opportunity. It, to a large extent, guaranteed equality of opportunity in education By 1970, most of the disparities which affected equality of opportunity in education, had been removed and its effect came to be widely felt in the sphere of university education.[144] Jennings, as every perceptive scholar and educationist, evaluated the developments within the structure of university education; he produced some comments every year through the annual reports or articles in journals. He was trying to justify his position that he worked with a vision in order to formulate a

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[142] Jennings, Ivor. Account to the People of Ceylon, in Ceylon Today, Vol.4,No. 3 & 4.

[143] Jennings, Ivor. Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon, University of Ceylon Review, Vol.II,1944, p.13.

[144] De Silva, C. R. op.cit; pp. 154-55.

clear policy. Jennings, writing to Ceylon Today, stated that 'one effect of having an autonomous University is that university education has been developed over twelve years in accordance with a clear and consistent policy without it becoming the sport of politics'.[145] Jennings, who refused to sign the Report on free education, had this to say; he, referring to the Special Committee proposals on 'free education', stated that 'it made the whole scheme inconsistent by grafting free education on a different sort of tree. I therefore refused to sign the report and I am glad I did so; free education without adequate planning produced the sort of confusion which should have been anticipated'.[146] D.S. Senanayake, who placed absolute trust on Jennings, wanted him to prepare a new set of proposals on the basis of the lines which Senanayake himself indicated to him. Though such a scheme was later prepared by Jennings, Senanyake could not get it through the Cabinet. This shows that Jennings had his own ideas in respect of education, and it was his view that 'there are no easy solutions to educational problems'.[147] He also considered his assignment as a member of the Special Committee on Education as 'one of the jobs imposed upon me outside the terms of my appointment', and he thought 'that though it was no part of his duty, he did his best.[148] As mentioned earlier, Jennings always made an assessment of the development within the University because he wanted to tell the world that the institution, which he planted, is now flowering into a reputed institution of learning in the Commonwealth. He, in fact, stated on the eve of his departure from Ceylon that 'please cherish the University as one of the better of your institutions'.[149] This amply demonstrated that Jennings thought that he contributed to build a unique institution. He made an assessment of the developments at the University in 1947- 48 and 1951-52, both which appear in the Ceylon University Magazine, a journal of the Union Society. Since they appeared in the Students Magazine, they deserve to be discussed in detail because Jennings wanted to publish them there with a purpose. One was to give the Magazine a status, and secondly, make use of it to educate the student community on the various aspects of University development.

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[145] Jennings, Ivor in Ceylon Today, Vol. 4,No. 3 & 4.p.18.
[146] Ibid;p. 20.
[147] Ibidjp.20
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

It would be useful to refer to three articles which appeared in the Ceylon University Magazine; the article published in the same magazine appeared under University News, and the title of the article was The University in 1947-48.[150] Since three such articles appeared in this Student Magazine, covering the period 1947-52, it is necessary to take them together to comment on them. The articles, as their titles indicated, focused on the developments within the University; the first article which examined the period 1947-48, referred to intricacies involved in converting two Government Colleges into a University, and the rest of the article referred to numerous difficulties faced in the course of the transition to University status. Though the transition was complete by 1946, the transfer to Peradeniya became impracticable because of the war and the post-war situation in the country. This, as Jennings mentioned, delayed the establishment of new Departments and Faculties at Peradeniya. The problems associated with accommodation were highlighted; there was no expansion between 1942 and the real expansion began after 1947. The country's new status as an independent nation too had an impact on the general process of expansion. It was during this period that the Faculty of Oriental Studies, which remained badly neglected during the College days began to develop as a major Faculty. Therefore, the plan was to shift both the Arts and Oriental Studies faculties to Peradeniya by 1950. Though there were difficulties, to which Jennings referred rather apologetically, he was of the view that 'on the whole, we have no great cause to gamble. I do not think that anybody in Ceylon denies that the University is by far the best part of the educational structure'.[151] In the year 1948-49, similar development: were discounted, and referred to health problems of the student community. Jennings, referring to this aspect, wrote that 'the remedy for this state of affairs was not in our hands but in those of parents and school authorities'.[152] Jennings thought that the solution is to move to Peradeniya where the conditions and facilities are better. The article titled, 'The University in 1950-51' referred to similar developments, and the position of different Faculties was discussed in order to show that each Faculty had its programme of development. Again, the centre of interest of each Faculty was the

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[150] Jennings, Ivor. 'The University in 1947-48' ,in Ceylon University Magazine of 197-48. Under University News, the article on The University in 3948-49, was published in the Journal of the following year. The article on 'University in 1951-52' appeared in the Ceylon University Magazine of 1951-52.

[151] Jennings, Ivor. The University in 1947-48', in Ceylon University Magazine, 1947-48,pp. 117-122.

[152] Jennings, Ivor. The University in 1950-51, in Ceylon University Magazine,1951,p.89

forthcoming plan to shift to Peradeniya. The question of student accommodation and the provision of scholarships was discussed and Jennings, understanding the difficulties of the student community, stated that 'we are far from achieving our ambition as we understand it for at least one third of the students'.[153] It was revealed that by 1950 nearly 40 percent of the students were living at home; therefore the move to Peradeniya will provide the other 60 percent with cheaper and better accommodation. Jennings mentioned that 'undergraduates should be reminded that when they graduate they will be expected, like alumni elsewhere, to help us, build up our endowments. Their obligations to the University are even greater than elsewhere, for they have not merely free Education, but also, in many cases, financial assistance from the Scholarship Fund'.[154] Such statements from the Vice Chancellor naturally influenced the student community to think in terms of the needs of the University. Therefore such publications, which continued till 1952, had a salutary effect on the student community.

Jennings, in 'University in 1951-52' focused on Peradeniya, which, according to him, gave him a host of problems. He referred to some student problems in his articles; he, in fact, stated that 'certainly, we had not anticipated the stupid behavior of some of the Law Students'.[155] He, while accepting the fact that he was over worked, stated that 'fortunately the cool air of Peradeniya every week-end has made the burden supportable. I cannot imagine how anybody who has spent a night in Peradeniya can want to return to the debilitating atmosphere and depressing anti-intellectual environment of Colombo. Jennings was an unrepentable admirer of the scenic beauty of the Peradeniya Campus and its environs, and he, as Ian Goonetilleke mentioned, thought Peradeniya was the ideal place for intellectual activity.[156] Yet another important article, focusing on the University, was the one titled 'The University in the Islands Economy', which, originally was a lecture to the University Economics Society.[157] The significance of this article lies in the fact that it, while discussing the significance of the University for the economy of the country, discussed the importance of the university as an institution of learning. It is generally accepted that what is central to the concept of University is the

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[153] Ibid;p.89
[154] Ibid;p.89.
[155] Jennings, Ivor. University in 1951-52, in Ceylon University Magazine,1952,p.87.
[156] Jennings, Ivor. The Kandy Road.Peradeniya,1993,p.xix.
[157] Jennings, Ivor. The University in the Islands Economy, in Ceylon Economist, Vol, No.2,pp.272-279.

pursuit of knowledge. But the functions of universities, as they at present exist, are various, including providing economic benefits to society and preparing individuals for future employment. Jennings, though saw the pursuit of knowledge as its central function, did not deny that Universities as actual institutions have a plurality of functions, some of which have little to do with its central function. Therefore, he wrote that 'a University is in one sense a natural institution, with a special responsibility to the people of its country, but it is also an international institution, a small part of the republic of learning, with a responsibility to learning itself'.[158] He was trying to establish a relationship between the output of the graduates and the nature of the economy; in other words, he thought that 'our only effective method is to relate present demand to present supply'.[159] It was his view that 'our present output is enough to meet the current demand, except in science'.[160] Jennings was of the view that the expansion of the University need to be based on the expansion of the economy, the fundamental weakness of it was the low productivity of its people. The present output of graduates, according to Jennings, stood at 300, which was likely to reach up to 400, and therefore, changes are necessary in the economy to absorb the increasing output of graduates. His perception was to produce 1000 graduate a year or a maximum of 1100 graduates.[161]

Jennings always thought in terms of a restricted intake in order to preserve the elitist character of the University of Ceylon; in addition to this, the general class structure of the country restricted university education to a privileged few. Jennings himself elaborated this when he referred to 'the rigidity of the class structure' in Ceylon.[162] As in other countries, the feudal elements converted themselves into a middle class and it is this class, after the establishment of plantations and commercial houses, which retained a monopoly over English education. The competency in the English language was an essential concomitant of the middle class status. Therefore, in such a setting, it became economically difficult for a labourer or a fisherman to get into the middle class. This was due to the existence of a barrier in the educational set up; until the creation of the University, education was virtually confined to the upper-position of the

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[158] Jennings, Ivor. The University in the Islands Economy', Ceylon Economist, Vol. 0.1, No.2, p.272.
[159] Ibid;p.276.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid;p.276.
[162] Idid;p.276

middle class. Jennings, in fact, wrote that 'the real university education was almost confined to Cinnamon Gardens and Jaffna'.[163] It was the University of Ceylon which breached the barrier and this breach became widened with the introduction of the scheme of free education.[164] Jennings, spoke against introduction of the mother tongue in higher education.[165] Though the free education scheme widened the source of student recruitment, the Universities paved the way for students of the lower middle class. According to him, more than one third of the students came from families in the gross income of less than Rs. 200 per men sum, and about a 15 percent from families with gross income of less than Rs. 100 per men sum. Nearly 6 percent came from families with a gross income of Rs. 50 per men sum.[166] This was the nature of the change in the social and economic background of the undergraduate, and this was certain to affect the economy of the country. In other words, the elite-orientation of the graduate came to be transformed, and the doors were opened for the sons and daughters of the lower classes. Still the dominant position of the English-speaking class remained intact; Jennings, though saw the impact of the language question on the future University policy, was not very enthusiastic in regard to the introduction of Sinhalese as the medium of instruction. He was of the view that teaching in Sinhala could be confined to such subjects as Paleography, Epigraphy, Philology, History and Archaeology; he thought that 'to make modern knowledge available to people whose only language is Sinhalese would require a complete literature'.[167] He was quite open in his opposition to the introduction of Sinhalese as a language of study at the University; justifying his position, Jennings categorically stated that 'it is in fact much easier to teach everybody English than to produce in Sinhalese the literature necessary for University study'.[168] While advocating a good scholarship system for students, he was of the view that the approach to the university becomes easier when there is no longer a language barrier'.[169] He, seemed to have failed to anticipate the vast changes that were to come along with the free education

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[163] Ibid; p.276.
[164] Idib;p 276.
[165] Wilson, A.J. Politics and University through Sir Ivor Jennings, in Lanka Guardian, Vol.12, 1989,pp.18-19.
[166] Jennings, Ivor.op.cit;p.276
[167] Idib;p.277.
[168] Idib;p.277
[169] Idib.

scheme, and those fundamental changes demanded many more changes in the sphere of University education in Ceylon.

Jennings, as usual, adverted himself to an important factor, the nature of the existing social system which accorded the University graduate a high place. This, he stated, was due to the absence of alternative opportunities for a young man as in England, and therefore, more than 90 percent of the students opted for the University.[170] This was the nature of the challenge before the economy though the best jobs, which hitherto remained with the upper branches of the middle class, were made available to the members of the lower branches of the middle class. This change was made possible by making the University accessible to the lower branches of the middle class. The removal of this barrier caused by the English language opened the door for students of lowly income origin. Murray Straus, in his sociological study, discovered that a large concentration of students came from families of relatively high socio- economic status; there were also students whose fathers were clerical workers and from the ranks of skilled workers'.[171] According to Murray Straus, most of the students were in the category of 'upper middle class'. Female students came from families of higher socio-economic status, of the students, about 25 percent spoke English at home. In terms of occupational preferences, a majority preferred government employment, including professional employment. This analysis of Murray Straus, again, demonstrated that the University still remained elitist. The demand for more and more University places arose with this change; the University, which in 1942 began with 904, now had 2000. If more opportunities are made available to the students of low income status, the figure will go up to 4000[172] Jennings, though he was in favour of an increased intake of students, was very conscious of the economic status of the country. In his point of view, university education needs to be a burden which the country's economy can carry. Though he once stated he favoured 'the building of Peradeniya all over Ceylon', the question was the wealth of the country.[173] His view was that Ceylon, though spends on both primary and secondary education, health, social services and economic development, 'cannot afford to

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[170] Ibid;p.277.

[171] Straus, Murray. Family Characteristics and occupational choice of University Entrants as clues to the Social Structure in Ceylon, in university of Ceylon Review, Vol.9, No.1,1951,p.135.

[172] Jennings, Ivor. op.cit; p.278.

[173] Idib;p.278Annual Report of the University Council, 1942, p.7

spend money unnecessarily'. He, therefore, argued on the basis of the nature of the economy, that 'we have therefore to limit numbers severely'.[174] The cost of university education and the level of expenditure per student were major considerations. Jennings thought that 'a residential university gives a much better education than a non-residential university' and this philosophy of his, though acceptable a standpoint, naturally interfered with the expansion of the University. It was his view that the level of expenditure on University education ought to be high enough to produce the leaders the country needs. Therefore, Jennings, though had numerous reservations with regard to the expansion of the university, looked at the matter from the point of view of the capacity of the economy of Ceylon.

Jennings, before his departure, stated that his stay in Ceylon made him a prolific writer, and it is this achievement of his which needs evaluation. His publications on Ceylon made a fundamental contribution to the development of the Ceylonese research enterprise. During the early years of the University College, there was not much research activity among the academic staff; research, in its real sense, began after the establishment of the University of Ceylon; and the early research enterprise was in traditional disciplines. Research in economics, politics and sociology came to be encouraged, and Jennings, in providing the impetus for research, made a pioneering contribution by publishing on economic and political issues of the day. All annual reports dealt with research; the 1942 report, in fact, stated that war-time conditions interfered with the research of the academic staff; in addition, they were engaged in work outside the University.[175] It was in 1942 that two important journals, The University of Ceylon Review and the Ceylon Journal of Science came into existence. The University of Ceylon Review started 'in order that opportunity may be given for the publication of papers by members of the Faculties of Oriental Studies and Arts, and in order that literary periodical of high intellectual standard may be available for the people of the island'.[176] According to information available in the Annual reports, the research enterprise was substantial by 1954. Therefore, what needs to be examined is the manner in which Jennings, through his own research, encouraged the research enterprise of the

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[174] Ibid;p.278
[175] Annual Report of the University Council,1942, p.7.
[176] Ibid;p.7.

University;. Jennings, as mentioned earlier, stated that 'I have been oddly enough most prolific author in Ceylon'.[177] Seven new books were written and new editions of five books were published; he published approximately one book a year, and this, for a functioning Vice Chancellor, was a tremendous intellectual feat. Therefore, he, finally, wrote that 'time has come for me to devote myself to my books and so I have accepted the offer to return to my own University'.[178] As far as this study is concerned, our interest is in his publications on Ceylon, most of which provided an impetus for further research and they, in addition, highlighted the importance of a research culture for the University. In addition, Jennings, displaying his interest in local issues, both political and economic, wrote a number of articles which, indirectly, encouraged research in those particular fields.[179]

His writings on Ceylon, specially in this context, could be categorised into areas- (a) research articles with a focus on Ceylon and (b) general articles catering to the interests of the Ceylonese reader. The research publications, primarily books and articles on political and constitutional matters, were pioneering studies which provided immense insight to the researchers of the following generation. It, therefore, would be

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[177] Ceylon Today. Vol.4, No. 3 &: 4, p.20.

[178] Ibid;p.20.

[179] Jennings's publications on Ceylon were as follows:

Ceylon and Its People (1942 pp.48.

Comments on the Constitution (1947) p. 19.

Comments on Independence (1948) pp.44.

The Economy of Ceylon (194R) .pp.224.

The Constitution, of Ceylon (1949) pp.262.

The Ceylon General Election of 1947, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.Vl, No.3,1948 pp.132-195.

The Appointment of the Soulbury Commission, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol. No.3, 1945, pp.11-28.

The Evolution of the New Constitution, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.5,: pp. 1-20.

The General Report of the Census, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.VIII, No. 4, 1950

The Declaration of His Majesty's Government on Constitutional Proposals. The Precedents, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.1, 1943, pp 1-9.

The Constitutional Problem in Ceylon, in Political quarterly,Vol.16,1946.pp.288-297

The International Bank Mission Report, in The New Lanka, Vol.1 No.l,1952.pp.9-16.

Lord Soulbury and Ceylon, in The New Lanka. Vol.V, No.4, 1955.pp. 12 -6.

Crime and Corruption, in The New Lanka,Volll,No.2 of 1950.pp. 1-9.

The Post-War Undergraduate, in The New Lanka. Vol.l,No.1, 1949, pp.8-14.

Emergency Procedure in the State Council, in University of Ceylon Review, vol. pp. 8-24.

Nationalism and Political. Development in Ceylon, in Ceylon Historical Journal No.1, 1953, pp.62-84.

D.S.Senanayake and Independence, in Ceylon Historical Journal.Vol. 5, No.4, 1955-56 pp.16-22.

The Languages of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review. Vol. Xl, No.l of 1953, pp.1-9.

appropriate to refer to the two books which he published; one was the Economy of Ceylon and the other was the Constitution of Ceylon, the latter partly based on his experience as the constitutional adviser to the Government.[180] Das Gupta, referring to the Economy of Ceylon, stated that interest in economics is growing.; Jennings, as his preface mentioned, wrote this work when he was confined to his room with an attack of malaria. He accepted that he was not an economist but Das Gupta thought otherwise. Jennings stated that he produced this book because of 'the great ignorance that prevails in the country particularly among students, on economic questions.[181] Yet another reason, which compelled him to write, was the fact that a good deal of nonsense is talked in the debating societies about economic imperialism, self-sufficiency, Ceylonisation, industrialization and socialism. He thought that this confusion was due to the absence of texts. Jennings was against the idea of introducing economics as a subject on the ground that economics requires a certain degree of maturity of mind and that there is no such thing as elementary economics. Das Gupta took the opposite view when he stated that there are many important ideas in economics which can be easily communicated to young people. Jennings, in his text, which ran to 194 pages, summed the basic features of the economy. Though he gave vent to his own ideas on foreign capital and industrialization, his work provided lot of information on the island's economy. Das Gupta wrote that 'it is remarkable how a man who is not primarily an economist, but has other heavy responsibilities, could have at all produced it'. Ralph Pieris, quoting a don, stated that Economy of Ceylon, published in 1948 by the Oxford University press, was perhaps his worst effort in a field in which his knowledge was minimal.[182] This text, though targeted the student, paved the way for further research on the economy of the Island.

The Constitution of Ceylon (1951) was a study of the Soulbury Constitution, which included his knowledge on Constitutions and his own experience as the constitutional adviser to the Government. Before this is analysed in terms of its importance, it would be useful to refer to K.M. de Silva's study on Constitutional Documents which explained certain aspects of constitution making. According to

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[180] Marasinhe, Lakshman. Sir William Ivor Jennings 1903-1965. Law and Society Trust, Colombo, 1983, PP.36.

Also se De Silva, K.M. British Documents on the End of Empire. Sri Lanka. Part 1 & 1 London.

[181] This book was reviewed by Das Gupta. See University of Ceylon Review, Vol. X, 1952, pp. 183 -184.

[182] Pieris, Ralph. The case of Marasinghe Versus Jennings, in Island of 15 August, 1986.

information provided in this study of constitutional documents, Jennings had stated that 'I was in sympathy with Mr. Senanayake's aim to secure Dominion status at the earliest possible moment'.[183] Jennings, justifying his role as constitutional adviser, wrote that it was a part of the university tradition which he inherited. He, in fact, stated that 'University tradition in these matters is very clear. Universities are public corporations containing experts on most branches of knowledge who regard themselves as holding that knowledge in trust for the community. If, therefore, the Government of the country, or indeed any country, requires assistance it is the duty of the University to provide it'.[184] In addition, he stated his association with D.S. Senanayake became very fruitful because 'I placed my knowledge at the disposal of Mr.Senanayake.[185] This association continued for four and half years between 1943 and 1947; therefore, the framing of the Constitution of 1947, according to K.M. de Silva was a 'triumph of personality rather than of organisation'.[186] According to Governor Caldecott, 'Jennings was given a free hand to make suggestions and criticism behind the scenes, since it was clearly desirable to carry as far as possible'.[187]Though Jennings was the Vice Chancellor, he became the principal, though unofficial adviser to Senanayake and Oliver Goonetilleke on the transfer of power.[188] Since he had access to vital constitutional information, he made use of the material to write The Constitution Ceylon (1951). Dr. N. M. Perera, who made a very critical review of this text, wrote that Jennings was an expert in omniscience.[189] In addition to the Constitution of Ceylon, where the nascent parliamentary institutions were discused, Jennings prepared a manuscript on Constitutional Heritage of Ceylon 1931-48, which, though not published, contained a critical evaluation of the Donoughmore Constitution. The defense agreements of 1947, which formed an integral part of the Constitution, were drafted by him. [190] A.J. Wilson, who writes from his own point of view of the minorities and the language question, used Jennings to comment on certain matters pertaining to the language question. Jennings, in the course of his study of the

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[183] De Silva, K.M. ed. Constitutional Documents of the end of Empire. Sri Lanka, page lxxi
[184] Idib; p.lxxii.
[185] Ibid.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Co 537/1674/No.3
[188] De Silva, K.M. op.cit;p.186
[189] Perera , Dr. N .H. Review of Constitution of Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.8 1950, p.65.
[190] Wilson, A.J. The Archives of Jennings, in Lanka Guadian, 12,1989, p.19

language question, argued for a return to English. In his unpublished paper on 'An Aspect of the language Policy', he discussed the educational advantages of English.[191] It was in this article that he argued for the retention of English as the medium of instruction at the University. He, in fact, stated that 'the Ceylon' student has the same advantages as the English student, but it was subject to certain limitations. It depended on the question of access to knowledge; reference here was to the absence of libraries, including school libraries. He was of the view that the present standards were high, so some Ceylonese undergraduates write better English than many English undergraduates. If English is made the second language in Ceylon, the resulting situation was that a good knowledge of English will have a high cash value. The students from English speaking homes will have an immense advantage. Yet another point which he made was that linguistic nationalism began as a literary movement. His study on languages of Ceylon was based on the findings of the Census Report of 1946. He was critical of the Census stating that it was dominated by racialism.[192] Speaking on bilingualism based on statistics, he again stated that Peradeniya is the ideal place for a bilingual University. He did a close study of the Census Report as well.

His study on the General Election of 1947, which appeared in the Ceylon University Review, was a pioneering piece of work, and it laid the foundation for further research on elections and the electoral processes. This was the first parliamentary general election in Ceylon, which, in a variety of ways, was important for the country, and the election itself was unique for the future of Parliamentary Government in the country. Jennings himself lamented that he was inadequately equipped to the task because his experience in the country was just seven years and he spoke neither Sinhalese nor Tamil. What was important was his purpose in undertaking the study; he stated that 'I have therefore ventured to write an essay on the election of 1947 in the hope that it would stimulate interest and perhaps induce a Ceylonese to do the job adequately'.[193] He rightly

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[191] Jennings, Ivor. An Aspect of Language Policy unpublished paper in Jennings Papers, at the Library, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya.

[192] Jennings, Ivor. The General Report on the Census, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.VIII, No.4, 1950. Also see Jennings, Ivor. Languages of Ceylon, University of Ceylon Review. Vol.IX, No.l of 1953.

[193] Jennings, Ivor. The Ceylon General Election of 1947, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.VI, No. 3 of July,1948, pp.133-195.

stimulated an interest in psephological studies and several Ceylonese political. scientists undertook studies in the subsequent years.[194] Weerawardene studied the General Election of 1952, and this received a response from Jennings.[195] It showed that Jennings was keen to promote electoral studies in the country. The electoral system was created on the advice of Jennings, who wanted to give weightage to both population and the area, which later came to be criticized by the left wing political parties. The weightage given to area was not acceptable to them. The articles on the constitutional developments were many and most of them were written before the publication of the Constitution of Ceylon(1951),which, in fact, contained the ideas which he expressed through such articles.

In concluding this essay, one must recount the criticisms which Jennings generated during the course of his career in Ceylon. His opposition to free education and the national languages came to be interpreted as an attempt to look at the issue from a colonial point of view.[196] His opposition to both these issues invited a scathing attack from P.de.S.Kularatna, who said that 'Jennings was a Welshman and he stole our mother tongue'.[197] According to Ian Goonetilleke, Jennings had problems with undergraduates who, through their weekly paper, 'Varsity News', expressed anticolonial sentiments and Jennings became the target. It on the other hand, showed the emergence of a radical political consciousness among the undergraduates.[198] According to the perception of the undergraduates, Jennings was seen as 'an anti-nationalist in a crown colony ripe for independence.'[199] The undergraduates were also critical of his vision of an exclusively residential University. Jennings was well aware of this trend and he wrote

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[194] Ibid. 195

[195] Seethe following publications on electoral politics.
Weerawarde, I.D.S. The General Election of 1956.Colombo,1960
Wilson, A.J. General Election of 1970. Electoral Politics in an Emergent State. London, 1973.
Warnapala, Wiswa and Hewagema , Dias. Recent Politics in Sri Lanka. The Presidential, and The Referendum of 1982. New Delhi, 1983.
Warnapala, Wiswa. Local Politics in Sri Lanka. An Analysis of the Local Government, Election of May, 1991., New Delhi, 1993. , Provincial Politics in Sri Lanka. An Analysis of the Southern, Provincial Council Election, 1994. New Delhi, 1997. , Electoral Politics in Sri Lanka. A Study of the Parliamentary; , General Election of December, 2001. Colombo, 2001.

[196] Wilson, A.J. op.cit. in Lanka Guardian.

[197] See Ian Goonetilleke's Introduction to The Kandy Road, p.xv.

[198] Ibid; p.xv.

[199] De Silva, K.M. ed. Constitutional Documents, p.128.

that 'portrait in oils of Prof. Marrs had been slashed into ribbons by some disgruntled students'.[200] He was very critical of Marxist students; he made some remarks about them in his autobiography, and there was a special reference to N. Shanmugathasan, who later became a reputed member of the Communist Party.[201] His view on Marxism came to be illustrated in Stuff of Politics, where he stated that 'Marxism is, in fact, an abstruse theory of sociology or social philosophy, incapable, of being appreciated except by one as learned as Marx in the fields of Metaphysics, economics and economic history. The number of genuine Marxists is therefore small.'[202] He was critical of the undergraduates who displayed traits of nationalism, and he, therefore, once wrote that 'if a University is concerned with truth it cannot be national, for nationalism at best is but a convenient hypothesis adapted to an imperfect society'.[203] Ralph Pieris thought that Jennings , though introduced Sociology as a subject of study at the University, had only a vague understanding of new subjects as Sociology. He erroneously equated Sociology with Social Work.[204] It was Pieris' view that Jennings was a Fabian Socialist, just left of the centre.[205] As a member of the Ceylon Social Services Commission (1947), Jennings was able to inject his Fabian socialist ideas into the Report which recommended the adoption of a number of welfare measures including health and unemployment insurance, besides a national provident fund.[206] Jenning's comment that Ceylon was a cultural desert attracted a lot of opposition; Magam Tennakoon, a Sinhalese Honours graduate from the University of Ceylon, wrote a thundering attack in Sinhala. Jennings described Ceylon as 'little more than a cultural desert' except for a little oasis on Thurston Road - the reference "was to the University. He opposed forces of cultural awakening, nationalism and decolonisation which were fast gaining ground in an independent nation. It was Magam Tennekoon who described the University at Peradeniya as the 'Paradise of Parasites'- Paraputtange Paradisiya.[207] It was his view that the University has been set up to destroy the culture of the country. According to Tennakoon, all undergraduates were

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[200] Wilson, A.J. op.cit;p.-18.
[201] Jennings, Iyor. The Road to Peradeniya, pp.108-109.
[202] Jennings, Ivor Stuff of Politics. Vol.III, London, 1960, p.443
[203] Jennings, Ivor The Post-War Undergraduate, in the New Lanka, Vol.1, No.1, 1949, p.13.
[204] Pieris, Ralph (Rapier) The Case of Marasingha Versus Jennings, in The Island of 15th August,1986,p.8.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Report of the Social Service Commission. Sessional Paper Vll,1947.
[207] Tennakoon, Eagam. Paraputtange Paradisiya (Sinhala).Colombo,1958.

expected to wear the European dress, and if an undergraduate was found wearing the sarong, he was certain to be fined Rs. 2.50. Those who wore the sarong were treated as 'uncivilsed' men, a characterization made by a Catholic Warden of a Hall of Residence. The members of the Oriental Studies Faculty who wore the national dress, and spoke English with a Sinhala accent, were called 'Haramanises', or 'Godayatics'. According to Ralph Pieris, the national dress sported by the students of the Oriental Faculty in the forties 'became obsolete in the fifties'. [208] Tennakoon saw the University as a place dominated by an alien culture, and it was his opinion that the University needs to be re-organised in such a way so as to see that it fits in well to the national culture of the country.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike once attacked Jennings; he stated that 'this gentleman Jennings, who has now become an expert upon all subjects in this country from advising officials on Constitutional Law to A.R.P. work and general university problems can claim to pose as one expert upon all subjects- as an authority upon every subject under the sun; that a second rate minor intellect in England comes out here and like a Triton, poses as a great authority upon every subject under the sun and he apparently puts up a memorandum which is the chief source of inspiration'[209] Bandarnaike, speaking further in support of F.R. Jayasuriya for the post, stated that 'we cannot get a person far superior to Harold Laski'[210] Jennings held the view that Ceylonisation should not interfere with University appointments. Dr. N.M. Perera was of the view that Jennings wrote the Constitution of Ceylon on the basis of his association with leading political personalities and he, therefore, was 'guilty of this personality approach to politics'.[211] It was his view that 'to reduce the freedom of a country to the problem of personalities is the negation of national political thought'.[212] Though Perera had made such criticisms, he was aware of the status of Jennings. He once stated in the University Court that 'Sir Ivor's place is not here; Ceylon is too small for a man of his caliber; he should be in England, at one of the ancient Universities, doing that research

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[208] Pieris, Relph. op.cit. in The Island of 15 August, 1986.
[209] Idib. Column 529
[210]
[211] Idib
[212] Perera, N.M. op.cit;p.65.

for which he is justly famous'.[213] It was his view that Jennings relied heavily on personalities instead of political trends and events.

Jennings, before his departure from Ceylon, received praise as well as criticisms. S.J.K. Crowther, writing in the Times of Ceylon, stated that the trouble with Jennings is that he is no politician.[214] Certain critics think that he behaved like a politician, and this charge was due to his close association with a certain group of politicians in the country. Times of Ceylon wrote an article titled 'Sir Ivor Jennings: Man who made people believe in themselves', and it stated that it was Jennings who 'transformed the vision of Ponnambalam Arunachalam and James Pieris into reality'.[215] His achievements involved prodigious work but hard work never ruffled his equanimity. This equanimity marked his relation with colleagues and student alike. His most important contribution was his commitment to the idea of autonomy. He will allow nobody, never however highly placed, to regard the University as a sub-department of their own; of its autonomy he has been a jealous and vigilant guardian.[216] Jennings, through his work and commitment to academic freedom, enriched the academic enterprise in Ceylon, and the legacy of Jennings still persists in the academic life of the country. Yet the model which he constructed at Peradeniya has been emulated by the other Universities, creating a plethora of problem within the system.

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[213] Times of Ceylon. March 29, 1954.
[214] Times of Ceylon, March 21, 1954.
[215] Idib.
[216] Idib.

Chapter VII

Expansion of the System of University Education

The impact of the free education scheme, which was described as the social demand model of education, had a direct impact on the University of Ceylon, and in response to the growing demand for higher education, several important policy initiatives were taken, which came along with the introduction of national Languages - Swabasha - as the medium of instruction. It is, therefore necessary to discuss the expansion of the system, with its accompanying results which completely changed the structure of University education in the country. The very concept of the unitary residential university, which the pioneers of university education cherished as an ideal, came under attack, and the Oxbridge model, which flourished at Peradeniya, faced a massive challenge.

According to Chandrasegaram, there were different schools of thought on the question of expansion of university education, and all the advocates of different points of view on the matter were of the opinion that one single unitary University cannot satisfy the growing demand and needs for higher education in the country.[1] Though the Main Campus of the University of Ceylon was established in 1952, the increasing demand for university education created a need for two Campuses, both in Colombo and Peradeniya. The other important innovation was the creation of two Universities Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Universities - based on the two ancient institutions of learning. The establishment of these two Universities was a part of the process of the Buddhist renaissance which came along with the recommendations of the Buddhist Commission of Inquiry. But the whole issue of expansion of University education came to be closely identified with the question of admissions to the existing University of Ceylon. It was known that the residential unitary university was planned on the basis of a restricted intake, and the original Peradeniya scheme, according to Malalasekera, envisaged a University of 1000 students.[2] The founders of the University

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[1]Vide Channdrasegaram, P. : Policies regarding Higher Education in Ceylon during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, with Special reference to the establishment of the University of Ceylon. M.A.Thesis, University of London,1961.

[2]Malalasekera., G.P.op.cit;p. 875.

of Ceylon expected the numbers to increase along with the increase in the demand for University education, and Jennings, though remained strongly committed to a restricted intake, was of the view that in future, steps have to be taken to establish a second unit in Thurston Road. Jennings, writing on this question, stated that 'in due course there will be no doubt 3500, and Peradeniya has been planned - since the creation of the University - on that basis. Very likely university development wil1 not stop there but when the demand is reaching 3500 steps must be taken in Thurston Road to start a second unit.[3] The authorities were not alive to the developing demand, which came along with the impact of the free education scheme, and it was not given much thought in the fifties and sixties. In view of the large numbers of students at the Colombo Campus of the University of Ceylon, the university of Colombo was elevated to the status of an independent University in 1967. The demand for expansion of university education was associated with the populist criticism of university education; the growing populist opinion was of the view that university education is very exclusive, and it operated on the basis of a restricted admission policy. The popular demand was that university education should be in the national languages and this, they thought, would open more opportunities for university education in the country. According to Ralph Pieris, the pressure groups which demanded unlimited extension of university education wished for a situation in which all young people could qualify for socially esteemed jobs[4].

The official opinion on University education was undergoing a change since 1946; it was in 1946 that a Committee reported on Sinhalese and Tamil as official languages, and according to this report, it was possible for a person to attain the highest position in the land without knowing a word of the national languages.[5] There was yet another Commission - the Commission on Higher education in National Languages, which, making a study of the present university, stated that 'we are of the opinion that the University, if it is to serve the highest interests of the country and fulfill the spiritual and moral aspirations of the people, should align itself to the needs of the country and play a vital role in disseminating knowledge amongst the larger

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[3] Jennings,Ivor. The Foundation of ,the University of Ceylon, .in University of Ceylon Review,Vol.IX,No.3 of 1951,p.25l.

[4] Pieris,Ralph. op.cit;p. 447

[5]Sinhalese and Tamil as Official languages. Sessional Paper 1946.

majority of the people of the land. But as things stand now, University education is denied to 94 percent of the people. The University denies education to the Swabasha educated pupils by prescribing as one condition of eligibility a pass in the SSC (English Medium) or higher examination.'[6] The Commission wanted the University to adopt a sufficiently progressive policy towards the national languages without further delay, and it emphasised the need to 'help the cause of Swabasha by throwing open its portals to those who are qualified in Swabasha, so that they may enter the University and benefit by higher education'.[7] The recommendations of this Commission were to be implemented before 1960 as the Swabasha educated students were tapping at the doors of the University in 1961. The official decision to change the medium of instruction naturally affected the demand and it meant that more Universities were now necessary. The Commission on Higher Education in National Languages spoke of more Universities; the Commission, in fact, stated that 'there should be at least two other Sinhala medium Universities in Colombo and Galle as against a Tamil medium University in Batticaloa or Jaffna'.[8] This is ample evidence to the fact that the switch-over to swabasha demanded the establishment of Universities. In fact, the Commission wanted the Government to establish a Tamil medium University before 1962.[9] The chapter XV of the Report of the Commission titled 'urgency for more Universities in Ceylon' stated that Ceylon should have at least four Universities if one person in every 2000 is to be educated in a University of the size of the present one.[10] This Commission disagreed with the view that university education should be determined by the availability of employment.[11] As far as the University of Ceylon was concerned, the Vice Chancellor Sir Nicholas Attygalla yielded to these pressures and showed his readiness to extend the benefits of higher education to all those deserving such education.[12] It was during this period that there was an unprecedented increase in the size of the student population, and the concept of a residential university, based on a limited intake, could not be sustained in the face of an increase in the number of students. As anticipated by Jennings, the second unit of the University of Ceylon was

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[6] Report of the Commission on Higher Education in National Languages. Sessional Paper, X,1956,p.71.
[7] Ibid;p. 71.
[8] Ibid;p.75.
[9] Ibid;p.82.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid;p.83.
[12] Malalasekera,G.P.op.cot;p879.

set up in Colombo. Not much planning was done at this stage, and as a result of the ad hoc policy measures, the standards were affected; the victims were primarily the Arts and Oriental Faculties as they had the largest number of students. Most Swabasha students opted to study traditional subjects taught in these two Faculties.

In the initial period, the agitation for expansion focused on the University of Ceylon. Subsequently, the agitation was for the creation of new Universities. Unlike in the period of Jennings, who successfully resisted political pressure for expansion, Sir Nicholas Attygalle could not resist the forces which demanded a new orientation to University education in Ceylon. It was a new political situation linked to the political change of 1956, which, in fact, saw the emergence of a series of radical nationalistic trends. The University autonomy, which remained jealously guarded, was under serious threat, and the University was asked to work according to the objectives of the Ministry of Education.[13] This kind of threat to university autonomy and academic freedom appeared largely due to the failure of the university leadership to plan the expansion according to the changes in the country; for instance, the University wanted to remain in the same mould which Jennings created for Peradeniya and it now became outmoded in the face of the pressure to enthrone Sinhala language as the medium of instruction.

It was in this background that both Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara were created, and W. Dahanayake, who introduced the Bill to create the two Universities, stated that this was being done in response to an understanding given during the 1956 general election in which the Buddhist Sangha, through an effective organisation called the Eksath Bhikku Peramuna (FBP), campaigned for the victory of the MEP. Therefore, the creation of the two Universities became a concession given to the vociferous group of Buddhist Monks, and most of its leaders came from the Vidyalankara Pirivena at Kelaniya. Yet another objective, according to W. Dhahanayake, the Minister of Education, was to give Sinhala language its due place in the sphere of higher education; the second important objective was to provide access to

[13] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit;p. 25.

those students who were seeking admission to the University.[14] The background of these two ancient seats of learning - Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara - were religious in character as these two institutions, based on ancient traditions, functioned as centres of learning confined to the members of the Buddhist sangha. They were founded in 1873 and 1875 as 'products of the Buddhist renaissance of the last quarter of the nineteenth century'.[15] Though there was no opposition to the conversion of these two centres of learning into Universities, there was a school of thought which contended that these two Universities should confine themselves to Buddhist and Oriental Studies. The Pirivena Universities Act, No. 45 of 1958, though modelled on the University of Ceylon, had certain unique features; for instance, provision was made for the appointment of Buddhist monks as Vice Chancellors, and the two universities, with several such appointments, became more non-secular in their orientation. There was a school of thought, which argued that these two Universities, if they are to achieve the main objective of expanding access, should function as fully-fledged Universities, with no restrictions placed as to the nature of disciplines. The Universities Act, No. 45 of 1958, as stated earlier, 'was based substantially on the Ceylon university Ordinance of 1942, and they began to emulate the pioneer in a variety of ways. The model of governance imposed on the two Universities by the Act of 1958 was similar to the model of the University of Ceylon with slight modifications to suit the monastic tradition'.[16] There was not much of a change with regard to the growing demand for university education.

The nature of the demand for university education could be studied from the point of view of the number of students seeking to enter the University and the number of students registered as external students of the University of London. Yet another innovation made in response to the demand for university education was the introduction of the Ceylon University (Amendment) Act of 1961, which empowered the University to conduct external examinations.[17] This was done primarily to discourage students from preparing for London examinations, and also to discourage

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[14] Gamage, D.T. The Struggle for Control of Higher Education in a Developing Economy. Sri Lanka, in Comparative Education. Vol.19 ,No. 3,1983, p.325.

[15] Malalasekera,G.P.op.cit;p.880.

[16] Gamage, S.T. A Review of the Development and Management of the Sri Lankan System of Higher Education, in Perspectives in Education, Vol.7, No.4,1991,p.215.

[17] Jayawardene,W.A. op.cit;n.74.

students from going to study at the Universities in India. It was during this period that Needham Commission was appointed to review the working of the University of Ceylon since its establishment in 1942 and make recommendations for the future development of the University. The appointment of this Commission coincided with the decision of the Government to end the monopoly of the University of Ceylon. On the other hand, there were criticisms of the restrictive admission policy which Jennings followed in respect of the University of Ceylon, and this, according to some critics, would lead to 'intellectual retardation' in the country. The Needham Commission, appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act, No.17of 1948, was expected to report on the following matters:

1. the aims and objects of university education in Ceylon;
2. university and its relation with the Government;
3. finances of the University;
4. the maintenance of high standards in the University;
5. the courses of study in relation to the present and future needs of Ceylon.

Thirteen other areas, were highlighted as well on various aspects of University education in Ceylon.[18] The provisions for advanced study, the organisation of research, medium of instruction, the granting of external degrees, the condition of service of teachers, the need for other Universities, and the need for advanced research in Ceylon were the other areas on which the Commission focussed. The Commission, the first of its kind in Ceylon since the establishment of the University of Ceylon, produced a very comprehensive report on many a matter affecting University education in Ceylon, and it, as expected, ran into 368 pages.

The chapter 11 of the Report dealt with the objectives of university education in Ceylon, and the Commission, while recognising the traditional role of the University, stated that 'in considering the specific question of university education in Ceylon, it is useful to bear in mind the criticism which has been directed against the University for a considerable period of time,[19] The Commission took the view that 'it was unusual that the only national university in a country should have been subjected

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[18] Dr. Joseph Needham, Professor C.C. Chatterji and L.J.de.S.Seneviratne were members of the Commission. See Report of the Ceylon University Commission. Sessional Paper, XXIII,1959,p.1

[19] Needhamt Report,p.4. 20 Ibid;p.4.

to severe criticism from different quarters without any noteworthy defense being made on behalf'.[20] According to the Commission, the absence of defenders meant that the University stood condemned in the eyes of the nation. Therefore, it became the central question of their inquiry. In the course of their findings, they discovered that that the University had up to now failed to achieve the high ideals for which it was established. The Commission listed eight reasons, which were considered as objections against the University, and they were as follows:

1. The atmosphere of the University was alien and hostile to the traditions of the country.
2. The University had increasingly promoted 'an ivory tower' attitude devoid of responsibility to the nation.
3. The University was not responsible even to Parliament; the sovereign body in a democratic country.
4. The type of graduate produced was totally unsuitable for the country
5. There was an absence of research tradition
6. Undergraduate indiscipline.
7. Non-representative character of the governing bodies.
8. The absence of Departments devoted to the study of the cultural traditions of the country.[21]

The Commission, however, expressed the view that all the criticism has not been fair, and there was a certain degree of exaggeration. They were of the view that the University established in an independent country, has to play a new role. Therefore, the Commission recognised the demand for university education and the expansion of facilities as the fundamental problems; they, in fact, stated that the expansion of university education be given immediate attention. Everyone, who gave evidence before the Commission, agreed that 'University education in Ceylon needed rapid expansion to meet the pressure of increasing numbers'[22]. By building up an educated elite while neglecting popular education, the colonial government helped to preserve a barrier between an entrenched upper class and the mass of the people. It was the hereditary aristocracy and the upper class strata who, in the initial phase, sent their

[20] Ibid;p.4.
[21] Ibid;p.5.
[22] Ibid;p.135.

children to the University. It was assumed that Peradeniya could accommodate 4000 students; it was considered the desirable optimum for a residential University at Peradeniya, but the following figures illustrated the growing trend in relation 'to the numbers seeking admission to the University in the period 1953 to 1957[23].

	Admissions	
Year	**Number seeking admission**	**Number selected**
1953	2132	514
1954	2053	607
1955	2096	658
1956	2137	750
1957	2289	763

Source : Annual Reports of the University of Ceylon

This was the situation when English was the medium of the examination for entrance to the university. With the decision to conduct the examination in the national languages in 1959/60, the situation came to be radically altered. Though the admission to the Faculty of Medicine was restricted due to inadequate facilities, the admission to Faculties of Arts were liberally increased. It was this policy which resulted in a steady increase in the student population at Peradeniya. The admission to Physical and Biological sciences remained restricted. Therefore, on the basis of such information, the Needham Commission came to the conclusion that there is a very big demand for university education in Ceylon and that the existing facilities are inadequate or unsatisfactory.[24] It was their view that the problems of numbers cannot be ignored much longer because it is the responsibility of the nation. The question of university education and employment came to be discussed; it was thought that it would be inadvisable to expand university education without ensuring a corresponding expansion of employment opportunities. In other words, it was

[23] Ibid;p.136.
[24] Ibid;p.140.

mentioned that there should be a co-relation between the annual output of graduates and employment opportunities available . The commission, rather prophetically, mentioned that expansion of university education, without due consideration of such factors, might create a class of discontented graduates unemployed.[25] What happened subsequently in Ceylon in relation to unemployed graduates vindicated this statement of the Commission. It, though, indirectly recommended an expansion of university education, paid attention to the contents of courses; it suggested a scheme of diversification of courses, and gave more weightage to subjects of special interest to Ceylon.[26]

It was during this period that the legislature in the country began to discuss the "need for more Universities in the country. P.Kandiah wanted a University in Colombo and Jaffna and Dr.N.M Perera, supporting this suggestion demanded a second University in Colombo.[27] Dr. N.M. Perera was one who opposed the site at Peradeniya and, therefore, criticised the construction of the University at Peradeniya. It was his view that much money has been spent on, 'excessive architectural embellishments'.[28] Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe, on the other hand, focused on the need to produce more doctors and that the University should play a role in the country's agricultural and industrial development. It was his view that the country should have at least one university student for everyone thousand of the population.[29] He suggested that the unitary residential principle was not suitable for an under-developed country like Ceylon. All these comments and viewpoints directly stressed the need for expansion of university education. The report of the Needham Commission, which included a number of suggestions pertaining to the expansion of university education in Ceylon, lost its significance because of the dissenting report submitted by L.J.de S. Seneviratne, who was the only Ceylonese member of the Commission[30] The Commission, with a view to expanding access to higher educational opportunities, suggested an additional University in Colombo, the creation of several independent

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[25] Ibid;p.141.
[26] Ibid;p.144.
[27] Hansard. House of Representatives.Vol.26,1956-57.
[28] Ibid
[29] Dr. S.A. Wickremasinghe' s views on this matter appeared in Ceylon Daily News of 5th August, 1957.
[30] See the Dissenting Report of L.J.de.S.Seneviratne,pp.279-343 in the Needham Report.

Universities, decentralisation of university education, the establishment of Regional Universities and a University for Tamil speaking people.[31] It was the view of the Commission that by enlarging the facilities through the scheme suggested, the country would be able to meet the problem of increasing demand for higher education in the country.

L.J.de S. Seneviratne, who produced the minority report, focused his attention on the issue of expansion of university education; there was difference of opinion on the elevation of the Pirivenas as Universities in 1958. The two Universities came into existence while the Commission was engaged in writing the report, which, in effect, meant that they could not comment on it. But they took the view that 'the introduction of the measure would not materially affect the major problem of expansion of University education.'[32] While they fully appreciated the government's wish to give recognition to these two centres of Buddhist learning, they did not think that they could conform to the objects of a University; Joseph Needham, in his explanatory note, wrote that any attempt to convert the Pirivenas into full-fledged Universities with Faculties of Science, Medicine, Engineering and so on will lower standards and create unhealthy rivalry between these institutions and the National University of Ceylon,.[33] Elaborating his stand on the matter, Needham stated that the Pirivenas, under this process of change,' would lose their traditional characteristics.'[34] The Needham Commission wanted these institutions to specialise in traditional disciplines, and every effort was to be made within this sphere to 'bring them up to the requirements of modern critical scholarship'.[35] In addition, they mentioned that these new Universities should not conduct external examinations, which should be the sole concern of the University of Ceylon.[36] According to Seneviratne's minority report, the financial resources of the country could not permit a system consisting of five Universities. He criticised the proposal to establish a University in Jaffna, and he disagreed with the Commission's characterisation of the Pirivena Universities as 'bogus Universities'. Professor Chatterjee took the view that the Pirivenas, though had

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[31] Needham Report
[32] Chandrasegaram,P. op.cit;p.161
[33] Needham,Report,p.240
[34] Ibid;p.240.
[35] Ibid;
[36] Ibid;p.240.

done excellent work in the past, did not conform to the basic pattern of a University'.[37] L.J.de S. Seneviratne wanted the same status to be accorded to other seats of learning, and wanted the same recognition to be given to such centres of learning in the North and East. He disagreed with the recommendation of the Commission to make external degrees the sole monopoly of the University of Ceylon.

This kind of difference of opinion on the question of expansion of university education, in the end, affected its recommendations. According to some critics, the Needham Report did not make much of an impact on the evolution of the University system in Ceylon.[38] The demand for liberalisation of the admission policy and the switch over to Sinhala and Tamil as the medium of instruction had a major effect on the system. The Government, due to political pressure, wanted the University to change the medium of instruction from English to the national languages. The popular demand was that university instruction should be in the national languages and this would offer opportunities to a larger number of students. The Commission on Higher Education in National Languages, in fact, mentioned that 'a Ceylon University would be useless as such if it fails to undertake its share in the development of the national languages of Ceylon.'[39] Though this was the official position in respect of the medium of instruction at the University, the academic community pointed out various problems involved in teaching in the national languages.[40] It was the view of Ralph Pieris that the University of Ceylon was 'demonstrably out of harmony with the populist forces, because it was pointed out various problems involved in teaching in the national languages.'[41] The new Pirivena Universities, as anticipated, adopted a different attitude on this issue. However, the University of Ceylon had to come to terms with the policy of the Government, and in 1968, both Arts and Science Faculties agreed to teach in the national languages. The University of Ceylon, though showed some hesitance at the start, gave fullest cooperation to convert the medium of instruction into national languages. The number of Arts students in secondary schools, which lacked facilities for science, increased, and a majority of the candidates taking

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[37] Ibid.
[38] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H.op.cit;p. 27
[39] Final report of the Commission on Higher Education in the National Languages. Sessional Paper X,1956.
[40] Malalasekera, G.P.o.p.cit;p.885
[41] Pieris, Ralph. op.cit;p.449.

the University Entrance examination from rural schools offered Sinhalese, Pali and Ceylon History. It was this group of students who later became teachers in secondary schools, who, in turn, began to produce more candidates for arts degrees in a few select subjects.[42] The over production of Arts students, therefore, became an integral aspect of the expansion of university education, which, subsequently, created a fresh set of problems in the country. Laksiri Jayasuriya, who made comprehensive analysis of the developments in University education, supported this point of view, and wrote that 'the real expansion of the rapid growth of the size of the University must be sought in the growth of the Faculty of Arts'.[43] The adoption of three languages - Sinhala, Tamil and English - as the medium of instruction had created enormous problems within the University system; this had been identified as the cause for the deterioration of standards.[44] In the period 1963-65, the residential principle, on which the University of Ceylon was built, could not be sustained. This was due to the inordinate increase in the number of students, and the Government was determined to dismantle the exclusive residential character of the University. This, again was related to the popular demand in the country.

The two Pirivena Universities, breaking away from the exclusive residential tradition of the University of Ceylon, followed a non-restrictive admission policy. Admission, in fact, was confined to both lay students and bhikkus, which, meant that the Universities had two categories of students. That was why the question arose whether they were secular institutions of learning. The Vidyodaya University of Ceylon, which functioned in the first three years in the premises of the Vidyodaya Pirivena at Maligakanda, Maradana, was shifted to Gangodawila, Nugegoda. It began in 1959/60 with 466 students, and the number of students in 1967/68 was 2004; at the beginning, nearly 60 percent of the students were bhikkus, and this began to fall to about 20 percent in 1968. The process towards secularisation of the University received yet another impetus with the opening of the University to female students. Under the original piece of legislation, only male students were made eligible for admission as internal students, with the repeal of this part of the Act, nearly 500 female students were given admission. Yet another important feature was that about 55

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[42] Ibid iP.450.
[43] Jayasuriya, D.L.op.cit;p.p.121
[44] De Silva, K.M. Universities and the Government in Sri Lanka, in Minerva, XVI, 2,1978,pp.251-272.

percent of the students were in the Faculty of Arts, 28 percent in the Faculty of Languages and 16 percent in the Faculty of Buddhism. The Faculty of Science had only one percent of students.[45] Since the University enjoyed the power to grant external degrees, there was a considerable increase in the number of external students. A significant change was that access to University education had been expanded and it was this that the Government intended to achieve by creating the two Universities. The Vidyalankara University, in terms of its development and expansion, followed the same pattern. The University, though initially began within the Pirivena premises at Peliyagoda, was shifted to Dalugama, Kelaniya; this University, which at its inception, began with 543 students in 1961, had 2115 students in 1967. As in the case of Vidyodaya University, this University, at its commencement, had a large number of bhikkus as students-63 percent of the total number of students. By 1967, this declined to 18 percent of the total number of students, and this was how the secular character was expanded. Yet another important aspect was that three Humanities-oriented Faculties dominated the academic life of the University. In 1966-67 period, 52 percent of the students belonged to the Arts Faculty, 36 percent in the faculty of Languages and 12 percent in the Faculty of Buddhism. In addition, bulk of the students in Arts read History and economics, while students in the faculty of Languages read Sinhala. This provides ample evidence to the effect that expansion of university education favoured traditional disciplines which fell within Arts and Humanities, and this later resulted in the creation of graduates who were not employable. Though the expansion of university education created more access, it created a fresh set of problems for the country which, in the seventies, was looking for new solutions.

Some reference has to be made to the creation of the University of Colombo, although some aspects have been already discussed in the previous chapter. The National Council of Higher Education (NCHE) recommended the creation of the University of Colombo; there was a well established infra-structure for the establishment of a University in Colombo. It started with 4960 students and again the students registered for Arts stood at 3650 while both Medicine and Science had 926 and 384 students respectively. It showed that the expansion of university education came to be closely associated with the growth in the number of Arts students. This was

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[45] Malalasekere,G.P.op.cit;p. 887.

the general pattern of expansion which came to be heavily criticised in the seventies as it created a major burden on the State.

Within three years, another Commission was appointed to report on 'the working and administration of the then existing three Universities in Ceylon'.[46] It, unlike the Needham Commission, consisted of Ceylonese, and their report, consisting of 18 chapters, touched issues as Pirivenas, Pirivena Universities Act, Administration of Pirivena Universities, Higher education of the Bhikkus, Finances, Courses of Study, Standard of Teaching and Examinations and Expansion of University education.[47] There was a special chapter titled 'the working and administration of the University of Ceylon and the measures proposed for efficient management'.[48] The Commission, in respect of the expansion of University education was expected to report on 'whether any one or more of the three Universities should be expanded and whether any University or University College be permitted to be established'.[49] This was the mandate given to the Commission in respect of the question of expansion of higher educational opportunities. The Commission, while accepting the fact that there was a growing demand for higher education, stated that 'nothing should be done to deny university education to any student who has the capacity to benefit from it'.[50] They, at the same time, were aware of the changes which could result from the production of a large number of graduates who have no early prospect of profitable employment. The Commission thought that the concentration of all university teaching in one location was not desirable; the Commission, therefore, suggested the dispersal of the facilities of higher education to convenient centres. Subsequently, this idea of dispersal came to be incorporated in the policy on higher education. The Commission, in its observations on the working of the University of Ceylon, was critical of the Vice Chancellor, who practically controlled all the administrative bodies of the university. They, in fact, stated that 'the continuance of this arrangement for too long a period has however resulted in these bodies losing their independence, and nearly echoing the Vice Chancellor's opinions'.[51] This was a stricture on the style of administration of the

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[46] Report of the Universities Commission of 1962. Sessional Paper XVl,1963.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid;p.136
[51] Ibid;p.126.

University of Ceylon under the Vice Chancellor, Sir Nicholas Attygalla. Such critical comments were made on all institutions in the University, and the system, according to the Commission, was unsatisfactory. The scathing criticism which the Commission made of the administration provoked a response from the Vice Chancellor, Sir Nicholas Attygalle, who openly criticized findings of the Commission. His response was a 41 page letter to the His Excellency, the Governor General, Sir William Gopallawa, and some reference to certain aspects of this letter is fundamentally important to understand some of the issues.[52] He took objection to the fact that the Commissioners described him 'as an autocrat, with strong likes and dislikes and one who brooks no opposition'.[53] It was the view of the Commission that administration at the University deteriorated due to this personality-oriented administration. Attygalle, in his letter to the Governor General, stated that he, in the administration of the University, was guided by the Court and the Council, which, according to him, consisted of eminent men. The Council consisted of 19 members whereas the Court consisted of 94 members, and most of the non-university members had displayed outstanding independence in other walks of life and their personalities were not of a character that would submit tamely to anyone's dictation.[54] This was the nature of his defense; the Vice Chancellor thought that the whole report was prepared with the ulterior motive of removing him. He finally concluded that 'the recommendations show that their knowledge of university affairs is very superficial.'[55] Though the Gunawardene Commission made some useful recommendations, the criticism made by Attygalla could not be ignored and the recommendations, though fell in line with the policy of the Government, were not immediately implemented. But the fact remains that the recommendations of the Commission, as the recommendations of the Needham Commission, provided some guidelines for changes in the future policy on university education in the country.

The change of Government in 1965, as expected, made an impact on the formulation of public policy in the sphere of university education. Two important Commissions - Needham Commission of 1959 and the Gunawardene Commission of

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[52] Sir Nicholas Attyegalle's letter dated 29th July, 1964,
[53] Report of the Universities Commission. Sessional Paper xvi, 1963, para 339.
[54] Vide Sir Nicholes Attygalla's letter Ibid.
[55] Vide Vice chancellor's letter

1962 - made important recommendations for the future development of university education. It was in this background that the Higher Education Act of 1966 was introduced by a Government, the political coloration of which was conservative in outlook. The university education had gone through a difficult period; several new changes took place within the system since the establishment of the unitary residential university. The most important change was the expansion of university education with the establishment of new Universities and the rapid growth of student numbers. The growth in the student numbers was primarily in such areas of study as Arts and Social Science. There was an uncontrolled increase in the size of the student population in the Arts and Social science.[56] It was in the period 1963-65 that there was a phenomenal increase in the student population of the universities, and the proportion of Arts students increased to 68 percent in 1965. The total intake in 1965-66 was 14,367 and the intake in the following year was 15,096. The Government was able to provide university education to these increasing numbers by adopting various ad hoc measures; access was provided to every deserving child and the universities were able to help the Government to expand the opportunities for university education in the country.[57] This kind of rapid growth in numbers seeking university education ' had been proceeding on an ad hoc basis without any centrally coordinated plan or a conscious attempt to integrate the higher educational programme with the general social, economic and cultural requirements and plans of the nation'.[58] It was now felt that steps need to be taken to reorganise the existing system of university education in order to make it more responsive to the needs of the country; yet another important need was to set up a new statutory body for the purpose of coordination and planning of the Universities. The most important function to be accorded to this body was the role of an intermediary between the institutions of higher education and the central government. Such a body was not necessary when the system was totally unitary; but now the system was federal, with a number of Universities, which, therefore, meant that some organisation was necessary to provide advice on policy. With the growth of Universities, there was unanimity among the academics that such an organisation was necessary. In the meantime, there was a school of thought which recommended State control of the

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[56] De Silva, K.M. The University of Peradeiya. A Short History, in University of Peradeniya Golden Jubilee souvenir, 1942-1992,pp.1-14.

[57] Indrarane, A.V. de. S. Access to University Education, in Gunawardene, R.A.L.H. ed. More Open than Usual. Peradeniya, 1992,p.14.

[58] Malalasekera, G.P. p.896.

Universities, and this was an inevitable development because the entire system of education, with the takeover of the assisted schools, had come under the Ministry of Education, whose Minister, I.M.I.R.A. Iriyagolla, had by this time, emerged as the most vigorous exponent of a policy of State control over the Universities'.[59] The growing student indiscipline in the Universities too was utilised to justify the introduction of a policy of State control of the Universities.

The Higher Education Act. No. 20 of 1966, which repealed the Ordinance No. 20 of 1942 and the Act. No. 45 of 1958, introduced a common academic and administrative structure for all Universities and the special feature of this legislation was the establishment of the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE), through which the Government wanted to control the Universities. The NCHE was constituted with non-University personnel, and the following powers and functions were assigned to it.

(a) the apportionment and control of expenditure on higher education.

(b) the maintenance of academic standards in higher educational institutes.

(0) the administration of such institutes.

(d) the coordination of higher education with the needs of the nation for social, cultural and economic development.

Under this Act, the administrative authority of a University was in the hands of a Board of Regents, consisting of the Vice Chancellor and 11 others appointed by the NCHE. With this innovation, the authority enjoyed by the academics was effectively removed and the appointment of a Vice Chancellor was to be made by the Minister of education from a panel of three names submitted to him by the NCHE. Under this scheme of appointment, the Minister could appoint non-academics as Vice Chancellor and he did appoint such men as Vice Chancellors during his period of office. Yet another innovation was the establishment of a Central Agency for Admission, and with this, the Universities lost control over one vitally important aspect of university administration - the intake of students. The University of Ceylon was now expected to work according to the dictates of the NCHE. The university autonomy, which the University of Ceylon enjoyed since the inception of the institution, came to

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[59] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p.31.

be threatened. The tradition was that when Universities were first instituted, they were given the right to manage their own affairs, and to decide their own teaching. This tradition, which Jennings injected into the system, remained jealously guarded till this particular piece of legislation provided avenues of interference in the internal affairs of the University. Therefore, the Higher Education Act.No.20 of 1966 was considered a major turning point in the history of university education in the country.[60] All matters pertaining to internal administration, rather indirectly, came within the purview of the NCHE, which, now began to introduce schemes of recruitment for both academic and non-academic staff; the procedure of appointment too came within the purview of the NCHE, and it enjoyed power in relation to departments of study, determination of fees, examinations and conditions for the award of bursaries and scholarships. Interestingly, it was the NCHE which examined the qualifications of the academic staff to see whether they possessed the required qualifications. This, in fact, meant that the Government, through the NCHE, removed the control of the internal affairs of the university by the academics, and thus the university autonomy, which remained a sacred convention, was threatened. This led to discontentment among the academic community. Yet another development, which came in the form of resistance was student unrest. The academic community openly clashed with the Minister of Education on many a matter, which they perceived as flagrant violations of the concept of university autonomy and academic freedom. Before the Bill was passed, the Standing Committee of the House of Representatives - specially the members of the Opposition- made a valiant attempt to press for amendments. They were rejected, and J.E. Jayasuriya noted that 'posterity owes its thanks to the opposition parties for having reduced some of the threats to the principle of university autonomy and academic freedom'.[61]

It was in this scenario that the 1970 General Election took place, and a sizable segment of the academic community, including such stalwarts as Prof. Ediriweera Sarathchadra, entered the fray with the sole objective of defeating the Government. The venom of the academic community was directed at the Minister of Education, whose policies and behavior became a major campaign issue at election in 1970. The academic community and the university students, unlike at previous

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[60] De Silva, K.H. & Pieris,G.H.op.cit;p. 330.
[61] Jayasuriya, J .E. Education in Ceylon 1939-1968.Colombo,1969,p.173.

elections, conducted a house-to-house campaign against the educational policies of the Government, and it, therefore, added strength to the campaign against the Government. One must accept that there was a modest expansion of university education between 1966 - 1970; for instance, the creation of a separate University in Colombo in 1967, the elevation of the status of the Institute of Technology at Katubedda to the level of a College of Advanced Technology, and the conversion of the Pirivena Universities into absolutely secular institutions. It was with this change in policy that the two Universities began to establish Faculties of Science, and with this, the two Universities were on the road to obtain international recognition. Though there was much interference from the Ministry of Education, the academic community, especially those trained in the tradition of academic freedom, resisted all inroads made to destroy the very foundation of university autonomy, The NCHE, as a buffer between the Ministry and the Universities, played a fairly careful role. The academics themselves later described the NCHE in the following way; 'with the passage of time the NCHE became in all but name an University Grants Commission'.[62] This shows that with the establishment of the NCHE, a strong foundation had been laid for the future establishment of the University Grants Commission. Yet another innovation made by the Higher Education Act.No. 20 of 1966, with a view to addressing the question of access to higher educational opportunities, was the creation of Junior University Colleges; the most important objective which propelled the Government to introduce such Colleges was the need to meet the manpower needs and the Colleges were expected to provide vocationally-oriented courses. Other aims included (a) impartation of essential knowledge, (b) the supply of skills directly relevant to development and (c) develop manpower careers in different fields of development.[63] This scheme, though provided access to obtain a Diploma, was not a success, and some of them were again converted into Technical Colleges.

It could not be denied that, under the Higher Education Act.No. 20 of 1966, there was a genuine attempt to expand the opportunities for higher education in the country. The victory of the United Front Coalition in 1970 was certainly a watershed in the history of politics, and the nature of the Coalition, with its own combination of political forces, was such that it commanded a tremendous amount of

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[62] De Silva,K.E. & Pierist G.H.op.citjp.32. 72 Ibidjp.32.
[63] Ibid;p.32.

popular support. In the area of Higher Education, the immediate need was to repair the damage done to the system by the previous Minister of Education, whose obstinacy destroyed many a good policy in the field of education. The United Front Government, consisting of three parties - the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), and the Communist Party of Sri Lanka (CPSL), was determined to reverse the policies introduced during the previous regime; the policies of the new Government, though came to be based on social democracy, took socialist form because of the two left-wing political parties and the SLFP elements, which professed democratic socialism, which, in ideological terms, was a form of social democracy. Since the 1970 victory gave the new Coalition a massive mandate, the nature of the popular support was so solid that it embarked on an ambitious set of policies. In the sphere of Higher Education, the Government produced proposals, which included, the creation of a University Grants Commission, the right of election of the Vice Chancellor and the participation of the Deans at the meetings of the University Council. It included a provision for student participation in governing bodies of the University, and similar representation was given to certain categories of the non-academic community. These proposals, though came to be guided by the progressive politics of the regime with which there was considerable academic community involvement, were abandoned immediately after the insurrection of 1971, which, though a youth insurrection, was an uprising of the educated youth.[64] The educated unemployment was a major problem, and nearly 10,000 university graduates were unemployed.[65] The growth of the education was such that it absorbed something close to 5 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the educational policies had reduced the inequality of educational opportunities, and this, when compared with most other developing countries, was an impressive achievement.[66] The 1971 insurrection as some political scientists argued, was due to the failure of education to adapt to the consequences of expansion and equality of opportunity.[67] The higher education, specially the Universities, came under criticism, stating that they have failed in adjusting themselves to the changing conditions. The attitude of the United Front Government, which, before the eruption of the youth insurrection, relied heavily on the

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[64] Warnapala, Wiswa. The April Revolt in Ceylon, in Asian Survey,Vol.XII,No.3,1972,p. 274.
[65] Ibid;p.261.
[66] ILO. Matching Employment opportunities and Expectations. Dudly Seers Report, 1971, p.131.
[67] Ibid;p.131.

Universities, took a hostile attitude to the Universities, and this was chiefly due to the involvement of University undergraduates with the JVP which led the insurrection of 1971. The undergraduate community - a considerable number of undergraduates- made use of the Halls of Residence as places to manufacture bombs and this was perceived as a force opposed to the new regime, which interfered with the attempt to introduce changes to strengthen the independence of the Universities. The Universities remained closed for more than 15 months, and the premises of certain Universities were utilized to house the young undergraduates and others who were involved.

It was in this background that the UF Government, which hitherto remained well -disposed to the Universities and its academic community, resolved to introduce a strong policy to control the Universities. This, therefore, meant that all progressive policies, planned and thought of in 1970, were abandoned and the ghost of Minister Iriyagolla began to haunt the Universities again. The political opinion in the country, in the context of the aftermath of the 1971 insurrection, changed to such an extent that the Government was compelled to change its course and introduce all types of legislation, which, in the eyes of its constituent parties, were undemocratic. Therefore, it was no surprise for the academic community that the Government was bent on introducing tough legislation to control the Universities. This, in fact, was reflected in The University of Ceylon Act, No. 1 of 1972; it was the first piece of legislation introduced in the year 1972, and it displayed its significance as an urgent piece of legislation. The United Front gave a definite pledge during the course of the campaign that it would undertake drastic changes in the field of higher education and as stated earlier, some of the policies of the previous Government demanded immediate revision. The Minister of Education, Dr. Baduideen Mohamed, a prominent Muslim educationist with close links to the leadership of the SLFP-one of the founder Assistant Secretaries of the SLFP when it was founded in 1951- appointed a Committee of Inquiry headed by Osmund Jayaratne, to report on the re-organisation of the higher education system in the country.[68] The Committee commenced its sittings on 21st May, 1971, and submitted its report on 2nd July, 1971. In fact, the Committee took less than two months to produce this report, and the excuse was that the majority of its membership came from the academic community. This Committee on University

[68] The Committee consisted of Osmud Jayaratne, K.Dahanayake, K. Jayasena, S.U.Kodikara, U. Kuruppu, M. Rohanadeera and V.K. Samaranayake.

reforms became the first such Committee to be headed by an academic. This report, though contained 114 pages, was comprehensive from the angle with which the Committee looked at the question of reorganization of higher education. Since it was headed by a known Marxist - academic, many a historian who studied the educational progress of this period made no reference to it except to say that it attempted to strengthen Government control over the Universities.[69] The Report of the Committee contained seven chapters, and they are as follows:

1. Introduction
2. The Proposed Structure of the University
3. The Relations between the University and the Government
4. Finances of the University
5. Admissions
6. Curricula and Evaluation
7. Miscellaneous Matters
8. Summary of Recommendations.[70]

Since the report's main recommendations became the basis for the University of Ceylon Act No. 1 of 1972, they need to be examined in detail; a certain segment of the academic community, which was politically opposed to the UF Government, expressed open hostility to the report, and the important and relevant recommendations which it made were treated as a part of a Marxist conspiracy. Therefore, the importance of this Report and its recommendations, though relevant or not at this point of time, need to be discussed to place the document in its proper historical perspective. Its introduction, which ran to eight pages, contained an illuminating discussion of the University in the context of the given socio-economic situation of the country. It stated that 'the out-dated administration and education structures have to be radically altered if we are to progress towards our avowed goal of socialism. The urgency of such change was never highlighted more than the tragic events that engulfed the country recently'.[71] This meant that the new Higher Education reform strategy was planned in the context of the after-math of the 1971 insurrection, and it was this experience which conditioned most of the public policies of the period.

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[69] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit; does not refer to this report.
[70] Vide Osmund Jayaratne Report, July,1971.
[71] Osmund Jayaratne Report ,p.l.

The developments in the country in the post-independence period had to be studied from the point of view of the problems of under-development, and the report, therefore, examined higher education from the perception of the impact of the colonial past. While the needs of the country changed, the educational structure, both secondary and tertiary, continued to remain in the structure and tradition of the past; the liberal arts tradition was fostered and no attempt was made to change in the direction of scientific and technical fields. In the absence of opportunities for science education, secondary schools began to produce an ever increasing number of students trained in the arts and humanities. This emphasis on traditional disciplines developed during Jennings' time and the pioneers of the University movement wanted more emphasis on Oriental Studies. Most of the students who passed out from the Universities were holders of degrees in Arts; the subject combinations were such that they were not employable. The situation came to be illustrated with statistics relating to arts oriented courses as a percentage of the total undergraduate population.[72]

1966-67	77 %
1967-68	76%
1968-69	73%
1969-70	70%

The conclusion was that large number of students follow courses that are not geared to employment opportunities. Most of the students opted for a general degree and the popular combination was Economics, Sinhalese and History. The undergraduates could not be blamed for choosing such soft combinations because in the rural schools, from which a large number of students enter the University, facilities did not exist for science studies. For instance, out of 1400 Maha Vidyalayas, only 162 schools had A/L classes in Science. The demography of the situation was that most of the students in the Arts stream came from the poorest homes, while students studying Medicine and Science, came from more well to do layers of the population. This shows that income disparities had a major effect on the choice of subjects.

[72] Osmund Jayaratne Report,p.2

The Osmund Jayaratne Committee, on the basis of their short historical study was not prepared to blame the education system for the lack of employment opportunities in the country. The reason was that 'there are not enough jobs to go around'.[73] They, at same time, made certain statements from the point of view of their ideology, and this provoked hostility from other segments of the academic community. The Committee, for instance, stated that 'unemployment is the necessary outcome of under development of a backward and lop-sided semi-colonial economy still dominated by capitalist interests. No amount of reorganization in the educational field can overcome this problem. The solution lies in speedy socio-economic measures aimed at building a scientifically planned economy based on socialism'.[74] Therefore, the view was expressed that the stagnant economy, cannot absorb the educated young men and women whom the system produces. The solution, however, was in a restricted intake and such a move was thought as very retrogressive. The Universities, the committee suggested, must make an effort to produce the skilled manpower required for the social and economic development of the country. Yet another suggestion was the need for diversification of higher education into more meaningful channels. On the basis of these ideas, the Committee strongly advocated a scheme of rationalization in the given context of financial constraints, and this provoked the academic community to oppose the scheme. The Jayaratne Committee recommended the establishment of a single University keeping with the present situation in the country; though they recommended the unitary principle again, they agreed that the ideal would be to have several independent Universities in the country.[75] Thus, these recommendations were incorporated in the University of Ceylon Act, No.1 of 1972, and the Universities in Sri Lanka were divided into Campuses under a single University, the headquarters of which was at the Senate House in Colombo. All governing authorities and institutions in respective Campuses were to function in an advisory capacity to the Vice Chancellor. It was a monolithic structure with the centre of power in Colombo, As such a form of centralisation of control came into existence, which was not welcomed by the academic community. The Katubedda Campus came into existence in 1974 and the sixth the Jaffna Campus, too came into existence. The structure was now completely monolithic and extremely centralised.

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[73] Osmund Jayaratne Report, p.4.
[74] Ibid;p.4.
[75] Vide Chapter II of the Jayaratne Report.

The main change envisaged was the removal of non-academic external controls introduced in 1966 and the replacement of a kind of academic domination. The traditional concept of a Professor heading a Department was done away with and the principle of election was introduced. There was provision for a transition period of two years, and this was due to the problems which arose under a very complex administrative system. Due to their various faults, the Act was not fully implemented.

Though several innovations were made, there was not much of an expansion of university education during this period. The scheme of rationalisation of courses adopted during this period antagonised the staff, and some of them left the country. It has been said that the brain drain from the Universities came to be accelerated during this time and this affected the Universities. The Teachers Associations fought hard against the scheme of rationalization and other significant changes. The University of Ceylon Teachers Association, Peradeniya, in a memorandum, opposed some of the recommendations; the idea of a single University, in their view, was retrograde.[76] The rationalisation scheme was aimed at reducing 'wasteful duplication of courses' and 'increasing teaching efficiency' are financially ineffective and academically harmful.[77] They thought that this would definitely lead to dismemberment of Universities, and the re-location of Departments would hinder diversification recommended in the report. It would specifically damage the fields of study of Humanities and Social Sciences. The whole administrative set up proposed would be cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive; the concentration of power at the very apex would lead to inefficiency and proliferation of red tape. The proposal to establish a Womens University was treated as a waste of resources. It was the view of the Teachers Association that the proposals incorporated in the Report of the committee ran counter to the progressive educational policies declared in the Election Manifesto of the United Front. The Report in its sections on the relations between the University and the Government, referred to the establishment of a University Grants Commission. Both the Needham Commission and the Gunawardene Commission referred to the need of a University Grants Commission to act as a buffer between the government and the Universities. The Needham Report, referring to this aspect, stated

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[76] A Memorandum on the Report of the Committee on Higher Education, July 1971, by the University of Ceylon Teachers Association, Peradeniya, July, 1971.

[77] Ibid.

that 'we consider that the academic independence of the University must be safeguarded by everyone, including the Government'.[78] The Neddham Commission, stated that the university should not be another Government Department.[79] According to the Gunawardene Commission, the Government had prepared Draft legislation for the creation of a University Grants Commission on the lines of the Indian University Grants Commission established in 1956.[80] The idea germinated in the minds of the academics and the policy-makers because every government wanted to make inroads into academic freedom and university autonomy. Jennings, on the basis of his experience with the University College which functioned as a Government Department, had always resisted interference of the Government, though he had to work with the Executive Committee of Education which consisted of politicians. Even the Riddell Commission, as far back as 1929 before the University of Ceylon was created, stated that 'we consider it of the first importance that the largest practicable measure of autonomy should be secured to the University. No institution deserves the title of University which is denied freedom to determine the branches of learning in which it will provide and promote research. It must be free to direct its academic policy independently of departmental regulations and of intervention by the legislature'.[81] The Osmund Jayarathne committee stated that their recommendations have taken care of these concerns but the academic community saw the entire set of proposals as an attempt to interfere with university autonomy.

The question of admissions to Universities came to be discussed during this period, which became a sensitive issue. Osmund Jeyaratne Committee examined the nature of the admission policy and recommended changes to rectify the imbalances within the admission system. The existing admission formula brought in a large number of Arts students into the Universities, and the Minister of Education was to be given wide powers in respect of admissions. The Board of Governors of a University had no other alternative but to act according to the directives of the Minister. The Thistethiwaite Report (1967) recommended a quota system in order to reduce the existing imbalances in the admissions to various Faculties.[82] Most of the

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[78] Needham Report,p.22
[79] Ibid,p.22

[81] Ibid,p.22
[82] Vide Thistlethiwaite Report of 1967.

students, as mentioned earlier, offered subjects for the General Degree course, and other subjects such as Pali, Sanskrit and English were not popular among the students, because they were looking for popular options. Therefore, what was proposed in the form of reducing this imbalance, was the diversification of the curricula system in the Arts stream. The admission to certain courses in the Arts stream needed to be regulated through some instrument. The peak years for the increase in the number of Arts or social science students in the Campuses of Sri Lanka were 1965, 1966 and 1967. The proportion of Arts students, which remained at 60 -65 percent range in 1960, rose to more than 75 percent in 1967.[83] The Arts oriented enrollment began to increase from 1966, and in 1973, 8031 were enrolled out of a total of 12,989. This pattern of growth drew the attention of policy makers. The most controversial recommendation, which contributed to the growing ethnic tension in the country, was the proposal for 'Standardisation of Marks in University Admissions' and this, according to the Jayaratne Report, was to be based on (1) an inner sphere of ability and (2) an outer sphere of opportunity. The inner sphere included aptitude and readiness of a student to undertake university education in a chosen field of study.[84] The outer sphere consisted of the socio-economic level, educational opportunity and geographical situation. The achievement level of a student is a result of the interaction of these two spheres. Therefore, the Committee came to the conclusion that the selection of students, in the country where wide disparities exist, solely on marks scored at the 'Public examination, would continue to perpetuate a system which favours a privileged minority against a less favoured majority. The Government was asked to take immediate measures to reduce the inequality in educational opportunity, and a sound system of standardisation of marks was recommended. A district quota system based on population was suggested. In 1974, the District quota system came into operation, and the media-wise standardisation came to be criticised,[85] which became very controversial, specially the weightage given to the backward rural areas in the country.

The next phase of University education, under which there was expansion as well as innovations, came along with the introduction of Universities

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[83] Siriweera, W.I. Social sciences in Asia: Sri Lanka, UNESCO, 1981,p.83

[84] Osmund Jaysratne Report, p.41.

[85] This issue of standerdisation of marks has been thoroughly investigated by C.R.de Silva. See De Silva,C.R. op.citjp. 151-178.

Act.No.16 of 1978, which still remains operative as the principal enactment on which Universities are administered. This Act of 1978 has been hailed as 'a return to the traditions of University Government embodied in Jennings's University of Ceylon Ordinance No. 20 of 1942'.[86] It also deviated from many of the features in the previous Acts of 1966 and 1972. Jennings had left the country two decades back but the attachment to his Oxbridge model persisted, and that was why a principal link with the concept of autonomy was made. The 1978 Act was seen as the legislation which gave due recognition to the concept of autonomy which, through both Acts of 1966 and 1972, came under attack, and it, therefore, was a significant achievement which naturally had an impact on the academic community. Since the creation of the University Grants Commission under the Universities Act.No.16 of 1978 has been described as the main instrument through which an administration in keeping with the established traditions of university autonomy was restored in the University system, it, therefore, needs to be examined here as it contributed a great deal to stabilise the system of university education. The Act of 1978, as anticipated on the basis of the previous experience of the preceding legislation in 1966 and 1972, restricted the powers of the Minister of Education. It confined Minister's directives to three important areas of activity: university places, finances and the language of instruction.[87] Another significant contribution of the 1978 legislation was the demolition of the monolithic university structure established under the University of Ceylon Act. No. 1 of 1972. Separate Universities, instead of one monolithic University, were created; in other words, the six Campuses, which functioned as units of the single monolithic University, were converted into autonomous Universities. In the field of academic departments, the dismemberment of Departments of study which took place under 'the scheme of rationalisation positive steps were taken to bring back those Departments to Peradeniya. It was during this period that a second Arts Faculty was established in Dumbara, which, in the late twenties, was thought to be the seat of the University of Ceylon. The decision was taken on the basis of a wrong – partly right – notion that Art students were singularly responsible for student disturbances within the campuses, and this wrong decision was later reversed, because the whole scheme was a failure and waste of both academic and financial resources. In the initial phase of the 1978 legislation, the same traditions related to university autonomy, for instance,

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[86] De Silva, K.N. & Pieris,G.H. op.cit;P.40.
[87] See Part III of the Universities Act,No.16 of 1978.

the traditions associated with the appointment of Vice Chancellors were restored, and some writers on University education described such events as genuine attempts to restore the traditions and conventions of the post- 1942 period.[88] It needs to be acknowledged that there was considerable expansion, and they were largely in Science and Medical, Engineering and Agricultural fields of study. Dental and Veterinary Science Studies too expanded, and they, in course of time, obtained faculty status. Yet another aspect of expansion was the establishment of Ruhuna University College and the Batticoloa University College which were opened in 1979. With such expansion of the non-Arts sector of the University, the domination of the Arts faculty in all student activities began to dwindle, but with the changes in the nature of the student profile in the Science-oriented Faculties, fresh student problems surfaced with new kind of student activism, the main features and trends of which appeared on the scene in the late eighties.

Though the University of Ceylon came into existence in 1942, a University Grants Commission was not established. But with the expansion of the system, its creation became inevitable. Though the UGC came into existence in 1978, it appeared only after 36 years of university education in the country. In India, it was established nearly after a century, because the Indian Universities Act of 1857 founded the first Universities in India in modern times, namely, those of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.[89] According to Ramachandra Guha, the Universities founded in 1857 had an influence on the Indian destiny as profound as the popular uprising that took place the same year.[90] This provides enough evidence to the effect that the system which evolved in the following century was expansive that it inevitably demanded the establishment of a University Grants Commission in 1956 and the institution, as the Westminster model of government, had been yet another 'British export' in the area of university administration. Therefore, some brief reference to the British University Grants Committee, established in 1919, is not at all out of place. Before this institution was created, there was an advisory Committee on grants to the Universities, and the University Grants Committee, created formally in 1919, was expected to 'inquire into the financial needs of university education in the United Kingdom and to advise the

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[88] De Silva,K.M. & Pieris,G.li. op.cit;p. 41.
[89] Littlehailes B. Progress of Education in India, 1922-27. Vol.1.1929.Calcutta,p.52
[90] Pandey,Ira.Beyond Jegrees.Finding Success in Higher Education. New Delhi,2008,p.2.

Government as to the application of any grants that may be made by parliament towards meeting them'.[91] The Committee on Public Accounts of the House of Commons, in the course of an analysis of the University expenditure, wrote that 'the position of the UGC is in many ways unique. It acts as a 'link' or 'buffer' between the Government and the Universities, interpreting each party to the other. It is wholly independent of the Universities though most of its members are actively engaged in university work. It is also, for the most part, independent of Government, though its staff are civil servants seconded to it from the Department of Education and Science. From the government's point of view it is the accepted source of expert advice on university affairs, including the allocation of the resources which the Government makes available to the Universities, it is the accepted medium of representing their opinions, and needs to the Government and for ensuring that allocation is equitable. The creation of the UGC and the development of its special position are widely regarded as an eminently successful example of administrative ingenuity'.[92] Though this was the official position on the role and functions of the UGC, the members of the academic community took a different view of its role. Lord Robbins, the Chairman of the Committee on Higher Education, stated that he, while agreeing with its present role, thought that 'it is desirable that so far as possible their direction and control should be removed from immediate contact with politics. It is not argued that it is in any sense improper for Ministers to indicate broad lines of Policy in regard to the working and development of the institution which receive Government support'.[93] He, with a strong commitment to University autonomy, argued that 'it is desirable that the detailed carrying out of such policies and the administration of the funds made available should be removed from direct Ministerial control or parliamentary audit'.[94] Lord Franks, who chaired the Commission of Inquiry on the University of Oxford, adopting a point of view similar to that of Lord Robbins, took the view that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C and AG) should not be given access to books and records of the individual Universities that C and AG was unfitted to the task of examining the books and records of the University Grants Committee; it was his view that it would mean treating Universities differently from other bodies as the BBC and

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[91] Green,V.V.H. The Universities. Penguin,1969,p.184.

[92] Special Report of the Committee of Public Accounts: Parliament and Control of University Expenditure, 1966-67. House of Commons, 20th July,

[93] Ibid;p.288.

[94] Ibid;p.288.

nationalized industries. The request by the C and AG of Britain to open up the books and records of the Universities in his special memorandum to the Public Accounts Committee in 1965-66 created lot of suspicion among the academics. A.H. Hanson, who, writing on the control of university expenditure, stated that evidence provided by academics and academic administrators was hostile to any 'opening of the books'.[95] However, in the teeth of the opposition by the stalwarts of the academic community to this request by the Controller and Auditor General to open up the books, the Committee on Public Accounts agreed with this request to give access to the books and records of the UGC and the Universities.[96] Hanson taking a different view of the matter, supported the attempt by the C and AG and the Committee on Public Accounts to scrutinize the accounts of the Universities; he, in fact, stated that this Committee is an established part of the parliamentary machine.[97] He, while believing in the concept of academic freedom, saw the necessity for strengthening and improving of parliamentary government; he, in fact, stated that any attempt to 'closing to parliamentary scrutiny of any books is not merely undemocratic but usually self-defeating'.[98]

It was necessary to bring this description of the parent institution – the British University Grants Committee – into the discussion in order to place our counterpart established in 1978 in its proper historical context, which would help make a proper assessment of the University Grants Commission in Sri Lanka. The system of university education, in the given context of the change, expanded with the creation of an Open University in 1990 and several Post-Graduate Institutes in vital areas of study, and all these changes, as expected, demanded a proper institutional structure like the University Grants Commission. The new federal structure which was now rapidly developing within the Universities system, demanded such an institutional mechanism to act as a 'buffer' between the Government and the Universities.[99] In all Commonwealth countries, where the system is based on the British model, the Universities, as independent institutions, traditionally enjoy a substantial measure of

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[95] Henson, A.H. The Control of University Expenditure, in The University of Leeds Review, Vol.X, No.3,1967 p.209.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid;p.216.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Jayawadene, W.A. March Towards an open University. Godage,2008,p.143.

control over their size and growth. Since Universities play a substantial part in the economy and the nations life, governments show an interest in university finances and development. Lord Robbins, in his report on Higher Education, stated that the University Grants Committee was created without impairing university autonomy.[100] The special feature of this argument is that the University Grants Committee is an institution standing between the Government and the Universities. The University Grants Committee, though established in 1919, expanded its scope in 1946, and the change guaranteed that Universities would work for national interest, and the resources, which were placed at their disposal, are used with full regard to both efficiency and economy.

The University Grants Commission, which was modelled on the basis of this historical tradition, functions today as the apex body within the structure of the Universities - which has now expanded into a large and complex organization. The Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978, stipulated the power of the University Grants Commission; it, as the apex body, was entrusted with the power to coordinate, regulate, promote, and assist in the progress and development of Universities and Institutes coming under its purview. Since the 1990s, it has been entrusted with the following tasks:

i. to expand, reform and restructure the entire system.
ii. to find ways and means to accommodate the increasing numbers
iii. to improve the quality and relevance of university education.

Traditionally, as noted in connection with the original University Grants Committee of Britain, the Sri Lankan counterpart was expected to function as a 'buffer' between the Government and the Universities. It, in course of time, acquired greater powers and more responsibilities, and this substantial growth in powers and functions came to be integrally linked to the process of expansion of University education.[101] The University Grants Commission consisted of five members, one of

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[100] The report of the Committee on Higher education (1961-63) Lord Robbins Report. appendix IV. CMND 2154 IV, pp5-6.

[101] Prof. Wiswa Warnapala, theProfessor of Political Science at the University of Peradeniya was appointed the Deputy Minister of Higher Education.He was first made a National List Member of Parliament.

whom was appointed as the Chairman who, invariably, was an academic employed at one of the Universities. This practice, without a break, has been observed, and the other members too are academics; it is this character of the organization which obtained its acceptance from among the academic community. In the selection of members of the Commission, care was taken to see that they were chosen from among the representatives from Social Sciences, Humanities, Science and Medicine. This kind of representation, though varied with each Commission, was in the interest of the academic community as the composition of the Commission became a form of allaying the fears of the academic community. In 1994, when the Commission was appointed, there were historians, including its Chairman, but it was still able to command the respect of the academic community. It was to this Commission that, for the first time, a female member, Professor Savithri Gunasekera, the Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Colombo was appointed, a significant innovation made by the People's Alliance Government of 1994.

Yet another change effected after 1978 was the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education, and the responsibilities of the new Ministry covered both University and technical education; the dispute arose when the same Minister held the two portfolios - Education and Higher Education. The Minister of Higher Education - the same Minister - could not see eye to eye with the Chairman of the UGC, Dr. F.S.C. Kalpage who, being a former UNP Senator, had access to the leaders in the Government, and this dispute, eventually, resulted in placing the Ministry of Higher Education under the President himself. The Chairman of the UGC began to function in a dual capacity because he was appointed as the Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education. Though this innovation had its own merits, the combination of the two positions led to disastrous consequences in the mid-eighties, and the entire system of University education went into a major crisis. Though a separate Ministry was created in 1978, the powers, which the Minister enjoyed under the principal enactment, were limited in scope when compared with the powers incorporated in the Acts of 1966 and 1972; It, therefore, was certainly an improvement, and the Government reduced the powers of the Minister in order to restore the concept of university autonomy, and, thereby win the confidence of the academic community which, throughout history since 1942, remained strongly committed to academic freedom. Though the University autonomy was established on paper, there was much

interference in the affairs of the Universities after the creation of a dual role for the Chairman of the UGC, who, through directives, began to stifle academic freedom. His hardline approach to student issues and his close alignment with the UNP- oriented Student Organisation called Samavadi Student Organisation, created numerous problems within the Universities. The entire student community, the leadership of which was now in the hands of the JVP, became totally alienated from administration, and it was this alienation which created conditions for the closure of the Universities for years in the late eighties. In the early eighties, the UNP-oriented Samavadi Sisya Sangamaya dominated student politics of the period due to the monopoly of power enjoyed by the UNP - the so called five sixth of power about which the Chairman of the UGC often spoke. In opposition to this student organisation, the JVP 'Socialist Student Union' emerged. The competition for power among the student community was between these two student associations and clashes among them took place within the university.[102] It was in this background that the University was closed for prolonged period. A Parliamentary Select Committee was appointed to investigate student unrest in the Universities and recommend corrective action.[103] The sole reason for this kind of student militancy was the abolition of Student elections and Student Councils, and this led to the formation of Action Committees, which, in the course of time, became the de facto Student Councils.

The University Grants Commission, unlike its counterpart in other parts of the world, is entrusted with the task of administering the admissions to Universities; in Sri Lanka, university admissions are a very sensitive issue, and it creates political sensitivities as well. Though the university system expanded during this period, the demand for university places was such that the system could not satisfy it as additional opportunities had not been created. There was no coordination between the policies on secondary education and higher education, and this lack of understanding between the two sectors on their immediate priorities created problems within the area of admission policy. The number of students admitted to undergraduate

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[102] The student mrest during this period has been well documented by Pieris, G.H. in his chapter in De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. ed.op.cit;pp.219-234.

[103] Report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into and report on the grave and unsettled conditions prevailing in all the University Campuses in Sri Lanka and to make recommendations with regard to the future functioning of the university campuses. Parliamentary Series No.107 of December, 1987.

courses increased from 3500 in 1976 to 6000 in 1985-86, and one feature of this expansion was the phenomenal increase in the number of Science-based students. There was an increased demand for medicine and engineering, and in response two new faculties were established in Ruhuna and Jaffna. The expansion was very rapid in the period after 1980, and by 1985, the student community within the Universities which came within the purview of the UGC stood at nearly 75,000. The Open University increased its enrollment to 80,000 in 1985. It was in this context that a demand was made for the establishment of a Private Medical College called the North Colombo Medical College (NCMC). It, instead of functioning as an Independent College of Medicine, wanted to affiliate itself to the University of Colombo. It was this decision which provoked the student community, whose opposition reached its peak in the late eighties and the Government in 1989 decided to attach it to the University of Kelaniya. The Universities Act (Amendment), No.3 of 1989, was introduced by A.C.S. Hameed, who was Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, and with this amendment, the NCMC became a part of the national university system which, in one way, appeased the student community. In 2000, the university structure had a student population of 100,000, and the Sri Lankan University system came to be dispersed throughout the country. Since 1978, the system had been expanding; the establishment of the Moratuwa University in 1978 was a significant step; the University of Jaffna, which started in 1974 as a Campus was elevated to the status of an independent University in 1978. The Open University was established in 1980, and the University of Ruhuna came into existence in 1979. In 1986, the Eastern University was created.

It was in this background that the question of regional or provincial Universities came up and both the Needham and Gunawardene Commissions referred to the need for regional Universities as a form of expanding access to higher education. In 1991, the University Grants Commission, as a form of expanding higher educational opportunities and absorbing the large number of school leavers who could not get admission to the Universities, established through a special Gazette Notification, No.688/37 of November, 1991, nine Affiliated University Colleges.[104] Under this programme, each Province was given an Affiliated University College. Before a

[104] Jayawardene, W.A. op.cit;p.173.

discussion of this innovation is undertaken, some reference needs to be made to certain administrative changes which took place during the term of office of the Minister of Higher Education, A.C.S. Hameed. The Universities were able to limp back to normalcy after a period of protracted closures and intolerable student political activism, and the presence of the Minister of Higher Education within the UGC premises was seen as an attempt to politically influence the higher education policy.[105] It was stated that during this period, the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) became an important entity, though it was expected to function as a subordinate body to the UGC. This Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors had been borrowed from Britain where they had what was called the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals, and this was formed in 1918. But it began as far back as 1887 in the form of an occasional ad hoc Committee.[106] Its status was vague and informal, and its meetings were solely for the purpose of taking counsel on questions arising out of university grants. As in the case of the Sri Lankan counterpart, the British Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals also held migratory meetings, and it became a joint consultative body in the absence of more effective means of joint action by the Universities. Therefore, it evolved into an effective consultative body but possessed no power and authority to commit a university to a special course of action. Sir Eric Ashby, therefore, concluded that the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals was 'only a point of cohesion for University policy in Britain: nothing more'.[107] The Sri Lankan counterpart, the CVCD, deviating from the well established tradition in Britain, according to which it earned the confidence of the Universities and created for itself an impressive public image, began holding direct talks with the Minister of Higher Education, by-passing the U.G.C. This came to be treated as a contravention of the University law, and the Minister made use of this new facility to get greater access into the formation of policy on higher education.[108] The Minister's powers set in the Universities Act No.16 of 1978 were frequently violated and this, in the end, created fissures and disagreements between the UGC and the CVCD. This organization, though not as independent and powerful as in the period referred to, sought to

[105] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p.68.
[106] Ashby, Eric. Community of Universities. Cambridge, 1963, p.61.
[107] Ibid;p.70.
[108] De Silva, K.E. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit;p.69.

influence policy on University affairs and though some irritants apparently appeared, did not disturb the cordial relations which existed between the two institutions.[109]

The appointment of a Minister of Education and Higher Education was the first attempt made since 1980 to link the two sectors – Education and Higher Education under one single Ministry. Along with this vital change, the former Minister of Higher Education, in addition to his portfolio of Justice, was made the State Minister. The position was that he cannot represent matters to the Cabinet of Ministers as there was a Minister in the Cabinet in charge of the subject. However, the State Minister, though he could not submit papers to the Cabinet of Ministers, could exercise control over the subjects allocated to the particular Ministry, and this, as expected, interfered with the lines of authority and decision-making. It was during this period that the admission policy was revised; the admission to Arts and Commerce courses were brought within a merit system without district quotas, resulting in minimum marks going up to 200; till then, the minimum mark was in the range of 180. Yet another innovation in the area of admission policy was the increase in the number of backward districts from 5 to 12. The most important change was the substantial increase in the number of students admitted under the new admission rules; the total number admitted to Universities reached 9000. In 1942, the University of Ceylon admitted only 904 students. Though 9000 was a phenomenal increase, there was equally a large number of students, though obtained the minimum marks, could not enter University. The lack of access became a serious problem and it led to political consequences as well. The Government, therefore, was compelled by these circumstances to embark on a new policy to provide more access to higher education, and a policy decision was taken to establish Affiliated University Colleges in the provinces, and with this, another subordinate system of higher education came to be established. The system of Affiliated University Colleges, though imposed on the existing structure without much thought and planning, and the Colleges were assigned subjects and they were requested to function solely for the purpose of teaching that subject. The affiliation was with the respective University where the particular subject was taught, and it enjoyed some reputation as a centre of excellence, though the label

[109] This is the personal experience of the author in his capacity as the Minister of Higher Education.

was an exaggeration. Therefore, under this scheme of Affiliated Colleges, the following arrangement was made on the basis of affiliation.

Affiliated Colleges

Province	Subject	University Affiliation
North Central/ A'pura	Management Studies English	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
North Western/ Kuliyapitiya Makandura	Home Science Food Technology Agriculture	University of Kelaniya University of Peradeniya
Central/ Dumbara	Physical and Biological Science	University of Peradeniya
Western/ Dehiwala	Mathematics Education Home Science Food Technology	University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Kelaniya
Southern / Galle	Management	University of Colombo
Uva / Rahangalla	Management Agriculture English	University of Sri Jayewardenepura, University of Peradeniya
Sabaragamuwa / Rathnapura Belihuloya	Resource Management Tourism	University of Kelaniya
Eastern / Ampara	Management Studies	Eastern University
Northern / Vauniya	Home Science	University of Sri Jayewardenepura

These Affiliated Colleges, though came to be affiliated to one or two Universities, were in many ways similar to the Junior University Colleges which were proposed in the period 1968-69. The Higher Education Act, No. 20 of 1966, proposed the creation of Junior University Colleges as non-University Institutes of

Higher Education.[110] They were to be directly administered by the Ministry of Education on the basis of the guidelines provided by the National Council of Higher Education (NCHE). It was expected that these would provide terminal courses of higher education in branches of learning for a period of two years, being courses designed to meet the manpower requirements of the country; secondly, to teach the students interim or transfer courses in branches of learning available in the Universities for later admission to Universities.[111] The plan was to provide core courses in the first year and Diploma courses in the second year, and in the third year. A practical training was also to be given in keeping with the manpower requirements of the country. The provision was also made for the students to apply for admission to Universities, and it was this feature which created much confusion. The emphasis was on job oriented courses based on the manpower projections of the country, and the same person, at one stage, could apply for admission to the University. The whole scheme, envisaged in this form and manner, was doomed to fail from its inception.

The Affiliated University College followed more or less similar objectives and the same pattern as the Junior University Colleges, though the nomenclature had the word 'university' in both cases. As mentioned before, the Affiliated University Colleges were inaugurated in 1991 as a 'means of solving the problem of youth unrest, reducing the pressure on the Universities for an increased annual intake in admissions and introducing appropriate innovations in the sphere of higher education'.[112] These laudable objectives and goals were not realized as the students, from the begining, showed continued opposition and resistance to these institutions. They became hot beds of agitation and youth unrest in the country, threatening to undermine the smooth functioning of the University system. There was deep dissatisfaction among the student community about the facilities provided at these institutions, the courses of study provided, and the academic standards of the courses. The students began to question the value and place of the Certificate and the Diploma in the current hierarchy of qualifications in the country as well. Since their establishment in 1991, two Committees. Indraratne Committee and Dorakumbura

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[110] Malalasekera,G.p. op.cit;p 898

[111] Ibid.

[112] See Wiswa Warnapala Committee Report. Report of the Committee on the Affiliated University Colleges. April, 1995. Prof. Wiswa Warnapala, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education was its Chairman.

Committee studied the problem but remedial action was not taken and the situation began to deteriorate to such an extent that the Government, elected in 1994, was compelled to think of new strategies to salvage these institutions. The youth unrest prevailed in the country forced both the legislature and the policy-makers to look for alternative policies to bring about changes which could satisfy the youths. The Parliamentary Select Committee, appointed in July, 1987, to investigate into the grave situation prevailing in the Universities, recommended the establishment of regional Campuses as a solution to the problem of accommodation which the Select Committee considered 'to be at the root of economic hardship of students'.[113] The regional Campuses were to form a part of the University system and the same formula in respect of admissions was to be followed in admitting students. In other words, the scheme was intended to expand access to higher education. Though these recommendations were not implemented, the idea of regional campuses was in the country's policy discourse for some time. Ranil Wickremasinghe, as Minister of Education in 1988, proposed a similar scheme under the Tertiary and Vocation Education Act. In 1990, the Youth Commission also recommended the establishment of regional Colleges as a means of solving the youth unrest, which, in the immediate previous decade, was the major de-stabilising factor in the country.[114] Originally nine Colleges were established and later two more Colleges appeared at Trincomalee and Batticoloa. In the eleven Affiliated Colleges which were in operation, student population of 3122 students registered for a two year Diploma course. In the first year, a Certificate was awarded after the successful completion of the course, and in the second year, after the completion of the respective course of study, a Diploma was awarded from the particular University to which the College was affiliated. This kind of arrangement was made for the student after the completion of the course, to look for suitable employment if he wishes to do so.

The Colleges, from the beginning, began to face numerous problems relating to the inadequacy of facilities and infrastructure; therefore, the general discontentment was seen within all groups –of students, academic staff and the non-

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[113] Select Committee Report on the Universities. Parliamentary Series No.107 of December,1987.
[114] Gunathilake, Godfrey. Youth in Ceylon A Profile, in Marga Vol.1,No.3,1972. See also Uswatte-Aratchi. From Highway to Blind Alley. A Note on Youth and Higher Education, in Marga, Vol.1,No.3,1972.

academic staff, and their grievances added a new dimension to the problem. The location of the College also was a problem; it was this which affected in-plant training, accommodation and transport. The main agitation among the students focused on one important issue; a re-structuring of the courses with a view to proceeding towards a degree. In terms of the inadequacy of facilities, the most disadvantaged Colleges were in Anuradhapura, Vauniya and Samanthurai; the one at Dumbara had reasonable facilities. Every College, in relation to buildings and places to conduct classes, had problems. The Affiliated Colleges, originally established in two locations, faced problems as the place was not accessible from the main highway in the area. The academic structure consisted of 11 courses, with five other courses which included courses an English and Computer Studies. Though there was a plan to eventually to raise the status of the courses into the level of Degree courses, it was abandoned due to opposition from the students in the established Universities. According to students in the Colleges, the syllabuses had been hastily drawn up and they could not be completed within a two years programme of study. Yet another cause for dissatisfaction was that employment opportunities were not forthcoming and the demand was that they should be given the opportunity to proceed in the direction of a degree, with which, they thought, they could obtain employment. Yet another problem was that these institutions could not attract good staff, and this affected the standards of teaching. In all, it became obvious that the entire experiment had been a total failure, and they could not be abandoned because of the nature and size of the investment. The public at large had been given the impression that higher educational opportunities had been expanded to make it more accessible to a larger proportion of students, especially in those parts of the country that had remained neglected. Therefore, what was planned was to undertake a complete reorganization of this scheme of affiliated colleges on the basis of the requirements of the existing system of higher education in the country.

The immediate question, which needed attention was the increasing demand for university education and means of absorbing those students who qualify to enter Universities. The pressure for increasing the intake could not be eased by requesting functioning Universities to share the burden. An increase in the intake could not be done without establishing new Universities. There was yet another argument which prevented additional intake to the established Universities as their output, remained unemployed. Skills and competencies were required for the management of

the economy and the acceleration of development. A knowledge driven growth required expanded and inclusive education systems which could reach a larger segment of the population; knowledge-driven economies demanded higher level skills in the workforce, and this, in other words, meant that higher educational opportunities had to be expanded with higher enrollment rates. For instance, in Sri Lanka the enrolment in public tertiary institutions had stagnated at 2 percent since 1990 due to lack of funding.[115] Though fiscal constraints had become a major problem, the demand in the country was to provide more opportunities for higher education. Therefore, remodeling of the Affiliated University Colleges became essential for the purpose of evolving a high quality-oriented, comprehensive national policy on higher education. Therefore Warnapala Committee recommended that the six of the eleven Affiliated University Colleges should be immediately incorporated to form two Universities with effect from 1996. This was considered insufficient for a country engaged in development. The University Colleges, which had adequate infra-structure and facilities, were to be converted into Technological Universities; though this was recommended, it was not implemented. On the basis of the recommendations, initially two Universities, the University of Sabaragamuwa and the University of Rajarata, were established, and the next one was established in Wayamba. The principle which guided this kind of provincialisation of university education was the fact that this kind of scheme of independent universities, in addition to the creation of additional access, would help in the acceleration of economic and social development of the country, especially in the provinces. The whole strategy behind this recommendation of the Warnapala Committee was the 'Red Brick' formula through which the British University System was expanded.[116] The new Universities in Britain, which came to be described as 'Red Bricks', came into existence to meet a genuine demand which Oxford and Cambridge could not or would not supply. The same principle came to be applied in the case of the establishment of new Universities in Sri Lanka. The conception that the University was a place of cultural luxury catering to a small and privileged class

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[115] World Bank. Constructing Knowledge Societies. New Challenges for Tertiary Education. Washinfton,2002,p.50.

[116]Report of the Committee appointed by the Hon. Minister of Education and Higher education on The Affiliated university Colleges. (Warnapala Committee), April, 1995. The phrase 'Red Brick' conveys something of the utilitarian character of the new Uriversities, a somber contrast to the mellow bricks of the Cambridge Colleges and the crumbling stones of Oxford. See Green, V.H.H. the Universities. London,1969,p.101.

had passed. Therefore, it was national interest that demanded the expansion of the intake into Universities, and this problem could not have been solved without establishing new Universities. The relative social and economic benefits were taken into consideration; other effects, as mentioned in Robbins Report, were a better informed electorate, more culturally alive neighborhood, healthier and less crime prone population and so on. [117]. What was not recognized at the establishment of new provincial Universities in Sri Lanka was that these social and political benefits, as in the case of Britain, were to have a significant economic effects. For instance, the efficiency with which goods are exchanged is obviously enhanced by general literacy, as education reduces crime, and the resources spent on those functions would be diverted elsewhere. The Warnapala Committee was very conscious of those advantages, and the experiment was a very cautious one as they came into existence in a haphazard way in response to certain social needs.

In the given context, the Universities, which were newly established, inevitably took a second place; the building were not as good as those of the established Universities, and their social life was restricted; though some Halls of Residence were opened, they were for the most part non-residential. The intention was to see that they remain totally non-residential but due to constant student agitation, residential facilities were provided. It is however, difficult to define the new Universities which communicated knowledge rather than culture. Yet they, within a short time, had overcome numerous difficulties, providing opportunities for men and women who would otherwise have never had the benefit of a University education. They, with a diversified curriculum based on relevance and local needs, represented a dynamic break-through in the system of higher education in Sri Lanka. With the creation of all these Universities on the basis of regional or provincial needs, the University structure in Sri Lanka came to be expanded to 15 Universities.

University Structure

University	Number of Students
Colombo	7,889
Peradeniya	9,285

[117] Report of the Committee on higher education (Robbins Report) , 1961-63. Appendix IV,P. 86.

Jayawardenapura	7,956
Kelaniya	7,690
Moratuwa	4,443
Jaffna	5,753
Open University	25,296
Ruhuna	5,497
Eastern	1,922
Rajarata	1,442
Sabaragamuwa	1,576
South Eastern (Oluvi1)	1,099
Wayamba	1,308
Uva Wellassa	145
Visual and Performing Arts	2,057

Source : The Development of the University system of Sri Lanka. 2001-2006 UGC, 2006

In addition to the Universities, which directly came under the purview of the UGC, Campuses and faculties in different locations came into being. There are nine Post-Graduate Institutes and another eight Institutes, specialising in different areas of study. The open University has 28 Study Centres spread out throughout the country; there are three more affiliated Institutes.[118] In addition to this structure, catering to the higher educational needs of more than 100,000 students, there are two Buddhist Universities - the Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka and Bauddhasravaka Bhikku University of Anuradhapura established exclusively for the purpose of giving a University level education to members of the Buddhist Sangha. With an annual intake of 20,000 students to the Universities sector, the total enrollment has risen to nearly 72,000 by 2006.[119] The two Buddhist Universities, as their original legislation had indicated, operated under the guidance of the Ministry of Higher Education, and they, on the advice of the high prelates of the Buddhist Order in Sri Lanka, were modelled on two great ancient centres of learning – Nalanda and Thaksila.

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[118] University Grants Commission. The Development of the University System in Sri Lanka, 2001-2006,p.10.

[119] University Statistics. 2005 UGC.p.3

The structure of Universities, which comes directly under the purview of the UGC, consists of 15 universities, with 77 Faculties and 411 Departments of study. The size of the academic staff in 2005 was 3770. In 2005, the number registered with the 15 Universities stood at 91,950, the post-graduate registration stood at 2536 and Institute registration stood at 3375.[120] This discussion on the nature of the expansion of the University system in Sri Lanka is incomplete without a reference to the admission policy, over which there was controversy and debate in the last three decades.

Since 1942, admission to the University was based on the results of the University entrance examination; admission was given to those who obtained an equivalent.[121] According to the regulations stipulated for the University Entrance examination, a candidate was required to offer four subjects. Admission, therefore, was based on standard performance reached at this public entrance examination called the University Preliminary examination which operated in the period 1942-64. This examination replaced the University entrance examination conducted by the University in 1942-45. The introduction of the free education scheme in 1945, through which primary education was made free, resulted in a tremendous increase in the school-going population.[122] One of the important features of this change was that the opportunities that it provided for higher learning had not kept pace with the expansion in the facilities for both primary and secondary education. As a result of this imbalance in the educational structure, a large number of students failed to obtain admission to universities. The introduction of the common admission system on the basis of the results of the Advanced level examination began in 1964, where a candidate was expected to offer four subjects. This system of admission continued till the introduction of the scheme of Standardisation in 1971/72; it represented a departure from the practice of selection on the basis of actual marks obtained at an open competitive examination.[123] It was done on the basis of the belief that it would lead to a reduction in the inequalities of educational opportunity; the primary objective was to help the under privileged in the backward areas. An admission system, based on standardization

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[120] Riddell Report,p.62.

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[122] Jayasuriya, J.E. Education in Ceylon. Before and After Independence, 1939-1968. Colombo, 1969,pp.26-34.

[123] De Silva, C.R. op.cit;p.157.

of marks and a district quota system was introduced; the main argument produced in favour of the district quota system was that it would give additional advantage to candidates from the backward and the under privileged areas. With all these changes, the number admitted to the Universities in 1979 was nearly 18 percent of those who attained the minimum marks level. [124] At that point of time, the country had six universities with a student enrollment of 16,300. Both the Higher Education Act. No. 20 of 1966 and the Universities Act. No. 16 of 1978 conferred on the Minister in charge of the subject of university education, the power to issue directives on the admission policy as well. Standardisation was both subject-wise and media-wise, and admissions were done on this basis till 1977. Merit on an island-wise basis became the criteria of admission till 1974; in the same year, the admissions were done on a district basis to enable students from educationally under-privileged areas to gain admission. It was in 1976 that the admission on a district basis was abandoned, and in 1976 and 1977, 70 percent were admitted on merit on an all island basis, which was based on the standardization of marks. It was the remaining 30 percent which was admitted on a district quota basis, and this was reserved to ten districts which had been identified as being educationally under-privileged.[125]

The Government of the United National Party, in the form of a response to the numerous criticisms of the existing admission formula, decided to change the policy; the standardization was abandoned and selections were made on raw marks. But the Government, due to the political implications involved, did not want to do away with the weightage given to districts, and a decision was taken to give special consideration to students from districts which were treated as educationally backward. Under this admission policy, the numbers were increased and a total of 4996 were admitted, registering an increase of 846, which, in effect, meant a 20 percent increase.[126] In 1978, with a view to further revising the admission policy, a \sub-\committee of the Cabinet of Ministers was appointed to advise the Government on the future admission policy, Several important recommendations were made in respect of admissions to Universities; the admissions were to be made on raw marks obtained at

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[124] First Annual Report of the UGC, 1979.p.41

[125] The districts were Ampara, Anuradhapura, Badulla, Hambantota, Mannar Moneragala, Nuwara Eliya, Polonnaruwa, Trincomalee and Vauniya.

[126] First Annual Report of the UGC, 1979, p.44.

the GCE A/L examination; the intake of students to remain at the 1978 level and 30 percent of the places to be filled on the basis of merit on an all island basis. 55 percent of the places of each course of study was to be filled according to the order of merit within each district and the opportunity was given to all the 24 districts. The balance 15 percent in each course of study was to be allocated among the districts identified as educationally under-privileged. Therefore, the admissions for the year 1979 were done on the criteria described above, and a total of 4959 were chosen. There was an Admission Committee at the UGC, and it collected the necessary information from all Higher Education institutions to determine the number of students to be admitted, and the method of allocation too was determined by it. Again in 2000, new regulations came into force and students taking the examination under these regulations were required to offer three subjects. It was thought that the four subjects, with their content, imposed a heavy burden on the student. In addition to three subjects, a candidate at the GCE A/L examination was expected to sit a common paper and a General English paper. It was in 2001 that another significant change in respect of the admission policy was made; the marks were standardized and Z scores were used instead of the raw marks or the average raw marks. On the basis of this scheme, the merit quota remained at 40 percent, and the balance 55 percent was distributed among all the 25 administrative districts. The remaining 5 percent was allocated among the educationally backward districts. This shows that several important changes had been made in respect of the admission policy, and the changes were made on the basis of the national needs. According to the existing formula, the selection is exclusively based on academic performance referred to as the 'Normal Intake'. There is a 'Special Intake', which recognizes special aptitudes of the candidate. In order to see that certain disciplines do not totally disappear from the Universities, a method of admission called 'additional intake' has been adopted in order to make full use of the academic and physical resources available at the Universities. Under the category of students with foreign qualifications, 0.5 percent of the places were allocated, and in selecting this number, adequate consideration was extended to children of the Sri Lanka Diplomatic personnel.[127] A concession has been extended to the children of the Armed Forces, and the figure is again 0.5 percent of the total, and the places are in the category of

[127] 27th Report of the UGC, 2005, p.19.

Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering. On the basis of this admission policy, the intake to Universities has been substantially increased.

The following table provides some relevant statistics.

Number of admitted to Universities			
Year	**No. Qualified**	**No. Admitted**	**Percentage**
2001	53,629	4,328	8.07
2002	46,441	4,370	9.41
2003	47,629	4,316	9.06
2004	51,762	4,534	8.76

Source: University Statistics, UGC, 2005

GCE A/L Examination 2002-2004

Number of Candidates Applied

Year	School	Private	Total
2002	227,085	30,579	257,664
2003	212,246	38,203	250,449
2004	198,851	40,860	239,711

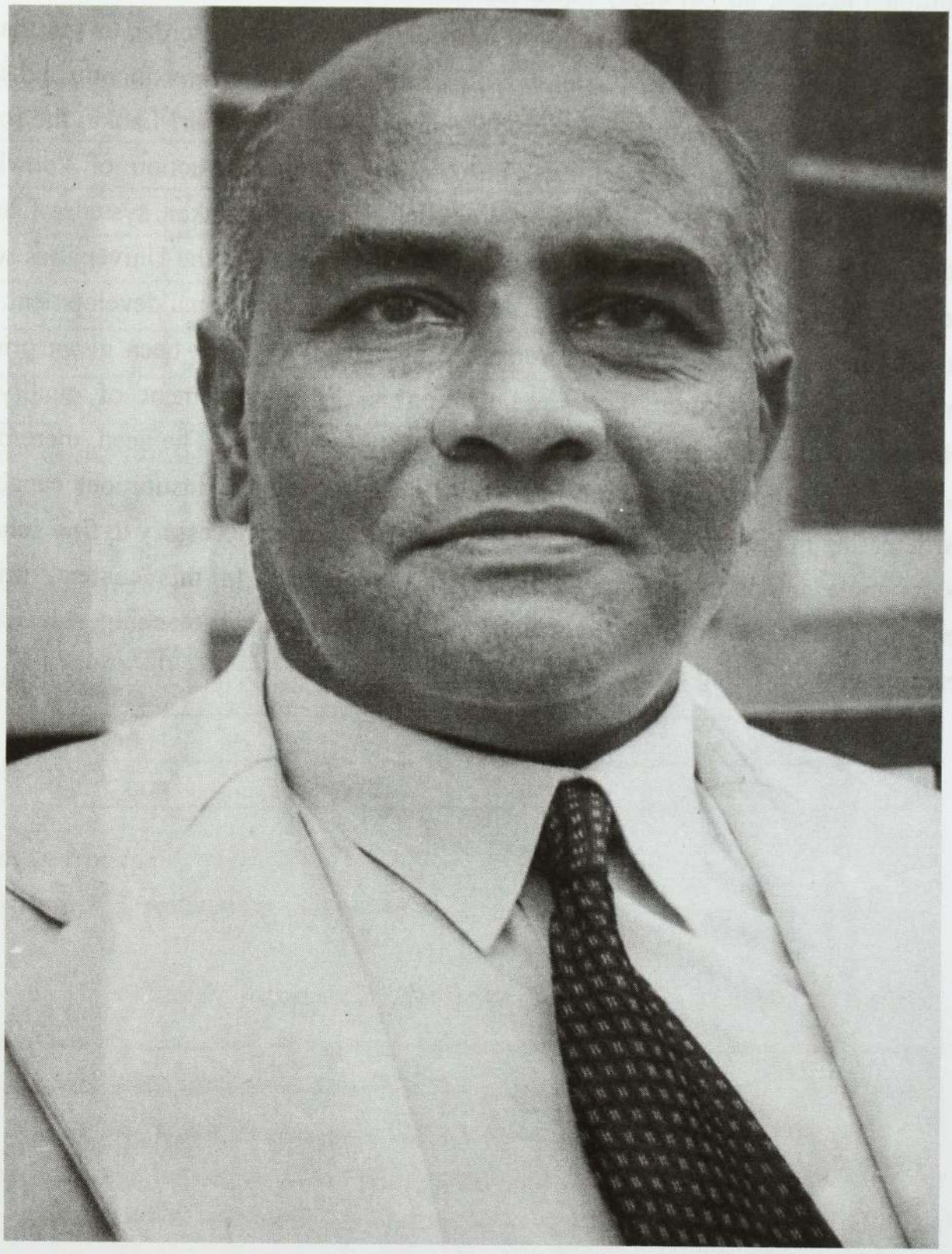
Source:

Statistical Handbook, 2002-2004

Department of Examinations. Colombo.

At the inception of university education in Sri Lanka, the number of students seeking admission was limited and the policy was to restrict the intake so that the university education could be confined to a privileged few. With the passage of time, the position began to change, and the number of students qualifying to enter far exceeded the number of places available in the Universities. This has been the pattern since the impact of the free education scheme on the system of education in the country, and this social-demand-model of education, therefore, demanded major changes within the system of higher education in the country. Though several ad hoc changes were made in the form of responses to political pressures, no proper policy changes were made to expand the system; now the system has been expanded and it

contains 15 Universities, distributed throughout the country, which, though provides additional access, do not enjoy equal status in terms of facilities and resources, both academic and physical. This has to be immediately rectified in order to see that the existing system of Higher Education responds to the needs of both economic and social development in the country. Specially in countries like that of Sri Lanka, the role of tertiary education has become very influential in the construction of knowledge economies, and this is the major challenge before the Sri Lankan system of higher education. Steps have been taken to re-organise the courses in the Universities with a view to getting the Universities to meet the requirements of national development. The curriculum reform, which hitherto remained neglected, has now been given priority, and yet another question receiving attention is the improvement of quality and relevance, particularly in the field of undergraduate education. The need, therefore, is to convert all higher educational institutions in the country as institutions capable of participating in the production and adaptation of knowledge necessary to find solutions to its most important economic and social problems. In this context, primary recognition needs to be given immediately to quality, relevance, teaching, research and learning in the existing institutions.



Sir Nicholas Attygalla

Chapter VIII

CHALLENGES AND INITIATIVES

The discussion in the preceding pages focused on the evolution of the system of higher education from colonial times, and how it, in the last seventy years, responded to various demands and changes, some of which as anticipated, created a series of unique issues for the system of higher education in the country. Some of the issues, though surfaced due to the nature and content of the system of higher education, had a debilitating effect on the system whereas others, in their own way, stimulated many an innovation, and those innovations, touching certain integral aspects of the system, gave a different dimension to the existing system of higher education which, though certain features based on historical traditions and antecedents, still remain the most vital sector in the country's process of change and development. Therefore, those issues and innovations, which were central to the process of expansion and change in the system of higher education, need to be examined and assessed.

Universities and the State

The relationship between the Government and the Universities, though varied at times depending on the attitude of a Government, was based on the concept of academic freedom which, traditionally, developed along with the evolution of the University as a, centre of higher learning. D.W.Hemlyan, elaborating the significance of the concept of academic freedom, stated that 'it gives it the right to some form of self-government, including that over financial arrangements, subject again, since the bulk of such finance is ultimately supplied by the government, to whatever sanctions are set up by government or other bodies instituted by government for that purpose'.[1] Therefore, it naturally entailed academic freedom, though that is a concept over which there has been much misunderstanding. Such misunderstandings have arisen in Sri Lanka in the last fifty years and the concepts of academic freedom and university autonomy have been misunderstood by various Governments which wanted to control the

[1] Hamlyan. The Concept of University, in Philosophy, Vol., 71, No. 276, 1996, p.207

Universities. It is in this background that the relationship between the State and the Universities need to be reexamined. What is important is whether one is concerned with the institution or with individual members in it. When the Universities first came into existence, they were given the right to manage their own affairs and to decide on what to teach. But it did not mean that the University teacher was free to teach or write anything he/she likes, or that the governments could not interfere with the Universities in other ways. Government interference has been present throughout the history of the Universities. But it has been accepted that an aspect of academic freedom is that the Universities should enjoy the freedom of determining academic courses. Therefore, the rights to self-government and control of finances have some connection with the concept of academic freedom, at least as far as it concerns the freedom of the institution. It is on the basis of this sacrosanct tradition of university autonomy and academic freedom that even the Riddell Commission, as far back as 1929, stated that 'we consider it of first importance that the largest practicable measure of autonomy should be secured to the University'.[2] It stated further, on the basis of their experience with the University College which functioned as a Government Department under the colonial public bureaucracy, that the University 'must be free to direct its academic policy independently of departmental regulations and intervention by the legislature'.[3] Such a comment was made because there was Government interference and it came via the Departmental status of the University College.[4] Though attempts were made by the academic leadership of the University College to get some recognition for the concept of academic freedom, the colonial bureaucracy, based on colonial rules and regulations, always treated the college as a Government Department; Prof. Robert Marrs, as the Principal of the University College, was aware of its significance for the proper

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[2] Riddell Commission Report, p.44.
[3] Ibid; p.44
[4] Both the Medical College (1870) and the Ceylon Technical College (1893) functioned as Government Department.

functioning of the College as an academic institution, but could not resist the Colonial bureaucracy.

However, the situation underwent a change with the enactment of the University of Ceylon Ordinance of 1942 which officially recognised the concept of university autonomy, for which both Robert Marrs and Jennings contributed. Both of them were strong advocates of academic freedom and university autonomy. It was on the basis of this tradition that the relationship between the Government and the University was built, and the traditions built by the University of Ceylon during its initial phase influenced the nature of governance of the Universities in Sri Lanka. The Recommendations of the Riddell Commission, on which the University Ordinance was formulated in 1942, made a positive contribution to the establishment of a tradition of non-interference by the Government and the legislature in the affairs of the University. The Riddell Commission, in fact, stated that 'it is the inherent duty of the Government to secure that a University claiming a national character should conduct in conformity with national needs'.[5] The Commission, on the other hand, did not question the right of the national legislature to investigate or inquire whether the resources of a University are used in the national interest. Therefore one could not absolve the Government of Ceylon, acting through its representative Assembly, from the right and duty of a general supervision and ultimate control of the University.[6]

Since the University, at its infancy was expected to function with the assistance of public funds, the Government could not be prevented from exercising ultimate control. The financial assistance was to come in the form of block grants and a statutory grant for five years, and this kind of assignment, it was argued, would relieve the University from undue interference in its academic policy. Every five years, the University authorities were expected to make their own case

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[5] Report of the Riddell Commission, p.44.
[6] Ibid; p.44.

for a renewal of the Government grant and formulate schemes of expansion to justify an increase of the grant at the next stage. This arrangement, both in its theory and practice, was modelled on the British experience, and the university autonomy in Ceylon came to be built on the British tradition. In fact, the general conduct of Universities has always been in some degree a matter of concern to the State. In modern times, it is the absolute right of Universities to exert complete freedom in academic matters without State interference in the internal affairs of the University. In the British context, this concept of academic freedom developed in a period when the Universities had ceased to be directly depended on State or ecclesiastical support for their existence and were financed primarily by large private donations.

The relationship between the State and Universities takes a new form as a result of the radical changes in the system of financing and support to Universities. In Sri Lanka, unlike in other countries in the region, the State, as the main source of funds, is heavily involved in the island's education system, and within the system the Universities play a crucial part. When the academic institutions and the governing bodies of University are totally depended on the State for finance, the question of self-governance becomes a problem.

With the expansion of University education, some of the traditions built during Jennings's period came to be challenged, and the Higher Education Act, No. 20 of 1966 and the University of Ceylon Act, No. 1 of 1972 were described as glaring attempts to destroy some the well-established traditions of Jennings's era. It was the issue of autonomy and academic freedom, in direct relation to forms of governance, which came up for discussion. First was the issue of academic freedom in the old sense, and the second question, as highlighted by Osmund Jeyaratne Committee, was what ought to be the general pattern in a developing country like Sri Lanka. There were virulent critics, who thought both the Acts of 1966 and 1972 threatened academic freedom in the old sense, for instance, the freedom to teach and express views according to the

intellectual conscience of the teacher.[7] Though the two pieces of legislation - the Acts of 1966 and 1972 – gave the State some measure of direct control over the Universities, the administrative structures which they proposed did not extend State influence to infringe on academic freedom. In other words, the allocation of funds to a University is likely to be influenced by whether its Professors are teaching the kind of ideas which are in favour with the Government in power or on the other had advocating views obnoxious to provide more resources to the study of new fields or to provide funds for university teachers to pursue new areas of study. It is central to the concept of academic freedom that university teachers are free to devote a considerable part of their time to independent research. There was no necessity to challenge this tradition while the total allocation has been done on a very modest scale, and the State, which provided the totality of funds to the Universities, has a right to link it with the changing pattern of higher education. The need was to break away from the concept of the classic University and to look for alternative forms of higher education as suggested by the Needham Commission (1959), Gunawardene Commission (1962), and the Osmund Jayaratne Committee (1971). Sir Sydney Caine, writing on the need for greater diversity, stated that 'unfortunately, such is the force of tradition, there has been little real examination of these alternatives'.[8] In the Sri Lankan context, the need for diversity is rarely examined and the expansion of higher educational opportunities was always based on the assumption that enlarging facilities for higher education meant enlarging Universities. It was on the basis of such a policy position that the expansion of university education was effected in the last four decades.

The Universities Act, No. 16 of 1978 was hailed as the piece of legislation which defeated all threats to University autonomy; it successfully did away with those obnoxious features which threatened university autonomy, and successfully restored those traditions and practices of University Government that were associated with the

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[7] De Silva, K.M. & Pieris, G.H. op.cit; pp.241-242.

[8] Caine, Sydney. Universities and the State, in Political Quarterly, Vol.40, No.2, 1969.

Ordinance of 1942. The establishment of the University Grants Commission, on the basis of the British model that came into existence in 1919, came to be described as the great embodiment of university autonomy, and it, therefore, needs elaboration as this institution still continues to function as the apex body in the system of University education in Sri Lanka. With this, there came to be established the Ministry of Higher Education, and both these institutions, though functioned in the last thirty years, had not made any inroads into the established concepts of university autonomy and academic freedom. What needs to be noted is that along with the expansion of university education in the country, the role of these two institutions, especially the University Grants Commission, has considerably expanded but no conflict in the exercise of its powers and functions has occurred. One strategy adopted was to combine the post of Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education and the Chairman of the UGC in one single person, who himself was an academic, which would prevent possible conflicts between the two institutions. Though various inroads were made into the autonomy of the universities by different Governments the question of admissions was one issue on which interference was made. It has been mentioned that there was an attempt on the part of the Minister to intervene in the affairs of the Universities in the period 1985-1994, and the reason was the absence of a lot student violence at the Universities during this period; it was the deterioration of law and order within the Universities and their failure to arrest the trend which compelled the Government to interfere in the affairs of the Universities. This, however, did not impinge on academic freedom.

The control of university finances has been discussed on a number of occasions; Sir Frank Kearton, the chairman of the Industrial Reorganisation in Britain, once stated that 'talk of university autonomy conceal one of the most inefficient sectors of the economy'.[9] Such criticisms have been used to justify intervention compelling the

[9] Hallt, Graham. Universities and the State, in Political Quarterly, Vol. 40, No..2, 1969, p. 163

Universities to open their doors to Government inspection. In was in 1966 that the Comptroller and Auditor General (C &AG) in Britain wanted to examine the books of the Universities. The academics thought that this could 'undermine to a dangerous extent the academic freedom which we value of highly and which Parliament itself ought to be equally anxious to preserve'.[10] The committee on Public Accounts, which, on the basis of a recommendation made by the Comptroller and the Auditor General (C & AG), wanted to inspect the books of the Universities as they were concerned with the regular and proper use of public funds,[11] as some Universities were badly run-inefficiently and wastefully. This demonstrated that the extension of bureaucratic State control was inevitable in the context of a system which was rapidly expanding. Lord Robbins, in the context of Britain, stated that 'at a time of rising demands on public expenditure, some tightening on the University purse-strings was inevitable'.[12] Yet another criticism was that no significant link had been discovered between economic growth rates and overall investment in higher education; yet another criticism was that the Universities have retained their traditional degree courses, instead of widening the types of courses offered to match the increasing intake. An adjustment was necessary in the context of the changing nature of the country's economy, and it is here that one has to question the relevance of the some of the traditional disciplines.

In Sri Lanka, the setting up of student quotas and the allocation of financial grants have been entrusted to the University Grants Commission, a group of academics who act as an intermediary between the Government and the Universities. The administration of the admission policy has given the University Grants Commission an enormous burden; unlike in other countries, the admissions to Universities are done by the University Grants Commission, which

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[10] Hanson, A.H. op.cit;p.203.

[11] Special Report of the Committee on Public Accounts, 1966-67. House of Commons, 1967.

[12] The Report of the Committee of Higher Education, 1961-63. (Robbins Report). London, 1963.

means that it has deviated from its established traditional role. According to the original concept, it helped the Government to give financial assistance to Universities without impinging on their autonomy. When Government funds become the dominant source of finances as in Sri Lanka, the steady increase in the control exercised by the University Grants Commission was inevitable. It is in this context that one can say the old concept of autonomy is dead. The academic freedom of the University, with special reference to appointments, promotions, teaching and courses of study has been guaranteed in the system which now operates in Sri Lanka. The relationship between the University and the Minister of Higher Education has to operate within the framework and spirit of university autonomy. It would be easily achieved through the instrument of the University Grants Commission. It is generally agreed that there are four areas in which the Government expects the University to abide by the policy of the Government. These are: (a) Determination of number of students to be admitted on the basis of the manpower needs of the country; (b) matters pertaining to finances. In addition, the Government enjoys the power to make provision for the administration of the University in times of national emergency. The cuts in University expenditure raise an issue concerning the allocation of resources.

In Sri Lanka too, it was envisaged that the University Grants Commission would function in that manner, but the experience shows, largely because of the fact that the main source of funding was the Government, that it would be immensely difficult to safeguard and protect the concept of university autonomy. Because of this, there is steady increase in the control exercised by the University Grants Commission. It rarely gives reasons for the way it allocates funds among the Universities; the priority is always given to the established Universities. The criteria, which the University Grants Commission adopts for the purpose of allocating funds and cuts in expenditure, is shrouded in secrecy and is done on the basis of both Ministerial and Treasury Directives. The role of the Treasury, as usual, is a very

powerful factor in Sri Lanka. As such, the University Grants Commission remains the acceptable mechanism through which public funding was to be channeled to the Universities. Its main responsibility is for the distribution of grants, and it also offers advice on how much should be provided. It provides grants through the principle of the block grants and the Universities have to exercise the freedom within the framework of national needs and priorities. This is a well established convention, which has been observed since the establishment of the University Grants Commission in 1978. Universities are requested to prepare corporate plans of development and this would provide the UGC with a scheme which could be used for the allocation of funds. This, in fact, became very necessary with the rapid expansion of the system of Universities in the country. The determination of priorities for university education, therefore, rests entirely with the UGC as the Government prefers to maintain an arms-length relationship with the Universities for their own interest. The UGC reflects the 'best" University view.

In Sri Lanka, the system of university education, from its inception, was a form of public sector education; the policy makers have been concerned only with the structure and numbers, and policies for higher education have never gone against the traditions enshrined in the Universities, and have defended the concept of autonomy. In Sri Lanka, student numbers always became the main focus of public policy discussion; all policy makers of the period accepted the political truth that it is socially and politically imperative to match expanded secondary educational opportunities with opportunities at the University level. The policy on student numbers, though became highly controversial, was an attempt to expand access. Therefore, both academic freedom and university autonomy can only be justified if they are useful conditions enabling Universities to play the role the society assigns to them, and which they perform through teaching, research and other services rendered to the society. The concept of academic freedom applies to the individual members of the academic community, and

university autonomy to the university as an institution. Academic freedom, therefore, is not the privilege of a caste but a way of enabling the members of the academic community to carry out their teaching and research. It is, therefore, vital that society and State should protect the members of the academic community, and in Sri Lanka, this protection, has been provided in legislation. On the other hand, the limits of university autonomy have varied considerably in different periods; the fact is that the modern University, even in the context of Sri Lanka, cannot be totally independent of the State and society for financial reasons. In a State funded system, the system of Universities cannot function independently of the State, and this has been the experience of Sri Lanka.

Improvement of Access and the Alternative Tertiary Sector.

In a rapidly changing social and economic environment, higher education plays a varied and complex role in development. In the context of a situation where there is growing demand for more and more higher educational opportunities, the question arises as to how one can expand the access. Yet another problem is the lack of resources to match the demand for expansion. It is, therefore, necessary to diversify the higher education institutions to satisfy the market needs and to provide more access to higher educational opportunities. In Sri Lanka, the Government was compelled to expand and diversify opportunities for every citizen to benefit from higher level skills, training and knowledge – qualifications for entry into the world of work. Technical education, which began in the country with the establishment of the Colombo Technical College in 1893, remained neglected till the sixties; it was in 1957 that the Ten Year Plan stated that 'the educational system must now be more aggressively geared to the needs of development with

a great bias to technical and scientific education'.[13] The Commission on Technical Education recommended that technical-oriented training needs to be provided at three levels.[14] There was also a demand for an unlimited expansion of university education as it was the only route through which a socially esteemed job could be obtained.[15] T.L. Green, as far back as 1952, stated that 'Ceylon is in urgent need of high level productive workers, the highly skilled workers and well educated foremen types who are much important in technological centers – whether they are based on heavy industry, mechanical agriculture or light engineering'.[16] In the sixties and seventies, an attempt was made to provide opportunities for training for secondary school leavers by establishing a network of low level Technical Colleges which specialized on craft courses. The number of Technical Colleges increased from 15 in 1977 to 23 in 1985. With the growing demand for more and more places in the Universities, the question arose as to how the existing non-University tertiary institutions could be developed to provide more access, and the non-university sector, which is called the alternative sector, needed to be expanded. It was in this context that the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education was established; the Technical Education remained fragmented with 26 Technical Colleges, and practically every Ministry was engaged in some kind of technical education. The system, therefore, remained lop sided without direction. It was with the creation of the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) that the system of technical education came to be transformed on the basis of the development needs of the country. During the same period, a system of vocational and skills development education came into existence and today new types of tertiary institutions have come into existence,

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[13] National Planning Council. The Ten Year Plan. Colombo, 1957

[14] Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Technical Education. Sessional Paper X, 1962.

[15] Green, T.L. Education and Social Needs in Ceylon, in University of Ceylon Review, Vol.10, 1952, pp.297-316

[16] Jayasuriya, J.E. Education in Ceylon. Before and After Independence, 1939-68. Colombo, 1969,pp.152-158

institutions which can make a noteworthy contribution to economic development.[17]

Tertiary education today consists of forms and levels of post-secondary education; those secondary school leavers, who cannot find places within the University, need to be provided with an education through a network of tertiary institutions, and Technical Colleges are expected to cater to the increasing demand. In Sri Lanka, all tertiary institutions, because of the inability of the Universities to provide places to all students who obtain the minimum marks at at GCE A/L examination, have to adapt to the increasing demands of multiple stake holders. While students demand access and quality education, employers demand education relevant to market needs, and the Governments need to be accountable for public resources diverted to education. Therefore, what Sri Lanka needs is a tertiary education sector, consisting of Technical Colleges which can provide access to A/L students, which can fruitfully function as an alternative to traditional Universities. In other words, a tertiary sector which can adjust to the needs of economic development. The manpower requirements are such that the country needs a special category of professionals with specific training – a set of high level technicians who fall within the intermediate level between the engineer and the skilled worker. An OECD Report puts 'learning' at the centre of any strategy to increase employment and this study argues that for centers to be equipped for the labour market of the future, there needs to be higher levels of education and methods of updating their skills and knowledge.

In Sri Lanka, the demand for University places has been met by the expansion of the Universities. The University system is not equipped to meet the increasing demand from the secondary school leavers who have obtained the minimum marks – qualifying marks – at the A/L examination. In 2002, 53.42 percent of the total number of

[17] Mikhail, S.M. The Alternative Tertiary Education Sector. More than Non-University Education. World Bank, 2008

candidates passed in all three subjects a minimum achievement with which they could be diverted to some institutions of higher education, preferably Technical-oriented tertiary institutions through which middle level professionals could be produced. In 2003, those who passed in three subjects stood at 54.80 percent of the total; in a system where the university places are restricted to little more than 20,000, the question arises as to how the Government can provide alternative forms of training and education. It is this question that can be answered by a network of Advanced Technological Institutes as proposed by the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education Act, No.29 of 1995. All countries, including Sri Lanka, had to create a specific education systems to meet the demand for training of middle level technicians, and today, this particular role has been assigned to the SLIATE which, while catering to nearly 7000 students, conducts Higher National Diploma Courses in Engineering, Accountancy, Management, Information Technology, Agriculture, English, Business Studies, and Finances. The policy of the Government was to expand this sector to offer higher educational opportunities to those secondary school leavers who do not find places within the Universities. The SLIATE, in the eyes of its advocates, was expected to function as the major apex organization in the field of technological education in Sri Lanka.

The SLIATE was established in 1995 for the purpose of reforming the existing structure of the entire technical and vocational system with a view to making it responsive to the changing needs of economic development in the country. The country wanted a programme of education through which initiatives could be taken to meet the scarcity of trained technological manpower for the purpose of accelerating the process of economic development. Under the Act. No.29 of 1995, the SLIATE enjoys the right to establish Advanced Technological Institutes (ATI) in every province and it, at present, manages 12 such Institutes, catering to nearly 3000 students who are admitted to different courses on the basis of the GCE A/L qualifications. With the establishment of this Institute with its branches, access to

higher educational opportunities has been expanded, and the expansion of access was a major problem faced by the Government. In 2008, the number of students who sat the GCE Advanced Level examination stood at 293,819 out of which 131,000 have been qualified to enter the Universities. The annual intake to the Universities was in the range of 20,000 and this meant that nearly 110,000 students were left out of the system, a waste of both intellectual resources and human capital. It is in this context that the expansion of Technical education became relevant; the country, therefore, was expected to create more alternative educational opportunities so that the ever growing number of secondary school leavers could be trained for jobs available in the competitive job market. The traditional perception of scholastic education, a legacy of the colonial period, resulted in large numbers aspiring to get a University education, and the existing system, due to the lack of enough public resources, cannot be extended; therefore, the Government was compelled to open up alternative opportunities for the expansion of technological education.

All the programmes of the SLIATE have been introduced with an eye on the labour market and the potential employability of its graduates.[18] The main aim of the SLIATE is to expand the access and diversify the system of higher education in the country; access to higher educational opportunities can be expanded through a planned expansion of the Institute which, with the passage of time, can meet the multiple demands of economic development of the country by producing the right type of skilled personnel. The establishment of the SLIATE, therefore, represents an aspect of increased institutional differentiation in the higher education sector, and such changes are necessary to meet the growing social demand for higher education and make the Sri Lankan higher education system

[18] World Bank. The Towers of Learning. Performance, Peril and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. 2009,p.45.

more responsive to the changing needs of the labour market.[19] Yet another objective was to develop a close interaction with industry, which is essential for enhancing the quality of training. As mentioned earlier, there was little investment on Technical education, and it was this which contributed to its backwardness as a sector. Investment in Technical education is certain to produce a pool of skilled manpower that would encourage the private enterprises to modernize their technology. What was available in various Technical Colleges under different Ministries did not meet the broader skills associated with economic development and growth. The private sector involvement in the provision of technical training was not forthcoming and this was largely due to the size of the private sector in the country. A modern technical training institution, therefore, was necessary and the creation of the SLIATE fulfilled this need. The absence of training facilities in the private sector in the area of middle level technical training was one justification for Government intervention in the provision of technical training through the SLIATE, which, in addition, provided access to higher educational opportunities to those secondary school leavers. The strongest argument in favour of the establishment of SLIATE was the need to promote equity and access and which enabled secondary school leavers to enhance their chance of getting employment. This is a non-University tertiary institution which, with its multi-faceted programmes of technical education, can make a contribution to the process of economic development. According to the World Bank, the alternative higher education sector has received less policy attention than the University sector, and considerable institutional development is needed in the future to strengthen the SLIATE.

External Degrees

[19] Mrs. Chandrika Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka, appointed a Committee, headed by Prof. Wiswa Warnapala, the Deputy Minister of Higher Education, to report on 'the Allocation of subjects of Technical Education which was under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. The report was submitted to the President in July, 1995. It proposed the establishment of an autonomous institution for the management of Higher National Diplomas and National Diplomas for which the entry requirement was GCE Advanced Level. It was on the basis of this recommendation that the SLIATE was established in 1995.

The external degree programmes began long before formal University institutions were established in Ceylon; the English medium schools prepared students for the examinations of the University of London.[20] In addition to the University of London, which conducted external examinations for Ceylonese students, there were students who were registered with the Universities in India – the Universities of Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Annamalai. The Colombo Academy was affiliated to the University of Calcutta in 1859, and it, since 1881, began to prepare students for the examinations of the University of London.[21] The continued dependence on external examinations was due to the delay in establishing a higher educational institution in Ceylon; in India, Universities came to be established in 1857 whereas Ceylon, despite the progress of the colony, took more than a century to establish a nucleus of a University. It was only after the establishment of the University College that arrangements for registration and presentation of students for external degree examinations of the University of London were regularized, and the system continued even after the creation of the University of Ceylon in 1942. The question of external examinations came to be examined by the Riddell Commission in 1929; in India, for instance, the view was that it was undesirable to continue external examinations after new Universities have come into existence.[22] The recommendation was to terminate the external examinations, and an external system to the University of Ceylon was also discouraged because it was thought that it would dilute the unitary residential principle on which the University of Ceylon was established. In the immediate transition period, external examinations were allowed in order to help those already registered to complete their degrees. Jennings was in favour of a restricted intake, and he wanted the University to remain elitist, and it was this attitude which discouraged external examinations. In 1945, three years after the establishment of the University of Ceylon, the State Council discussed the issue of external examinations. D.S. Senanayake took the view that since the University is an independent body, it is up to the University to take a decision on the matter. Though the resolution was passed in the State Council, the University authorities, because of the need to maintain its

[20] Jayawardene, W.A. op.cit;p.57-58
[21] Idbid;p.59.
[22] Riddel Commission Report, p.61.

exclusive elitist character, did not pay much attention to the issue.[23] Jennings' strong commitment to a unitary residential University was such that any attempt to interfere with its elitist character was resisted.

The introduction of the free education scheme expanded the opportunities for secondary education, and this, in turn, increased the number of students seeking admission to the University of Ceylon. The Government policy regarding the medium of instruction was partly responsible for the demand for increased admissions. Therefore, in the mid –fifties, the situation became so acute that the University of Ceylon, with its limited residential and other facilities, faced the problem of accommodating the increased number qualifying for admission to the University. The two new Universities – Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara – which came to be established under act No. 45 of 1958, decided to grant external degrees, in response to the growing demand. University education, which examined the request for external examinations, stated that 'we cannot share the view that external degrees would vitiate the ideals of University learning'.[24] It further said that 'it would be a utopian proposition to think of providing University education to meet the present extensive demand only through residential Campuses similar to the one at Peradeniya'.[25] Needham Commission was of the view that registration at Indian and British Universities was not a satisfactory solution to the increasing numbers seeking University education in Ceylon. Therefore, they suggested the combination of the residential and non-residential principles, and recommended that early steps be taken by the University of Ceylon to award external degrees.[26] In 1961, the Ceylon University Ordinance was amended to provide for external examinations, and thereafter, all three Universities began to grant their own external degrees. The Higher Education Act, No. 20 of 1966 provided for the continuance of the granting of external degrees. The University of Ceylon Act, No. 1 of 1972, which established a monolithic single University with several Campuses, recommended the establishment of a central agency for the conduct of external examinations. The agency established under this Act of 1972 was re-named the External Services Agency. With the establishment of

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[23] Hansard of the State Council of 6th June, 1955, Column 2986/87

[24] Report of the Needham Commission (1959), p.145

[25] Ibid;p.146

[26] L.J. De S. Seneviratne, in his dissenting report, wanted external degrees to be granted by a Syndicate representing all the Universities. Vide Needham Report, pp.304-305.

the Open University, the External Services Agency became redundant and a decision was taken to allow the respective Universities to conduct the external examinations. In 1978, the Universities were identified as being suitable for the conduct of external examinations; in order to avoid duplication, not more than one University was permitted to conduct examinations leading to a particular degree. Under this programme, the University of Colombo was given the LLB degree, the University of Peradeniya the BA and B.Sc. degrees and the University of Jayewardenepura the B.Com Degree. The new Universities were very enthusiastic in commencing external examinations as this became a form of generating funds for the University. The proliferation of external degree programmers have become a common feature, though external degree programmes have become 'degree mills' churning out low quality graduates. It was this trend which wanted to be arrested through a new set of policies.

Though external degrees expanded access, it created a fresh set of problems. The rigid regulations which governed registration for external degrees began to change and an open policy was followed with the primary objective of expanding access to higher education. The crisis within the conventional university system was that it could not absorb all those students who qualify at the GCE Advanced Level examination; for instance, in 2005, the number qualified was 117,435 out of which 16,292 were absorbed in to the formal system. The number not selected for University admissions was nearly 86 percent of the total. In 2006, the number enrolled was 150,142 and the pass rate was only 3.53 percent. According to a study done by the Commonwealth of Learning in 2002, 166,000 were registered for external degrees and they were drawn from the larger numbers of those whose marks are not high enough to get admission to a University.[27] In 1999, 73,347 candidates sat the A/L examination, out of which 12,500 were admitted, and this was 17 percent of the qualified for entry. The external degree programmes are conducted without much guidance, and the students rely on the services of unregulated private tutories; the role of the University is to only hold examinations, and therefore, the whole process has become a money-making venture. Traditionally, the most popular external degree programme was the BA; the success rate at this examination was poor. The reason attributed to this is the lack of proper academic support services for students. It is this

[27] Kayes, Anthony. The Current Situation of External Degrees in Sri Lanka. Commonwealth of Learning, 2002.

fact which has encouraged the students to seek registration for an external degree at a recognized University, and the Universities, without a proper plan, have organized external degree programmes with a view to generating funds. While the major incentive has been the generation of income through the external degree programmes, the income generated is not properly used to provide high quality instruction and training to the external students. The system has been constructed in such a way so as to produce poor quality graduates who are coming out of the mill without academic competence and intellectual ability. When compared with the output of the internal degree programmes of the Universities, the academic standards of the external degree graduates is comparatively poor, and this has been the major criticism.[28]

The rate of unemployment among the external degree graduates is around 77 percent.[29] This is a major issue before the country as these graduates demand employment; they are politically motivated and well organized. The poor quality of the graduate is due to a variety of reasons; the primary reason is the absence of proper facilities for them to acquire knowledge and skills. At present, the advice and guidance given by the Universities to external students is limited to administrative matters and examination regulations. The existing external degree programmes cover eleven Universities, and the number of students registered for external degrees with Universities is 206,152, and this, in effect, means that the total number of students, who sit the A/L examination annually, enter the external degree programmes. The Universities are very liberal in registering the students; for instance, Kelaniya University had registered 58,434 students. The increased enrollment is largely due to student-parent perception that reflects their preference to follow a University course instead of looking for employment. The perception is that it would help them to obtain employment in the future. Though the pass rate is low, the external degree programmes, because of their poor quality, have created a social problem as these graduates look for public employment. It is this deficiency which needs to be corrected through new policy initiatives. It is true that the external degree programmes of the Universities have expanded the access and more opportunities have been created in the field of higher education for those who qualify at the A/L examination. This, as

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[28] World Bank. Towers of Learning. Performance, Peril and Promise of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. World Bank 2009, p.42.
[29] Ibid; p.42

we know, is necessary as there is a massive demand for higher education in the country as most of the secondary school leavers, educated in arts subjects, look for a higher qualification. There is only one single route which consists of the Ordinary Level (GCE) Examination, the GCE Advanced Level examination and the University, and those who fail to get into the University get themselves registered as external candidates. In other words, the Sri Lankan student rarely looks for an alternative path, though many opportunities exist in the system. The external degree programme has failed to produce a quality graduate who, with their qualification, cannot find employment in a competitive economic environment; they always look for jobs in the public sector. The present external degree programme, due to the liberal registration formulas in the Universities, has been changed into a mass system, and this feature requires the establishment of a mechanism to handle the challenges that have developed as a result of the expansion of access through this route. The quality of the product has virtually declined and no employer, except the Government, wants to provide employment to external graduates.

If the quality of the external degree programme is to be developed, important policy changes are necessary in the following areas. With regard to the enrollment of external candidates, all Universities, engaged in conducting external degree programmes, need to be requested to follow a single system of enrollment based on a nationally accepted single formula, for instance, the use of Z score with a minimum cut off point so that the number seeking registration could be drastically restricted. No ad hoc enrollment on the basis of three A/L passes should be allowed in the future, and it is through this innovative measure that weak candidates getting themselves registered could be prevented. Such candidates always obtain registration with a soft combination of subjects. A central admission policy could prevent this kind of ad hoc registration. Strict regulations are, therefore, necessary to determine the combination of subjects; some subjects, though they are University subjects, have no relevance to the demands of a rapidly changing economy. The traditional disciplines, which dominated the curriculum in the fifties and sixties, are still popular with external candidates, and the subjects for the General Degree come within the traditional disciplines which have little relationship to the needs and demands of the labour market. It is this fact which interferes in the employability of graduates. It is here that the policy framework for higher education needs to be linked to specific national

conditions, which, in fact, means the importance of economic relevance of the higher education system. The World Bank Report, in this particular context, stated that 'the knowledge and skills of graduates, particularly in the external degree and distance mode programmes, and the arts, commerce and science courses, as well as their work attitudes and aspirations need to be oriented more strongly to the needs of the economy'.[30]

As mentioned earlier, the number of candidates registered by the individual Universities for the external degree are so high, and therefore, unmanageable. For instance, the University of Kelaniya registers students in thousands, and such liberal forms of registration are the sole reason for the decline in standards and quality. As previously stated, yet another reason is that most of the candidates offer soft combinations of subjects. A restrictive formula needs to be imposed to curtail the numbers, and this can be done by introducing rational and useful criteria. In a system where a large number of students who fail to get into the formal University system look for low cost external degree programmes, a strict form of registration is necessary and it needs to be administered by a specially established mechanism. The absence of a quality assurance mechanism to assess the quality of external degrees offered by the Universities and the quality of education offered by various institutions in the established tuition industry is a major problem, and a policy on quality assurance is a must. Such an assessment is certain to enhance the quality as the providers are expected to maintain the required standards in a highly competitive higher education market. The quality of external degrees has become an important issue, in the context of the number of graduates seeking employment, the decline in quality is largely due to the fact that they depend on private tuition classes which are ill-equipped. Most deficiencies in the external degree programmes are due to the absence of a direct relationship with the University with which the external candidates are registered; this relationship is confined to the preparation of syllabi, setting of question papers and marking of examination papers. Marking of papers is most unsatisfactory as it is not properly supervised, the University Grants Commission has now introduced a set of regulations to look into all aspects of assessment.[31] Yet another reason for the decline

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[30] Ibid; p.42.

[31] UGC Circular No. 932, dated 15th October, 2010, Policy Framework and Guidelines for offering External Degrees and Extension Programmes by Universities/Higher Educational Institution/

in quality is the absence of a learning environment as in the case of internal students. It is through an effective system of quality control that the accountability of the external degree programme could be maintained. The focus needs to be on the end product – the external graduate who needs to be a competent, intellectual-oriented person; according to Max Weber, a 'cultivated' individual.[32]

Today, the determination of optimal education outlays has a direct relationship to the rate of economic growth; the rate of economic growth of a country depends, to a considerable extent, upon the availability of skills of all types in the labour force. This has to be kept in mind in changing the policy on the production of external graduates. In concluding this discussion on the need to maintain quality in the external degree programmes, one must pay attention to the number of recommendations made by the UGC to enhance the quality of external degrees programmes of the Universities of Sri Lanka; the UGC Circular, No. 932 of 15th October, 2010, which contains all the relevant guidelines for the programme to function more effectively in the future. The UGC made a comprehensive study of the programme in 2008 and a detailed report was submitted; it, in fact, became the basis for certain useful recommendations which focus on student quality, curricula development, learner support, student assessment and quality assurance. The most significant recommendation was the establishment of a 'central apex body' to oversee the entire operation; this would certainly accord extra-responsibilities on the University Grants Commission which is already over-burdened with the administration of a centrally-controlled admission policy, and many other responsibilities with regard to the Universities. Unless and until guidelines are provided to the Universities through an instrument associated with the University Grants Commission, the deficiencies in the system of external degrees cannot be corrected. The relevant guidelines have been published in a Handbook prepared by the University Grants Commission. More emphasis has been laid on the curriculum; the failure to modernize the curriculum led to the inordinate increase in numbers. The curriculum reform should include subjects which can improve the skills of the graduates, and it should fall in line with the Credit

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Institutes. It contains directive relating to Policy Framework, Institutional Organisation, Arrangement, Admission Criteria and Methods of Selection and Registration, Programme Structure, Types of Degree Programmes and Courses, Programme Delivery, Student Assessment and Evaluation, quality Assurance and collaboration with other institutions.

32 Gerth, H.H. Mills, Wright. From Weber. Essays in Sociology. London, 1947, p.356

Qualification Framework approved by the University Grants Commission. The most important proposal was that all external degree programmes of Universities must be subjected to review periodically by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of the University Grants Commission. In the past, the Universities, with no periodical assessments, continued the programme and no attempts were made to re-orient the curriculum in keeping with national needs. It was very unfortunate that the Universities looked at it purely from the angle of the generation of income.

Since the criticism was the increased numbers registering for external degree programmes, some form of restriction was needed to be placed on admission while the basic qualification for entry was based on three passes at the GCE A/L, the eligibility would now be determined on the Z score as determined by the University Grants Commission, which, as proposed in the Circular No. 932 of October, 2010, would release annually a minimum mark to determine eligibility, which would restrict the numbers.[33] It is through such restrictions that quality too could be maintained and a quality graduate could be produced who can contribute to development of the country. Under these recommendations, additional responsibility was placed on the Universities; for instance, they can conduct an aptitude test, a formal interview and a practical test to choose the number from among the eligible candidates. Now all Universities are required to ensure that the external degree programmes have relevance to human resource needs of the country. In addition, the Universities are expected to assess the quality of the output once in four years in order to see whether the programmes have produced employable graduates. The success of all these lofty objectives depend on the internal efficiency of the systems within the Universities, and the University Grants Commission, though these innovations with regard to external degree programmes have placed an additional burden, must show its muscle to get the Universities to adhere to the new rules and regulations. The improvement of the quality of the external degree programmes is certain to have major impact on the process of development in the country, and it needs to be an integral element of the development-oriented higher education policy in Sri Lanka.

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[33] See the attached Table on External Degree Programmes in Universities. New Registration and Total Enrollment – 2008.

External Degree Programmes in universities, new registration and total enrollment – 2008

University	Course of Study	New Registration	Total Enrolment
Peradeniya	BA	8546	26325
	Total	8546	26325
Colombo	LLB	*1	146
	Total		146
Sri Jayewardenepura*2	BA	8826	48993
	B.Sc. (Business Adm.)	8727	40517
	B.Sc. (Management)	232	2501
	BCom	310	5293
	Total	18095	97304
Kelaniya*2	BA	13959	54377
	BCom	165	1818
	B.Sc.	101	602
	BBMgt	801	1637
	Total	15026	58434
Moratuwa*2	BIT	89	89

	Total	89	89

Jaffna*2	BA	383	12913
	BCom	91	2342
	BFA	4	252
	Total	478	15507

Eastern University	BCom	*3	55
	BBA	46	116
	BSc*2	49	78
	BSc (Agriculture)	*3	17
	BEcon	20	20
	BA	667	2273
	Total	782	2559

South Eastern University	BA	416	2254
	BBA	141	794
	BCom	12	93
	Total	569	3141

Sabaragamuwa	BA*2	132	289
	Total	132	289

Wayamba	BSc (Plantation Mgt.)	36	66

	Total	36	66

UCSC	BIT	1237	2289
	Total	1237	2289

Grand Total		44990	206152

Note:

*1 No new Registration as the programme has been suspended.

*2 This provide 2007 student nos. as 2008 registration has not yet been finalized.

Violence and Ragging in the Universities

In the recent past, violence among students has become a major problem within the Universities, and much thought has been given to find ways and means of tackling this malaise and menace, which, in the years, has become the main de-stabilising factor within the system. In February, 2008, the Island newspaper, a reputed daily in the country, wrote an editorial titled 'why Close Universities? Deal with Student Thugs', and it would be useful to make use of this hard-hitting editorial as a starting point of this discussion on violence and ragging in the Universities in Sri Lanka. When the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya was inaugurated in 1952, its architect, Sir Ivor Jennings wanted the University to remain more open than usual, but the opposite of this wish has come true. The immediate provocation for the hard-hitting editorial was the closure of the University of Peradeniya due to a protest organized by the student community, preventing the naming of the newly built Hall of Residence at Lower Hantane as the Sir Ivor Jennings Hall. The Halls of Residence

have been given the names of the pioneers who championed the cause of a unitary residential university in Sri Lanka. However, the student community, majority of whom were not aware of the pioneering contribution made by Jennings to university education in the country, was not prepared to honour Sir Ivor Jennings by naming the new Hall of Residence after him. In fact, the student leadership, led by the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) student activists, wanted the Hall of Residence to be named after a student activist, Rangitham Gunaratnam, who died at the heigh of the JVP – oriented University crisis in the mid – eighties. It was on this issue that the clashes occurred between the student leadership, and the administration which stood by their stand that the Hall of Residence be named after Sir Jennings. This is an important example which provides a realistic index to the nature of student behavior and the level of intellectual orientation of the present undergraduate. Jennings, writing in his Students Guide in 1948, stated that the 'fundamental task is to produce educated men and women in the fullest sense of that phrase, men and women who are capable of fulfilling any function in the world that may fall to their lot, citizens of high intelligence, complete moral integrity, and possessing energy, initiative, judgments, tact and qualities of leadership'.[34] The question is whether the present undergraduate, fits into that mould which Jennings succinctly characterized; a close examination of the violent behavior of the undergraduate and his involvement in ragging shows that there is a visible deterioration in the undergraduate behavior due to both student activism and political militancy associated with a large segment of the undergraduate community and it is this aspect, which fundamentally contributes to instability within the system, which needs to be investigated and discussed in order to highlight the major features of this malaise.

Jennings autobiography, The Road to Peradeniya (2005) reveals how he planned an elitist oriented University on the basis of the Oxbridge model, where the University was made exclusively residential. Every University, which came to be established after the creation of Peradeniya in 1952, wanted to emulate this tradition, and it was this residential model which created numerous problems for the policy-makers and administrators of Universities in Sri Lanka. Jennings planned the University at Peradeniya for a maximum of 5000 students; intake in 1942 was 904.

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[34] Jennings, Ivor. Students Guide, 1948,p.8

Today the annual intake is in the region of 20,000 and above, where the elitist character has paved the way for a kind of 'massification' of Universities in Sri Lanka. The biggest single change in higher education over the past two decades is 'massification'.[35] In Sri Lanka, this kind of mass higher education came as a direct result of the social demand model of education, under which education was made free from kindergarten to the University. This model of education produced a noteworthy change in the social composition of the student population. The substantial proportion of the student population came from the lower middle class, working and peasant class backgrounds.[36] In addition, the students, who come from such social backgrounds, are concentrated in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences, Humanities, Commerce and Management. This, again, began to change in the eighties, and students of those social backgrounds are now found in Engineering, Science and Medical faculties as well. Therefore, one cannot say that the student militancy is found only among Arts students as prospectus for employment is limited.

The change from an elite-status to massification had an effect on student behaviour and their militancy; the students, who came from a restricted elite background and from select schools, got themselves involved in politics through student organizations, which were largely based on the ideological stands of Stalinism and Trotskyism. Jennings himself referred to the existence of such divisions among the students in his autobiography.[37] He noted that student politicians were 'leftists' and that they came from the comparatively wealthy sections of the population.[38] Because of the nature of the social background of the students, their militancy was confined to arguments and debates on ideological matters. There was some intellectual content in their discussions, and it was the elite-orientation of the institution which, probably, encouraged a kind of intellectualism among the undergraduate community. The question of Marxists among the undergraduate community became the subject of a discussion in Parliament in 1954. Pieter Keunaman, speaking on the occasion, said that 'any attempt at preventing the study of the science of Marxism and its contribution

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[35] The Knowledge Factory, in The Economist, London, May, 2008
[36] Lakshman, W.D. challenges in University Education. Sri Lanka. Stanley Wijesundera Memorial Lecturer, April 2007, p.6
[37] Jennings, Ivor. The Road to Peradeniya, p.108
[38] Ibid; p.108

to knowledge is an attempt to stifle academic intellectual freedom in the University'.[39] The need to preserve academic freedom came to be highlighted in this debate; both Dr. N.M. Perera and B H Aluvihare defended the concept of academic freedom.

According to Ralph Pieris, the University, in the subsequent years, did not develop as an intellectual institution; he, in fact, stated that there was a complete absence of a research tradition in the form of post-graduate schools and Institutes.[40] This had a major impact on the undergraduate community which saw the University only as a teaching institution, and it was in this background that both unrest and indiscipline began to develop among the undergraduates who, unlike their predecessors of the past, became more violent and believed in a monolithic ideology similar to fascism where democratic discussion was totally absent. Though there were incidents due to student unrest in the late fifties and sixties, they did not develop into major events of de-stabilisation of the Universities. This trend began to change in the seventies, and incidents in 1971 marked a complete change in the nature of student activism. In the past, for instance, the student clash with the Police in 1953 at Peradeniya, was an incident which did not result in wastage; whatever happened in the period before 1971 had an international dimension and students maintained some relationship with international student organizations. In the post-1971 period, student activism has become the major de-stabilising factor, resulting in wastage of both financial and academic resources which needs elaborate discussion.

The major reason, attributed by critics, is the nature of the expansion of the Universities. As stated earlier, the Sri Lankan Universities, fifteen in number, are no longer the exclusive preserve of the English-educated middle and upper classes. Today, most of the students come from under privileged backgrounds, who seek employment through education.[41] As in the fifties, the undergraduate community is not associated with a broader perspective; instead they are involved only in typical university issues. They are scarcely aware of the system of education and enter higher educations without a clear conception of its rewards. They, rarely, get involved in

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[39] Hansard. House of Representatives 1954-55, Column 130.
[40] Pieris, Ralph. Op.cit; p.446
[41] Oxford still takes 45 percent of its undergraduates from private private school, which educate just 7 percent of the nations children.

intellectual discussion and debate over international political and economic issues. They have failed to produce worthwhile publications; their music and theatre have deteriorated to propagandist art, and this kind of intellectual retardation is represented in their numerous posters and graffiti's on walls of the campus. In this context, it would be interesting to look at the phenomenon of youth revolt in the West in order to see whether there is any valid relevance. The youth revolt of the West in the late sixties gave birth to an autonomous youth culture which was absent in Sri Lanka except perhaps the organized protests of undergraduates, which demonstrated the intellectual poverty of a generation.

In 1968 in France, when the Gaullist regime was repressive, it became one of the grievances taken up by the students.[42] There was a sense of distance between the Government and the governed, and the young passionately demanded justice and freedom. Many of the students, those militants have studied Sociology. With the vast increase in the student population, and drawn from different social classes, the students, all below thirty, demanded power and recognition. They began to question the relevance of the subjects taught at the University, and went on to question the Sociology they were being taught.[43] Therefore, the student movement, which began to question the adult world, developed as a movement of the youth with its own leaders, symbols and demands. It was in the late sixties that a student estate emerged as a power to be reckoned with.[44] In Britain, student estate had become a body whose corporate opinion had to be reckoned with as the National Union of Students (NUS) had a membership of 300,000.[45] There was a strong sense of cohesion among students and the natural product of this was a claim to rights and responsibilities of students. One important problem was the attitude of the society to those rights and responsibilities which the spokesmen of the students claim for themselves.

In the case of Sri Lanka, university students, rights and responsibilities were not properly examined, though Jennings made some reference to it in his Student Guide, published in 1948; but it never became known among the

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[42] Spender, Stephen. The Year of the Young Rebels. London, 1969, p.103.
[43] Ibid;p.170.
[44] Ashby, Eric & Anderson, Mary. Rise of the student estate in Britain. Macmillan, 1970,p.1
[45] Ashby, Eric. Nasters and Scholars. London, 1970, p.44.

students in the subsequent years as there was no second edition of this publication.[46] The most important issue relevant to Sri Lanka is that this document on student's rights and responsibilities published in 1948 stated that 'student behavior should never be based on the belief that he is entitled to any additional license.[47] It further stated that students, as a class, bear collective responsibility towards the community. [48] In Sri Lanka, in the absence of a Student Charter, the undergraduates could commit acts of violence with impunity. As in the West, in the late sixties, university students did not launch protests to reject the adult world. In the Sri Lankan Universities, unlike in the West, the youth culture is not based on dress, music and worship of cults. It is based on an insurrectionary-oriented youth political culture which began in the early seventies with an ideology, the Marxist strands of which are limited. It was an ideology, with which a group of student leaders tried to dominate the undergraduate community by imposing a single monolithic view on student matters and issues.[49] This monolithic view on matters is articulated through various social and economic issues affecting the student community, whose grievances are not dissimilar from those of the large mass of the people in the rural areas. The most overtly political protest among young people is dominated and largely being manipulated by a small minority of student leaders with links to the political leadership of a political party which is still bent on insurrectionary politics.[50] The radical student groups continue to control students opinion which, as the Youth Commission pointed out, is 'the nature and quality of education provided in our Universities which has significantly contributed to youth unrest'.[51] This is particularly true, but the main fact was the association of undergraduates with the JVP-oriented politics in the country, and their agenda being different as they wanted to take over power through a Fascist-type putsch. There was some truth in the argument that the education at the University did not immediately provide employment. The National Education Commission wanted to introduce a Code of conduct for undergraduates with

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[46] In Britain, the first Student Charter was published in 1940, after a British Student congress held in Leeds. 600 students participated at this Congress. Twenty years later in 1967 there was another attempt to define the rights and responsibilities of students. One important demand was that students should be consulted over academic issues. Student behaviour, says the document, should never be based on the belief that he is entitled by his status to any additional licence. See Ashby, Eric.

[47] Ibid;p.55

[48] Ibid;p.55

[49] Warnapala, Wiswa. Tertiary Education in Sri Lanka. Relevance in the Global Context. Colombo,2009,p.188

[50] Mathews, Bruce. University Education in Sri Lanka in context. Consequence of Deteriorating standards, in Pacific Affairs. Vol.68,No.1,1995

[51] Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth. Sessional Paper No. 1,1990,p.33

a view to maintaining discipline, and suggested a meaningful dialogue with the student groups in all matters affecting the students, including curriculum and course planning.[52] The political motivations have been stronger than their need to get themselves involved in such matters. In the aftermath of the student unrest in the West, this matter relating to student participation in academic government came to be discussed, but student reformers believed that such arrangements were cynical devices to pacify agitators. The argument was that Universities exist to transmit knowledge and to advance knowledge; two essential decisions are: What is to be taught? And what research is to be done? These decisions have to be taken by individual members of faculty, any attempt to transfer these decisions to another would lead to a gross infringement of academic freedom.

In Sri Lanka, there were demands pertaining to students' right to form Student Unions. As in the West, the violence among Sri Lankan undergraduates did not come within the description of youth revolt; it was not an assault on formal adult radicalism. It was violence without wide ideological objectives. It strictly lead to destruction and anarchy, bordering on fascism, and it did not lead to adult radicalism; the reason was that the young radical was working on the basis of wrong priorities. Ediriweera Sarathchandra, in the Convocation address in 1982, saw student violence as a source of class conflict; he stated that student violence was not mere vandalism.[53] It was his view that as the social and economic gap between students and academic staff grew more and more during the sixties, university students began to regard learning as a part of the vested interests of a class of privileged people. According to Sarathchandra, the students saw the class conflict in a heightened form; this was an over-statement of facts as students displayed only a kind of antagonism based on their views on society. JVP's 'five classes' ideological package taught the rural youth of the existence of social and economic oppression in the village, and it was hatred which, not only in the University but in all areas, manifested in the form of violence against the established authority. The student violence in the eighties became so widespread that the Universities could not function for several years, and a Parliamentary Select

[52] National Education Commission. National Policy Framework on Higher Education, 2009
[53] Sarathchandra, Ediriweera. Convocation Address, University of Peradeniya, 1982.

Committee was appointed to investigate the matter.[54] The Report of the Select Committee, which ran to 305 pages, was a comprehensive study of the problem, and it stated that it 'had a frank and forthright discussion with all those who were directly connected with higher education in the country'.[55] In the course of its study of problems and issues which affected the undergraduates, the Select Committee identified the inability of University authorities to deal swiftly with student unrest as one primary factor. The abolition of Student Assemblies in 1985, without providing for an alternative arrangement, was a step in the wrong direction. This, according to the Select Committee, left the university authorities without a medium to deal with students.[56] In the absence of properly constituted student bodies, the politically motivated students formed 'Action Committees', similar to those formed in France in 1968, and these Committees began to take decisions on behalf of the undergraduate community. Though there was violence in the past based on ideological and political points of view, they were isolated incidents which did not assume critical proportions. But what the Universities experienced in the late eighties included a cycle of violence with thuggery, intimidation, and taking of hostages, and several incidents of murder as well, which made the functioning of Universities almost impossible.

The accepted view was that a small group of students between ten to twenty percent of the student body was responsible for this state of affairs. The majority was compelled to follow and the vocal and the militant minority – among whom student activism was very high-expanded its influence by articulating the issues that impinged on the welfare of the students. The experience of the University authorities in the late eighties was that student violence interfered heavily with the governance of the Universities, and had become a perennial problem in the Universities.[57] The failure of the University authorities to find solutions to their grievances – which had political overtones – compelled the students to protest before the University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Higher Education, a new phenomenon in student militancy. Sometimes all the Universities, at the behest of the

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[54] Select Committee Report on the grave situation in the Universities. Parliamentary Series No.107 of 1987.9.46.
[55] Ibid;p.46.
[56] Ibid;p.48.
[57] Warnasuriya, Narada. University Governance and Student Unrest. Kanangara Memorial Lecture, 2008, p.7.

JVP – oriented Student Federation – IUSF – which is not a formally recognized Student Union, became involved, and this phenomenon, became an irritant to modes of governance. Such demonstrations were given high profile publicity by the media. Their aim was to show their strength to those in power and the motive was partly political. The frequent closures would disrupt the academic calendar and would invariably affect academic standards. Yet another consequence of continuous student violence is the wastage, and according to information available, the closure of Universities and boycotts in the Universities resulted in the system losing 193 working days, out of which 185 days were lost as a result of the boycott of classes by students.[58] Faculty rivalries, more often than not, lead to clashes among students, which were, sometimes, bloody at which severe injuries were inflicted on students. The information about closures relates to one single academic year, and the wastage, when calculated in monetary terms, is about 2.5 percent of the annual allocation of the recurrent expenditure. As Lord Robbins reported in the case of Britain, this kind of wastage affected the performance of the undergraduates, and this is one of the basic reasons for the decline in the quality of the graduate. Yet another consequence is that the Universities could not work according to the University Calendar, and this, again, stifled the intellectual activities of the Universities. Universities could not allow protests that threaten the life of the University community by disrupting the normal operations and infringing upon the rights of others. Students have the right to protest on current burning issues of the society but such events should not interfere with the normal operation of the University as a community. The boycott of lectures by students interrupts the academic work and the resources allocated are wasted. It finally affects the economic and social development of the country.[59] According to an unpublished report, the average wastage was about 2.5 percent of the annual allocation for recurrent expenditure. The highest recurrent cost wastage occurred at Peradeniya.[60] Weeramunda's study on student violence provides a detailed account on issues which

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[58] Warnapala, Wiswa. Higher Edcuation Policy in Sri Lanka. New Perspectives and Change. Vijitha Yapa, 2009, 9.113

[59] Number of Strikes. Peradeniya lost 61 days. Rajarata lost 33 days, Sabaragamuwa lost 69 days and Wayamba lost 41 days. Source. Strikes in the Universities. Unpublished UGC document, 2007.

[60] Weeramunda, A.J. Socio Political Impact of Student Viloence And Indiscipline in Universities and Tertiary Education Institutes. National Education Commission, May, 2008.

Also see Marga Report on Student Violence, Marga Institute, 2010.

stimulate students to indulge in violence within Universities. The question is whether the University can continue to exist as an open society; the normal operation of the University should not be impeded. Therefore, it has been argued that a University should allow only the legitimate means of communicating dissent, and both civility and rationality need to be maintained as the most reasonable means of dissent within an academic community.

The next important issue, which contributes largely to the de-stablisation of Universities, is ragging which has now become endemic in the system. It was during the 'ragging' season, which takes place at the beginning of an academic year with the new intake of students, that the Universities experienced various violent incidents which, in the end, lead to a closure of the University. Several Commissions of Inquiry had been appointed by respective Governments to find ways and means of preventing the recurrence of such incidents. Although high powered Committees were appointed to-investigate the matter, the findings however, have not been utilized to take corrective actions; these Committees have became a means of placating the public and warding off public criticism.[61] The incidents of ragging, which lead to violent incidents, including the death of students, have been investigated by such Committees of Inquiry. While 'ragging' has been present in the University since its inception, Jennings for instance was highly critical of such acts and rejected the belief that it was a Western tradition.[62] What Jennings saw as 'ragging' was some kind of rowdyrin, though there were incidents, they could not be compared with the violent incidents which took place in the universities of late. Jennings was very critical of the undergraduates of his period because they were noisy; hooting and whistling at union society meetings were a common feature which he rejected as unruly behaviour. Yet another thing Jennings condemned as unbecoming of an undergraduate was the practice of uttering obscenities in the presence of female undergraduates. The Report of the University Council in 1945 reported that 'there have been outbursts of minor offences, such as hooting at student meetings, stamping in the library, and rowdyism in the neighborhood of women hostels'.[63] According to Jennings, discipline of the

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[61] Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the Incidents at the Peradeniya Campus on 11th and 12th, September, 1976. Sessional Paper1, 1977.

[62] Gunawardene, R A L H ed More Open than Usual, p.44.

[63] The 4th Report of the University of Ceylon Council , 1945, p.15.

University was quite unlike the discipline of a school, for it is almost entirely self-discipline.[64] The aim, he stated, is to give the utmost liberty to the students, believing that the task of the University is to create a sense of moral responsibility in its members and that their task is embedded when police power has to be used.[65] He wanted the undergraduates not to commit acts prejudicial to the good name of the University.[66] The undergraduates were addressed as 'ladies and gentlemen' because students were regarded as grown up adults.[67] Though there was much talk of discipline, a small minority of students indulged in 'ragging' which, as mentioned earlier, came to be confined to non-violent behaviour, which, however, was a form of public nuisance. In other words, 'ragging' – which then was confined to a week, which however, was not strictly followed – did not lead to a major problem within the University. Dharmasiri Pieris, a senior public servant, recounting his own experience as an undergraduate at the University of Ceylon at Peradeniya, wrote that 'in the late fifties, the rag week was more a 'get acquainted exercise' than a pre-meditated assault on mind and body'.[68] According to Dharmasiri Pieris, an added aim was to cut down to size the over-confident public school student who thought that he knew a great deal because he had been successful at the competitive examination.[69] This shows that the 'rag' in the early phase of the University of Ceylon was a very mild form of harassing and embarrassing the 'freshers' in the first few weeks at the University.

In the course of time, the 'rag' deteriorated into vulgar acts of violence against the freshers and the seniors, who unleashed terror in an organized way, and began to commit acts, which, if taken before the law, are criminal offences. Unlike in the past, the 'rag' in the post – 1971 period had become a part of an insidious form of political recruitment to join their union which has its own ideology linked to an insurrectionary oriented political party. It was this feature which converted the 'rag' into a repressive instrument of political mobilization – of course at a very low level – which displayed hatred, humiliating the fresher with a view to attacking the basic values to which he remained attached. They wanted the student to reject the

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[64] Jennings, Ivor. Student Guide, p.15.
[65] Ibid; p.15.
[66] Ibid; p.16.
[67] Pieris, Dharmasiri. Peradeniya in the L950s, in University of Ceylon Golden Jubilee Souvnir, 1942-1992, p.63.
[68] Ibid; p.63.
[69] Ibid.

conventional world; the rag, through its numerous diversions, interfered with the personality of the young men, among whom there were men who could stand this ordeal and still maintain their balance to remain a student whereas others became ill, and experienced nervous breakdowns, and serious psychological problems. Some students gave up their university education and looked for alternatives; certain parents, out of sheer fear, did not want their children to continue at the University.

It was because of such dangerous proportions to which this menace developed that there was a public outcry to take action against the perpetrators of such violence. In the public perception, there is so much of opposition to ragging and the Sri Lankan press condemns it as a menace which needs to be eradicated. Amongst the academic community, there is opposition; there are pro-rag student groups and anti-rag student groups; the latter, in fact, is linked to a political party which, through the 'rag', wants it Campus supporters recruited and made use of their protests during the course of the year. The Universities – Peradeniya, Kelaniya and Jayewardenepura – have had major clashes during the 'rag' season, and the nature of the 'rag' became such an anti-social phenomenon which threatened the stability of the University as an institution of learning. It added such a violent dimension to the environment that the administration, which became helpless, virtually broke down during this period. Some violent incidents took place in association with the 'rag'; when the culprits were dealt with, it invariably lead to a major crisis within the University which, finally, resulted in Police intervention or closure of the University for a couple of weeks. This, in general, is the pattern of events associated with the 'rag', and it has become a major threat to University governance. In the Universities, with the disciplinary machinery available – which, from the inception, came to be called the Board of Residence and Discipline (BRD), the authorities punish the students, but the punishments meted out, again, are challenged with a new wave of protests; they include boycott of lectures, sit-ins, taking of hostages and other acts with which the administration is interfered with. Jennings, in his Student Guide, stated that 'university does not condone criminal offences.[70] In the Universities of Sri Lanka, the criminal offences are committed with impunity by the students, and it is this which has threatened the very foundation of intellectual life in the Universities. It was in 1975 that the authorities adopted a serious view of the on-

[70] Report on Ragging at the Vidyalankara Campus. Sessional Paper No. , 1975.

going problem of ragging, and decided to appoint a Committee of inquiry to investigate the 'ragging' incidents at the Vidyalankara Campus.[71] Some school teachers, who came to the Campus as adult students, were 'subjected to perverse, sadistic, inhuman and indecent ragging', and this, to a great extent, was something new to the 'ragging' culture of the past, and the incidents at Kelaniya in 1975 demonstrated that 'ragging' has been elevated to the status of naked sadism. This report, making a damning condemnation of those involved in 'ragging', revealed that 'the majority of the male teachers were forced to commit unnatural sex acts. Some were forced to imitate dogs in the sex acts. Some were forced to perform sex acts on a coconut shell as a substitute for the female organ. A female teacher was forced to imitate the birth of Prince Siddartha. Torture, obscenity, indecency, vulgarity and sacrilege were at their peak. The language used is unprintable. [72] Such inhuman and sadistic acts took place in 'Siberia', at the extreme end of the Science building, where all the male victims were taken to perform such acts.[73] The report, the revelations of which shocked the country, mentioned that 'some male teachers were subjected to cruelties of unimaginable forms'.[74] Though it was not substantiated, there were incidents of rape – some lecturers were talking of rape said to have been committed in the course of the 'rag'. Similar stories are heard in other Universities as well, and they have not been given much publicity for obvious reasons; the victims are afraid of the reprisals which they are likely to face during their undergraduate career. In regard to the Kelaniya incidents in 1975, 15 persons who were alleged to have been involved in ragging were identified, but the political groups, as usual, tried to suppress the information. The description above, though confined to the Kelaniya Campus, is representative of the general nature of the 'rag' in other Universities as well. The 'rag' is indecent, sadistic and an expression of perversion. It displays features of uncivilized inhuman behaviour; the students engaged in such acts are not fit for higher education as they cannot play an acceptable role in a decent and civilized society, the values of which are based on ancient traditions.

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[71] Ibid; p.3.
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[73] Ibid; p.3.
[74] Ibid; p.3.

The Vidyalankara Report, which was a landmark report in respect of ragging as it successfully brought the menace into public attention, went into reasons which motivate students to indulge in acts of violence against fellow students. The 'rag' has been treated as an integral aspect of student culture – a sub-culture with its own traditions – where the 'fresher' is supposedly introduced to the traditions of the University but which becomes nothing but misbehavior leading to sadism and perversion. According to the Vidyalankara report, the root cause of indiscipline is to be found in a wide variety of sociological and economic reasons; there was another school of thought which described ragging as a sick symptom of the basic causes of undergraduate discontent.[75] The unavailability of immediate employment opportunities for the Arts graduates is a reason for their frustration, and 'the frustrated student population therefore is fertile soil for tremendous ideological propaganda'.[76] The view was expressed that manifestations of ideology at the university, especially those doctrines, make the undergraduate aggressive and militant; student militancy and activism are closely linked to ideologies which they profess as undergraduates, and this, in an environment of ideological and intellectual competition, leads to student indiscipline. Yet another reason attributed to this violent and sadistic behaviour was the psychological stresses and conflicts among the undergraduates, who make use of ragging to unleash their stresses and frustrations. Ragging, in the eyes of the deprived, was a form of dealing with the class enemy, and this perception came to the forefront after the 1971 youth revolt. Therefore, ragging, in whatever form it appeared, displayed absolute disrespect for established law and order in the country. This could not be treated as a recent tendency but has been gradually growing in all the Campuses; the expansion of university education resulted in over-crowding in the Halls of Residence, and this is yet another reason for widespread ragging. The ragging cycle begins with the second year undergraduate who, in his first year, underwent the ordeal; therefore, he either wants to emulate his seniors who ragged him or take revenge for what he experienced. This is the phenomenon common to all Universities, and it is tied to a desire to establish an identity among the students. Yet another reason identified by the commission of Inquiry was the lack of a relationship between students and teachers; some teachers are keen to establish this relationship while others are very oblivious to

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[75] Ibid;p.73
[76] Ibid;p.73

it. The majority of the teachers take the view that their duty is to conduct lectures and they do not think of the need to promote better relations between the two communities.

The anatomy of protest is not new, it has been there in the Universities from medieval times. The peaceful sit-in is the form of protest in the British Universities, and in Sri Lanka, a student sit-in is certain to lead to some form of violence, the result of which is damage to university property. There was a school of thought which dissected the whole issue of student indiscipline in political terms, and came to the conclusion that partisan politics, with which the undergraduate community is involved, leads to the break-down of discipline. The report of the committee of Inquiry on the violence at the University of Jayewardenepura in 2008, thirty years after the Vidyalankara incident, mentioned a series of reasons which lead to violence.[77] It saw the failure to hold elections to the University Student Council as an important reason which generated student unrest; the lack of student representation came to be identified as a cause for violence.[78] The violence at the Jayewardenepura University, according to this report, came to be integrally associated with ragging; there were two groups - one wanted ragging to go on unabated and the other group championed anti-ragging, and both groups, as they struggled for status and recognition, clashed among themselves. The students, who experienced ragging, described 'the period of ragging as the most terrifying in their lives'.[79] According to the latest report, 'the acts of ragging varied for both males and females and even clergy, from being forced to wear particular types of clothing, comb their hair in a style decided by seniors, wear rubber slippers to being forced to perform obscene acts in the buff. They were verbally and physically assaulted if they refused to comply. The psychological damage that resulted was immense'.[80] Similar ordeals and orgies have been committed at Peradeniya which have had a terrible psychological effect on the victims. The Jayewardenepura incident in 2003 revealed that these acts of sadism were committed by seniors on freshers with the intention of recruiting them to their student group. It was in 2000 that a group of students formed themselves into an anti-rag group with the sole intention of eradicating the scourge of ragging on the Campus, and this group, because of their stand on the

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[77] Report of the Presidential Commission on the Violence at Jayawardenepura University,2003, Sessional Paper
[78] Ibid;p.10
[79] Ibid;p.8
[80] Ibid;p.8

issue, became popular and posed a great threat to the pro-ragging group. It was the clash between the two groups which finally culminated in the death of a student by the name Samantha. The division of opinion on ragging is now prevalent in all Campuses but there is still an aggressive group of students bent on ragging, a strange phenomenon in a country where there is so much opposition to ragging.

It was in this background that the Minister of Education and Higher Education appointed a committee to recommend legal action against ragging and other illegal acts committed by students in Universities.[81] This, in facts, showed that all other methods adopted so far to prevent ragging had failed; in other words, it meant that Universities, as independent and autonomous institutions, had failed to curb ragging and other acts of violence. The immediate reason for the appointment of this committee, headed by Prof. Savithri Gunasekera, Professor of Law of the University of Colombo, was the death of a Tamil undergraduate at the University of Peradeniya after an incident of brutal ragging. A female student, who leapt from a window of her room in the Hall of Residence to escape ragging by seniors was crippled for life. Though it was expected that such incidents would lead to positive action ragging has continued. It is legitimised on the basis of the argument that it is an acceptable aspect of student life. Therefore, ragging the first year students - the freshers - has become a legitimate practice from the point of view of the culture of student life, and those who stand against the practice, which on numerous occasions has taken brutal forms, are more often marginalized and targeted for acts of violence. Some students as well as members of the academic staff rationalise the need to be tolerant of ragging and this is a highly controversial matter which has not been debated sufficiently among intellectuals.

Milder forms of ragging have been justified as traditional social practice, and this kind of assertion was made on the basis of experience in the early phase of university education where the intake of students remained restrictive and the social background of the student was that of the upper middle class. It was true that ragging, in a way, socialised the student to the realities of life within and outside the Campus. It had an effect on the students of upper middle class families as they were

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[81] Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Education and Higher Education to recommend legal action against ragging and illegal acts committed by students Universities December 15,1997

taught to interact with students from a different social background; yet another advantage was that the seniors could act as mentors of the freshers. These objectives, harmless and acceptable, were later overturned with the conversion of ragging into brutal acts of violence which no society could tolerate. As time passed, even milder forms of ragging became unacceptable and the public began to voice opposition to any form of ragging as it created such a negative perception among the people. It was in this context that the authorities thought of the need for special legislation against ragging and other acts of violence. The purpose of legislative intervention was to prevent authoritarianism and abuse of power by senior students, and thereby to foster a culture of tolerance, intellectual freedom and respect for human rights. There was a common belief among students that laws of the land do not apply within the Campus, and this erroneous notion gave the students the license to commit acts of violence within the Campus. The Committee, therefore, stated with a view to debunking this wrong notion that 'the laws of the land apply to all citizens and it is imperative that they are respected and enforced within the University Campus'[82] This question came up in 1953 when there was a clash between the Police and students at Peradeniya, and the issue was as to why the Police entered the premises of the University. It was raised on the belief that University was an enclave with different sets of rules and regulations. Sir Nicholas Attygalla, in his capacity as the acting Vice Chancellor informed the students that 'he agreed that the Police should have nothing to do with the University Campus'.[83] In recent years, there has also been a very high incidence of violent acts such as intimidation, damage to university and public property, unauthorised occupation of hostels, hostage taking and assault on students. All these acts of violence, as mentioned earlier, interrupt the academic activities of the Universities and they, in the process, are de-stabilised. The popular perception was that Legislation was required to 'ban' ragging as illegal, and the Committee looked at the issue of ragging on the basis of the existing law. It was their view that ragging constituted a grave crime from physical injury to homicide. The general agreement was that acts, which come within 'ragging', could be treated as criminal offences; for instance, sexual harassment is an offence punishable with a maximum prison sentence of five years. Uttering obscenities to the annoyance of others is an offence, and this is an essential part of the rag. According to the committee, ragging also came within the infringement of

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[82] Ibid;p.5

[83] Daily News of 13th August, 1953,p.3

fundamental rights.[84] In this context, a legal responsibility has been placed on university authorities to provide protection. Yet another interpretation was that the definition of torture in the Torture Act of 1994 is wide enough to cover acts of ragging, intimidation, severe mental pain and wrongful restraint. There were enough arguments in favour of fresh legislation to curb ragging in the Universities.

The committee examined the legislation in Tamilnadu, the Prohibition of ragging in Educational institutions Act of 1996, and decided to modify this piece of legislation to suit our conditions. Therefore, it was in 1998 that the Parliament of Sri Lanka, more or less unanimously, passed the Prohibition of Ragging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutions Act, No. 20 of 1998.[85] Since the author was personally associated with the passage of this piece of legislation, there were Members of Parliament who thought that the legislation was little bit draconian in its character. It was certainly a strong piece of legislation as it had enough teeth to deal with this grave problem. According to the Prohibition of Ragging Act, No. 20 of 1998, any person who commits ragging is made guilty of an offence, for which the punishment was rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. [86] A person who, while committing ragging, cause sexual harassment or grievous hurt to any student, is liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years. Under this piece of legislation, criminal intimidation, hostage taking, wrongful restraint, unlawful confinement, forcible occupation and damage to property were listed as offences; the Persons could be expelled from the educational institution. A Person accused of an offence under sub-section 2 of section 2 of the Act could not be released on bail except by the judge of a High Court; this piece of legislation applies to Universities, Vocational Institutes, Advanced Technical Institutes, Pirivenas, the Law College and the Colleges of Education. This Act, in terms of its coverage, was a comprehensive piece of legislation; it had sufficient powers to deal with the problem but the Universities did not make complaints under the Act and Police, for some strange reason, did rot charge the accused under this legislation. The legislation, therefore, remained a dead letter till the Ministry of Higher Education intervened in 2008 and wanted the Inspector General of Police to send instructions to respective Police

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[84] Report of Savithri Gunasekara Committee. P.8

[85] There was one sole opponent in Parliament, the JVP MP, Nihal Galappatti – who voted against it.

[86] See section 2(1) of the Act,No. 20 of 1998

Stations to deal with ragging incidents under this law. At the same time, the Vice Chancellors have been appraised of the need to charge students under this piece of legislation; the student leadership carried a protest against such moves but the position of the authorities was that this law needs to be used to combat ragging in the Universities. Its draconian features serve as a deterrent, and students are now aware that this particular law has enough teeth to deal with the problem Several Indian states have enacted similar legislation to prevent ragging which, again, is a widespread menace in certain Universities of India.

The introduction of such laws would serve as a deterrent but violence, associated with ragging, can be eliminated with the development of a vibrant intellectual culture in the Universities of Sri Lanka. The violent behaviour among the undergraduates, which goes on unabated, has been analysed from the point of view of the problems in the existing Sri Lankan society and the nature of the examination system; the students are admitted to the universities entirely on the results of a fiercely competitive written examination; the aspiring University students have little time to read anything on which they could not be examined.[87] The unavailability of both facilities and opportunities to enlarge their mind is a major problem, and it is this narrow intellectualism and the lack of employment opportunities and social mobility after graduation which make education a futile and frustrating experience for students. It is this frustration, articulated through ideology and politics, which has lead them to violence, and the solutions, therefore, can not be found within the premises of the University. In other words, broader issues, relating to both society and education, have to be understood to find ways and means of salvaging the Universities of this ongoing violence. It is, therefore, inevitable that the mould of the existing system of higher education needs immediate reform, and this means that alternative paths have to be found as early as possible. In India, similar legislation has been framed by a number of states; recently, in Kottayam, a student got ten years in jail for rape – ragging .[88] A student of a Nursing College was sentenced to ten years of rigorous imprisonment and another student was sentenced to three, for raping a junior student during a ragging incident. They were dealt with under section 354 of the Indian Penal Code. The other

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[87] Fonseka, Carlo. Towards a peaceful Sri Lanka. Six Introductory Seminars to University Students, WIDER, UN University, 1990.p.6

[88] See Hindustan Times of February 27, 2009,p.9

case was dealt with under Section 377(2)g of the Penel Code, under which incidents of gang rape cases are dealt with. The provisions of the Prohibition of Ragging Act were also used for both cases; the State of Kerala has enacted an anti Ragging Act, and Kottayam incidents were dealt with under this piece of legislation. In India, the Ministry of Human Resources Development appointed a panel of experts with R.K. Raghavan as its Chairman to formulate a set of guidelines against ragging. This particular case in Kottayam Medical College went beyond ragging, and the victim, a first year nursing student was sexually assaulted in a deserted laboratory in 2005. These instances have been referred to in order to convince authorities in Sri Lanka that such judicial actions are necessary to prevent ragging in the Universities through legislation. While incidents similar to those of Indian States, have been witnessed, no attempt has been made by the Police to charge the students accused of ragging under the existing piece of legislation. But legislative and judicial intervention is necessary if this issue is to be dealt with effectively.

Relevance and quality in Undergraduate Education

Since the establishment of the University of Ceylon in 1942, the issue of relevance and quality in undergraduate education did not assume importance as its advocates had expected it to contribute to a renewal of indigenous Ceylonese culture.[89] It was on the basis of this ideal that Oriental Studies and Culture were given more emphasis and this bias, which, then, was treated as something important for the country had an impact on curricula in the University; in addition, the same impact was felt within the new Universities which, based on the tradition of the University of Ceylon, began to implement the same curricula, the major content of which was in the area of traditional disciplines. The development of traditional disciplines, related to Oriental Studies, had served a good purpose and the early academic achievements and the research enterprise came to be built around these disciplines. With the expansion of educational opportunities in the field of higher education, the question arose as to the need to produce graduates who could contribute to the accelerated process of economic development. It was in 1971 that the Osmund Jayaratne committee raised the issue eloquently and wanted the Universities to break-away from the tradition of producing a

[89] Pieris, Ralph. Op.cit;p.445

mass of unemployable graduates. The Osmund Jayaratne Report stated that both the University College (1921) and the University of Ceylon (1942), with their emphasis on the liberal arts, were likewise conceived as factories for the supply of recruits to the Civil service and the higher executive positions in the Government service.[90] It was this liberal tradition which, despite developments in science, engineering and medical studies, dominated the expansion of the Universities in the country; the slow evolution from 'an elitist-orientation' to 'massification' without a comprehensive re-orientation of the curricula in the universities, created a major crisis in the area of both relevance and quality in the higher education institutions of Sri Lanka. The ten Year Plan (1957) stated that the educational policy should be based on not only the increase in population but also on the expected growth in employment opportunities in the various sectors.[91] The Dudly Seers Report (1971), agreeing with the viewpoint expressed in the Ten Year Plan, stated that 'Universities have failed to respond to the needs. They have failed largely because they have been unable to adapt to the consequence of expansion and equality of opportunity'.[92]

The problems confronting higher education in Sri Lanka can be classified into three areas; access, equity and quality. The policy-makers gave priority to access and equity at the expense of quality, and this was the pattern in the last three decades. It would not be incorrect to claim that the emphasis has overwhemlingly been on access with equity becoming the second priority. Quality never assumed importance in the discourse on higher education and the emphasis on access and equity has been at the cost of quality; in fact, all these three components have to be promoted simultaneously. Higher Education, in any country, has to be built on these three pillars- access, equity and quality. The pillar of quality has been the weakest in Sri Lanka, and it was this fact that created an unbalanced and debilitated system of higher education. The issue, therefore, was whether the country was satisfied with the expansion of higher educational opportunities or whether she should aspire to build an inclusive system of higher education of quality. It was for this that a road map was required. The failure was in the area of curriculum reform in the context of 'massification', though adjustments, both ad hoc and planned, were made to expand the access and guarantee

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[90] Osmund Jayaratne Report, p.1
[91] The Ten Year Plan, p.47
[92] Dudly Seers Report, p.241

equality of opportunity. No comparable corresponding changes were made to arrest the deterioration in standards and quality of education imparted by the Universities, and this deterioration was integrally linked to the issues of both quality and relevance. The massive growth in the numbers of graduate unemployment became a major area of concern, and it was essentially a mismatch between employment expectations generated by the existing educational system and the job opportunities provided by the labour market.[93] In Sri Lanka, the situation was that the rates of unemployment began to rise with higher levels of education, contrary to the fact that higher levels of education improve chances of employment. The question, therefore, has been raised whether the university education, is relevant to the needs of the country. In other words, obsession with quantity – always thought in terms of expansion and numbers – has been at the expense of quality; this crisis, which the system of higher education experiences is a fundamental matter involving the immediate need to recognize both relevance and quality in undergraduate education. Since the Sri Lankan Universities are primarily undergraduate institutions, the need to restore both is of fundamental importance.

The current finding by the OECD is that simply spending more on education does not yield better results. The major problems the University systems face are higher drop-out rates and too few skills taught for later careers. The problem in Sri Lanka is that it cannot supply enough to match its universities output. It was in 1996 that a constructive dialogue was initiated among policy makers and stake-holders with a view to preparing a National Policy on University Education by the National Education Commission, an apex organization appointed by the President of Sri Lanka to formulate education policy on an on-going basis. Two documents came to be prepared; National Policy on University Education and Reforms in University Education; it was on the basis of these two documents that the government undertook a review of the tertiary education sector in the country, and the fundamental objective of this reform strategy was to re-orient and improve the tertiary education sector with a view to making it more supportive of the process of social and economic development in the country. In the six areas identified for the purpose, the improvement of quality and relevance became most important. The World Bank Project, which supported this

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[93] Blaug, Mark. Education and the unemployment problem in the Development Countries. ILO,1974,p.8

long term strategy on Tertiary education reforms, focused on enhancing institutional capacities to achieve greater relevance and quality in undergraduate programmes. It was expected that this project also assists in building human capital which is one of the key factors in poverty reduction. The key objective of the programme was to achieve higher employment rates among future graduates of selected undergraduate programmes.

It is in this context that a brief reference is necessary to the issue of graduate unemployment, which from the sixties, became the concern of policy makers.[94] The conventional approach has been to put the blame on the Universities for producing a mass of unemployable graduates without skills that are acceptable to the labour market. Yet another reason highlighted throughout this period was the relationship between youth unrest and graduate unemployment. The available data suggests that graduate unemployment varies from time to time because of the introduction of various programmes by the State. It was estimated that the unemployment among arts graduates was very high; the employability of graduates with special degrees or those who have obtained classes in their field of study, is fairly high and a large backlog of unemployed is in the category of those who have passed the General Degree.[95] In the seventies, Development and job-oriented courses were introduced with a view to diversifying the Arts curriculum but this attempt was in vain. The unemployment rate in the country was 6 percent and the rate among graduates was lower than the general rate of unemployment. The visible deterioration in the quality of the graduate and his inability to fit into a position in a highly competitive labour market has been the issue. All the Universities except perhaps the Moratuwa University, offer courses in Social Sciences and Humanities, and this is very much related to the University tradition in the country. At present, fifty faculties in the system conduct classes in Social Sciences and Humanities. There is a widespread belief that the present graduate, specially in Social Sciences and Humanities, is unable to meet the current labour market requirements. Since then, graduates in Social Sciences and Humanities form the largest contingent of graduates, these graduates had a high incidence of unemployment. Nearly 85 percent of them are unemployed, and

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[94] Chandrasegaram, S. Educational S=Disadvantage in Sri Lanka with special reference to University Education. J.E. Jayasuriya Memorial Lecture, 2006,p.15

[95] See 'University Education and Graduate Unemployment' in Sri Lanka. Marga Institute, 1983.

this explains the nature of the problem. In 2000/2001, the public universities which offer undergraduate programmes had recruited 61,600 students; in 2001,the Universities admitted 12,000 out of 73,500 students who qualified for admission on the basis of the performance at the GCE A/L examination. The average enrolment rate in South Asia is 8 percent, and the rate in Sri Lanka is less than 2 percent, and it has stagnated at this level since 1990 due to the lack of enough State funding. Such financial constraints have affected the performance of the system. The crisis is that both teaching and learning practices and methods do not encourage the acquisition of competencies and skills demanded by the market, and the curricula in number of disciplines have not kept pace with the economic and social needs. Still there is an over-emphasis on traditional disciplines which dominated the system in the initial phase of university education in the country. It is this low quality in output, and the lack of economic and social relevance in the academic programmes offered by the public Universities, which contribute to the growing graduate unemployment.[96] Among graduates below 25 years of age, 58 percent are unemployed; among 25-30 group, 35 percent are unemployed.

The Youth Commission Report (1989) reported that youth unrest in the country was due to the poor employment prospects of graduates. All governments, at different points of time, have addressed this question as an urgent priority; today 27,000 unemployed graduates are an economic problem in terms of under utilization of human capital, and a major social problem in terms of its potential for political turmoil and social unrest. 1971 is one such example, where youth unrest, debilitated both the social and political fabric of the country. It was in this particular context that steps have been taken to improve quality and relevance of undergraduate education of the Universities which still are public funded institutions. This is to be achieved through the establishment of a Quality Enhancement Fund, and the strategy is to link the performance of graduates to the needs of the labour market. The project was to have two major components, one involving the students and the other involving the teachers. As far as students are concerned, the benefits expected are enhancing the quality of teaching, improving access to learning resources, increasing market-orientation in

[96] World Bank. Project Appraisal. Improving Relevance and Quality in Undergraduate Education.2003,p.4.

courses and the employability of the graduates.[97] In respect of the academic staff, the project envisaged the provision of opportunities for staff development through post-graduate degree programmes, improvement of working conditions through investment in information technology and the enhancement of professional opportunities through linkages. One has to accept the fact that the quality of the academic staff too deteriorated with the expansion, and monolingualism – competence in one language – was a significant reason for the decline in the quality of the academic staff. Yet another reason was the absence of a post-graduate tradition and a research culture within the University which contributed to the process of deterioration in standards and quality. Both sectors – students and teachers- experienced a period of decline, and it was this feature which interfered with the development of a vibrant intellectual culture in the Universities of Sri Lanka.

The challenge before the system is to improve the quality of the education to bring about a marriage between goals of excellence and expansion of educational opportunities. How to achieve this by using the limited resources within the system is the question. The economic and social needs is to produce graduates who are able to fulfill a variety of roles. Curriculum development becomes important in this context as the curriculum changes should match the skills needs of the country; in other words, the graduates need to be provided with skills that make them employable; a curriculum that is relevant to the needs of the Sri Lankan society is the aim. The graduates in subjects as engineering, medicine, Information Technology and Science programmes have adequate skills to seek employment. The issue lies in graduates who specialize in Arts, Social Sciences, Humanities, Commerce and Management, as they lack the required skills needed for the labour market. Therefore, the policy-makers, through the IRQUE project need to address the concerns effectively. Quality in teaching needs to be promoted instead of the existing method of providing notes without it being linked to a list of compulsory reading. Student needs to be motivated to acquire knowledge. The prevailing teaching culture is not organized, and is haphazard with no attention paid to regular attendance, and the strict maintenance of regular hours. The promotion of a research culture is equally important as fame and esteem of peers comes from research publications rather than teaching. Further, in the

[97] Ibid;p.9.

absence of highly developed post-graduate Institutes, teaching should assume importance in the Universities as all Universities are primarily undergraduate institutions. Yet another reason which interferes with quality is the lack of competence in English. It has been estimated that nearly 80 percent of the academic staff in the Humanities Departments do not speak English. This shows that the country needs all effective teaching/learning process geared towards social relevance; the country has to move away from the sheer maintenance of the status quo in the educational system and look for a more diverse system of delivery of world class higher education.[98] A11 countries have benefited from the 'massification' of higher education.

The IRQUE project, as anticipated by the World Bank, was expected to play a major role in modernising the curricula on the basis of relevance, and it was to be accompanied by a scheme of diversification of courses. It is through this that the demand for the relevance of the courses could be answered. The need of the country was the introduction of socio-culturally relevant curriculum that can address the development needs of the country. The national development strategies of the country should match the graduate output in order to minimise graduate unemployment, and policy-makers are expected to take this into consideration. In other words, curriculum development and reform should address the issue of training graduates to the world of work. It was here that quality needs to be linked to relevance. The IRQUE project, therefore, identified the following areas for immediate investigation and reform. They are as follows;

1. Relevance and quality in public universities
2. High unemployment among graduates
3. Improvement of learning and gender quality
4. Low student intake
5. Poor internal efficiency due to student unrest
6. Weak administration
7. Inadequate financing
8. Absence of quality control

[98] In 2006, 144 million students were enrolled in higher education in the world. It is accepted that participation rate of 40 to 50 percent in higher education is vital to economic growth.

The Government's priority was to improve the employability of graduates, and this came to be integrally linked to enhancement of institutional capacities to address both relevance and quality. While tackling such issues as closure of universities and accompanying student unrest which had contributed to the decline in quality, the Quality Enhancement Fund was established to allocate resources to improve the undergraduate study programmes, and block grants were provided for the purpose.[99] The focus was on the improvement of quality of the degree programmes so that employability of the graduates could be guaranteed. The curriculum changes were made; nearly fifty new courses were introduced into the system with a view to linking it with the needs of the labour market. The Open University of Sri Lanka established Diploma and Bachelor courses in subjects which had immediate relevance to the market needs. The curriculum changes were a positive outcome of the project; the revision of curriculum from traditional disciplines to more market-oriented courses was an innovation. Certain Departments for instance, Agriculture and Economics, made substantial changes in their academic programmes on the basis of the need to enhance quality and relevance. In the Department of Economics at the University of Ruhuna, changes were made to break-away from the traditional teacher-centered teaching to student-centered learning where students were encouraged to indulge in self-learning. The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Kelaniya undertook to revise the curriculum under the IRQUE project; major curriculum changes were necessary in Social Sciences as subjects had not deviated from the traditions of the forties and fifties. The outdated syllabi, which had no relationship to modern global developments were being used with text-books published nearly a century ago. Inter disciplinarity is another issue. Today traditional boundaries of disciplines are collapsing in the context of knowledge explosion, and inter-disciplinarity has taken precedence over multi-disciplinarity; what is needed is diversification. In respect of the Social Science curriculum, the fundamental issue is its relevance in the contemporary socio-economic context. In Social Sciences, its scope of knowledge has widened during the past three decades, and the developments and vistas of knowledge have crossed the traditional boundaries of these disciplines. Any curriculum revision has to address this question.[100] The most significant fact is the relationship between the higher education

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[99] The Impact of the IRQUE Project, 2010. Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo.p.15

[100] Uyangoda, J. Reforming Social Sciences and Humanities Education in Universities. Workshiop on Higher Education, December, 1995.

sector and the employment market; this relationship is vital a requirement in curriculum reform in Social Sciences and Humanities. This tradition, in terms of its intellectuality, was dysfunctional and needs to be changed. The Department of Sociology at the University of Peradeniya has been one of the major beneficiaries in the Social Science area; the assistance was largely for the purpose of capacity building. The undergraduate curriculum has been over-hauled and updated in such way so as to facilitate that its graduates contribute effectively to national development.

On the basis of the assistance provided by the IRQUE project, attempts have been made to establish an innovative higher education system in Sri Lanka-a broad-based higher education system that would provide quality education to all students in the system. Once these achievements are in place, it is proposed to increase the annual intake to 30,000 in 2016, and this is in addition to the intake through other modes. It is no exaggeration to say that the project, through its different instruments, has successfully enhanced the quality of undergraduate programmes. The funds have been allocated to (1) staff development (2) improvement in the learning environment (3) curriculum development and (4) promotion of social harmony. Over 170 study programmes submitted proposals for the improvement of quality in their undergraduate programmes, and 40 proposals qualified for funding. The main objective of the IRQUE project was to address the problem of unemployed and under-employed graduates, which, in fact, was treated as a serious socio-economic problem in the country. The short term evaluation suggests that both student and faculty have benefited from the project; both internal and external efficiency of higher education institutions have been enhanced. These have been done with the realization that the University still remains the focal point of intellectual activity, social progress, technical evolution and economic development. University, at times, was more scholastic than innovative, and its teachings were unrelated to the needs of the times; whenever it became an ivory tower, it failed in its mission. Therefore, changes in its role, in both learning and teaching, should not undermine academic freedom and institutional autonomy which cannot be separated from responsibility to society. Higher education, on the basis of this thesis, must adapt itself to the requirements of a rapidly changing world. Sri Lankan Universities, as in the last seventy years, are certain to face this challenge in the years to come.

In addition, the need for a Higher Education Management System and a Mechanism for Quality Assurance assumed importance. The unavailability of information on the Higher Education system, and the time and delay consumed in the search for information, affected the management of the system as well as decision-making. The lack of relevant information affected policy formulation; there was no deficiency when the system remained confined to one single residential university. With the rapid expansion of the system, the situation underwent a change, and information, both institutional and comparative, was required but was not readily available. The lack of such information, apart from its impact on management, created numerous problems for all the stake-holders. It was in this scenario that certain steps were taken to establish a Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) for the purpose of planning, monitoring and evaluating higher education sector. Though individual Universities collected information and disseminated it through reports, and such documentation, it was not properly organized on a scientific basis, and all stake-holders, specially administrators and graduates, found it difficult to obtain information. The qualifications and individual performances could not be checked due to the absence of a central sources of information. The proposed system, therefore, would cover information of the entire higher education system, including social and economic data relevant to higher education policy-making, and modern technology is to be used to collect and analyse such data. The system, once in place, is certain to produce national level indicators that would help the policy-planners. Technical assistance for the project has been provided by the Higher Education Information Agency in the Federal Republic of Germany. The work of this Management Information Programme began in 2008, and five modules, embracing Student Information, Human Resources, Finance, Inventory Control and Assets Management have been completed. The standard report, which the HEMIS had prepared on university admission, is a document which contains information on student admissions by university, admissions by gender, and admissions by course. The transition from elite to mass and universal higher education resulted in an explosive growth of institutions of higher education in the last two decades. While many of these institutions depend for resources on the Sri Lankan State, others are integral part of the State and the economy. In other words, higher education has acquired an explicit economic value in the emerging Sri Lankan economy, and the structure and form of delivery of higher education are changing. There is an increase in the use of modern

technology, and these changes demand new techniques of management and accountability.

Quality Assurance in the System

The Sri Lankan University system, which began during the colonial period, maintained standards by having relationships and linkages with the leading Universities in Britain. Both the University College (1921) and the University of Ceylon (1942) maintained standards on par with British Universities, and there was a strong tendency to accept London University syllabi, a tradition which continued despite the expansion of the system.[101] The system of determining quality on the basis of the British standards was acceptable when the system remained confined to a single university with a restrictive intake of students. With the expansion of the system with 15 Universities with a student clientele of nearly 75,000, the system demanded changes in the form of an establishment of an Quality Assurance mechanism. The tertiary institutions in Sri Lanka, though developed in the post-independence period, did not contribute to the process of economic and social development in the country. The learning culture, in the Universities, does not show that the institutions are emerging as centers of global excellence. Though the question of access and equity has been addressed through a diversification of the tertiary institutions, an appropriate Quality Assurance mechanism was not created in the last two decades. This, in fact, was the major deficiency in the Sri Lankan system of higher education. The formal public sector of higher education, which is totally State funded, caters to nearly 75,000 students, whereas a large number of private providers, including those cross-border institutions, cater to nearly 50,000 students. Various types of qualifications are produced in the system, which, to a certain extent, remains differentiated; non-university tertiary institutions, in the form of an alternative sector, have proliferated in the country as there is a growing demand for higher education. The primary reason is the restrictive admission formula followed by the University Grants Commission in respect of the admissions to Universities; annually, nearly 100,000 students, who obtain the basic minimum marks at the highly competitive A/L examination, remain outside the system, and it is this group which patronises the numerous non-university

[101] Pieris, Ralph. Op.cit;p.423.

tertiary institutions in the country. In this context of proliferation of institutions engaged in the delivery of higher educational services, both quality and qualifications have recently assumed importance.

As mentioned before, since the establishment of university education in 1921, the country has been making various adjustments in respect of University curricula with a view to making a contribution to the process of economic development. The traditional disciplines, which the country enthroned within the system to promote indigenous culture, promoted a very powerful scholastic tradition in the intellectual culture, and the country, therefore, remained isolated from the global changes. A modern University, which aspires to achieve a global status, needs a modern curriculum to enthuse students to study subjects that are relevant to the needs of the labour market. It is through a scheme of Quality Assurance that new opportunities could be created for growth and development in the knowledge sector. The quality and relevance of teaching, research and learning have begun to decline, and the Universities still function with outdate curricula, unqualified staff, poorly prepared secondary students and the absence of academic standards and systematic evaluation of performance. Student political activism are contributory factors as well. In the past, a lot of attention was not paid to the question of quality assurance in the institutions of higher learning. This was largely due to the fact that there were effective forms of internal assessment. For instance, the University of Ceylon, maintained a system of assessment in collaboration with certain leading Universities in Britain. There was a practice of sending Special Degree final year papers to a British University for standardization and assessment, and hence quality was maintained. With the expansion of numbers, monitoring quality became a problem and no mechanism for the purpose was created. The delay in substituting a system of Quality Assurance was due to the lack of a debate among the University academics. The failure of graduates to find suitable employment and the refusal on the part of the private sector to employ graduates highlighted the issue of quality. Yet another was the need to convert institutions as centers of excellence which demanded improvement of quality. The challenge, therefore, was the construction of an inclusive system of higher education with a few selected institutions of world class status in terms of quality.

The initiative for the establishment of a Quality Assurance Mechanism came from the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Directors (CVCD) in 2001, and the framework for it was prepared by the Standing Committee on Quality Assurance established by the University Grants Commission. Thereafter, the significance of the matter came to be discussed, the National Education Commission, deriving inspiration from a UNESCO document, began to examine the issue of quality assurance. The quality in higher education was a multi-dimensional concept which embraced such functions as teaching, research, scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, equipment, facilities and services provided to the community.[102] The aim of such a system was to provide assurance to the Government and the public at large, that higher education ensures a quality education in keeping with agreed standards and criteria. Quality Assuarance demands reviewing of the existing academic programmes in order to see that they fall in line with recognized benchmarks. Students look at quality from the yardstick of employability while the faculty may focus on the teaching and learning environment, research and academic excellence. University administration may look at quality from the point of view of institutional achievement. The most important objective is the need to pay attention to the competencies of the graduates. Their criticism is that the University graduate is incompetent and non-intellectual; he lacks skills demanded by the competitive labour market. Therefore, the need is to strengthen the economic and social relevance of the undergraduate academic programmes.

Two important issues need to be addressed through the quality assurance mechanism; firstly, the low level of employability of graduates. Secondly the issues related to economic relevance of University programmes must be addressed. In this context, such skills as English, IT and soft skills have to be promoted. The lack of these skills has been mentioned as the sole reason for low employability of University graduates. At first, a standing committee on quality Assurance was established by the University Grants Commission, and its function was to coordinate and regulate the quality assurance system in the Universities. Under the IRQUE project, a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAAC) was established as a separate department of the University Grants Commission; its association with the UGC has

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[102] Nationaln Education Commission. National Policy Framework on University, Technical and Vocational Education. December, 2008, p.22.

been questioned and discussed as this council has not been given a truly independent status; in addition, it was to report to the standing Committee on Quality Assurance in the University Grant Commission. Today, higher education has acquired an economic value in a knowledge economy, and the form of delivery of higher education is continually changing, and these changes, which are global, demand increased quality assurance. With the rapid expansion of enrollment in higher education, all countries in the world are faced with the issue of ensuring quality.[103] At the same time, defining and measuring quality has become more difficult. Quality Assurance is treated as a process where key elements in higher education are measured, and it is in this process that the concepts of performance, standards, norms, accreditation, benchmarks, outcomes and accountability constitute the quality culture in a system of higher education.

In Sri Lanka, as in certain other countries, the 'massification' of higher education has transformed the system, and the challenge is of ensuring quality. The accreditation system, established more than a century ago, was treated as a global benchmark, and the University of Ceylon maintained links with the established British and Indian Universities. Higher Education, then as now, was conceived as the production of manpower, and the graduates, whom the country produced, though small in number, found employment in keeping with the quality of education they received. In the context of higher education, accreditation, assessment and academic audit are in current usage. As the system is totally state funded, quality has to be maintained in order to see that the country gets 'value for money', and prevent wastage. Since there is an invisible private sector, consisting of all kinds of private providers, ranging from Certificate providers to degree providers, the higher education sector needs to be made more competitive through a scheme of diversification of the higher educational opportunities. With the expansion of the system of higher education, there grew a demand for more efficiency within the system, and it is in this context that quality becomes important. Globalization has also profoundly affected higher education in all countries; globalisation has increased student mobility. This has affected the academic community as well and there is increased mobility among academics and professionals.

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[103] In 2007, the percentage of the age cohorts enrolled in tertiary education in the world was 26 persent; there were 150.6 million tertiary students in the world. Vide Albatch, Philip and others. Trends in Global Higher Education. UNESCO, 2009.

Today, research Universities, are at the pinnacle of the global academic system. The demands of the global knowledge society have placed pressure on higher education to focus heavily on quality education, both in the spheres of teaching and research. In this context, there is a greater need for recognition of qualifications across different countries as there is widespread mobility of students and scholars. The number of students studying outside their own countries, have increased substantially in the last two decades and Sri Lanka is no exception to this trend.[104] A quality Assurance Council has been established and the entire system of higher education has been brought under this scheme; there is an acceptable framework for evaluation and assessment, and the principal aim has been to promote a quality culture in the institutions of higher learning in the country.

The lack of a National Qualification Framework in the country created numerous problems for the stake-holders; though the system expanded to provide for both access and equity, there was no mechanism to determine the acceptability of qualifications and achievement levels of achievers. There was so much confusion in respect of this matter within the system, and sub-standard qualifications came to be recognized. Such qualifications found acceptance within the academic community, specially in the new Universities, and this, directly contributed to the decline in quality. With the establishment of a National Qualification Framework, embracing all institutions of higher learning, the stake-holders, including the employers, would better understand the different Qualifications and levels of achievement. The country, in the last two decades, witnessed a process where bogus institutions, without national or international academic standing, doling out qualifications. This became such a notorious problem that the Cabinet of Ministers appointed a sub-Committee to make necessary recommendations to arrest this trend. Through the National Qualification Framework, these could be controlled in the interest of a legitimate intellectual culture in the country. In a highly globalised world, qualifications have to be evaluated as they constitute a form of international

[104] UNESCO estimated that there were 2.8 million students studying abroad in 2007, an increase of 53 percent over the estimated figure of 1.8 million in 2000. According to the UNESCO, in some parts of the world, international student mobility has become a central issue in higher education. Though official estimates are not available, it is surmised that nearly 25,000 Sri Lankan students are abroad.

currency.[105] Higher education, the World Bank states, is a global public good, the administration of which needs an international qualification framework to assess and evaluate qualifications. In all countries, appropriate safeguards have to be devised to prevent institutions from doling out sub-standard and bogus qualifications.

The Open University of Sri Lanka, through the employment of the Distance Mode expanded the opportunities for higher education with the establishment of regional centers. It was in 1980 that the Open University came into being by the Ordinance No.1 of 1986.[106] It was in the period 1985 – 1994 that the academic activities of the Open University expanded; the student clientele grew to 20,000 and the university assumed the character of national university. The distance mode became popular among the students, for whose benefit 25 regional centers were established. It was with the introduction of the IRQUE programme for the National Universities that the need arose for the improvement of quality in Distance Education programmes as well. The successful negotiations with the Asian Development Bank resulted in the Distance Education Modernisation Project, for which 60 million US Dollars were given in the form of a loan; In addition to the modernization and development of the infra-structure facilities and other academic resources, the National Online Distance Education Service was established; it was accompanied by the introduction of a Management Information System as well. With the expansion and modernization of the system of Open and Distance Learning in the country, the question arose as to how quality and relevance are to be assured. By then, the need to establish quality had entered the academic discourse in the country. Quality was defined as 'fitness for purpose'. To be more precise, this amounts to the specifying of worthwhile educational goals; in determining the goals, academic standards, aspirations of students, need of employers and expectations of society had to be taken into consideration. Quality assessment, involved judging whether the teaching offered and the assessment methods used match the specific training goals. This, in other words, meant that any system of higher education, whatever the type of delivery of services, needed a procedure to assess quality; therefore, quality assurance refers to a set of procedures with which

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[105] In Europe, there is the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. UNESCO has its own scheme of assessment. These are attempts at ensuring international comparability.

[106] Jayawardene, W A op.cit;.
See also Open University of Sri Lanka 1980 – 2010. OUSL Publication, September, 2010,p.9.

quality is defined or interpreted. For instance, the Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) was set up for the purpose of capacity building and promotion of access, quality, relevance and quality in distance education programmes. Quality Assurance was to include procedures, attitudes, actions and policies to ensure that quality is maintained and enhanced.[107] The rapid developments of online technologies would give distance learning a glamourous image, and the rapid expansion of distance education in higher education would give it greater respectability and credibility.[108] The Quality Assurance toolkit for the Distance Education programme was developed by professor Uma Coomaraswamy, with the active support of the UNESCO and the Commonwealth of Learning, and it was expected that this would help the institution to deliver quality education. A distance Education partnership programme (DEPP) had been organized under the Distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP) to develop and deliver demand driven programme of study[109]. Twenty two institutions showed an interest in becoming partners to provide their programmes on line creating more and more opportunities in the field of higher education. As such access to higher educational opportunities have been expanded, and this would be beneficial to the youth in the rural areas. The quality of such programmes have to be maintained through the Quality Assurance mechanism that has been developed by the University Grants Commission; in other worlds, the Quality Assurance Framework for open and distance learning, which has been prepared by the UGC with the collaboration of the Open University of Sri Lanka and the Commonwealth of Learning could be used for the purpose.

Though the University system has existed for more than a century, the intake capacity of the national Universities still remain restricted due to a variety of factors. The Sri Lankan University system, despite its experience and traditions, has failed to build on the remarkable achievements in the school sector in terms of both access and equity. In Sri Lanka, the primary sector enrollment rate is 96 percent, and the secondary school enrollment rate is 75 percent respectively. This was a direct result of the free education scheme of 1945; there are still problems relating to access,

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[107] Coomarassamy, Uma. Concept paper on 'National Assessment and Accreditation council for Distance Education. August, 2008

[108] Daniel, John S. Mega Schools Technology and Teachers London, 2010,6.68

[109] Ibid;p.69

equity, relevance and quality in higher education, and the Government is seeking alternative forms of delivery to fulfill the growing demand for higher education. The distance Education Modernisation Project (DEMP), which began in 2003, intended to enhance on-line distance education and the promotion of public-private partnership to reduce pressure on public sector enrollment through the creation of the Online Distance Education Network. It was expected that the programme would improve the human resource base and develop the under-developed human capital of the country. An open-learning system, based on well developed technological facilities, as opposed to the traditional methods of 'chalk and talk' has tremendous advantages.

New Dynamics in Higher Education Policy

Higher education has now become a competitive enterprise, and the transformation taking place in the world is unprecedented in its scope and diversity. The Sri Lankan system of higher education, has to adjust itself to meet the challenges that have emerged as a result of national and global factors. Though there is a comprehensive system of higher education, consisting of a network of State funded Universities and a set of private providers functioning on an adhoc basis, the system does not operate in the form of an inclusive system providing opportunities for higher education to all young men and women who aspire to get into the system through a highly competitive entrance examination. Despite all developments in the past, the question of access and equity have not kept pace with the requirements for economic development, and Sri Lanka's enrollment rate is tremendously low when compared with other countries. According to an UNESCO estimate, the percentage of the age cohort enrolled in tertiary education has grown from 19 percent in 2000 to 26 percent in 2007. The average rate for developing countries is 5 percent; China and India have recognized the need to increase it to support continued economic growth; China enrolls 23 percent of the age cohort, while India enrolls 12 percent. In Sri Lanka, the rate stagnated at 2 to 2.5 percent; the expansion of the system by breaking away from the elite-orientation of Universities in their initial phase is still inadequate and insufficient. The transformation of the country into a knowledge economy will require a strong base of well-qualified and skilled manpower, and this, along with a high level of technical

expertise, has to be produced by the Universities and the tertiary institutions in the alternative higher education sector. The development of higher education on the basis of the three pillars, access, equity and quality is certain to generate substantial economic and social benefits for the country.

It needs to be realized that the University, as an institution of higher learning, is being transformed. The concept of the University, as expounded by Cardinal John Henry Newman, has undergone a radical change; his concept of the University was dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of knowledge.[110] Today, the Universities function as producers of useful knowledge and disseminators of knowledge; for instance, American land-grant Colleges were established to improve the performance of agriculture. The modern University, therefore, has an utilitarian function, and developments in Science and the demand for mass higher education, have given additional durability to the institution of the University. In Sri Lanka, the new provincial universities were created on the basis of the British 'Red Brick' principle, and it was through these Universities that the access expanded. They, though brought many an innovation in curriculum development, did not break-away from the mould of the peer University, the University of Ceylon (1942). Their enthusiasm to emulate some of the traditions of the forties, in the end, interfered with their mission. In the eyes of the undergraduates in these new Universities, they too wanted the university to emulate 'the Peradeniya model', which resulted in many a problem. The elite system of higher education, established in the forties, could not be sustained as the country, because of social and economic reasons, demanded a system that would provide additional opportunities of higher education. Expansion, in fact, meant inclusiveness and it essentially meant an increase in enrollment. The haphazard expansion, adoption of ad hoc policies to address issues of access, continued over-emphasis on traditional disciplines, the reliance on the Arts stream, resistance to curriculum reform, and the failure to take measures to improve internal efficiency have afflicted the system, and they need to be rectified to achieve both quality and performance. Many students who leave secondary schools seek to enter the University, and this is a major consequence of the Free Education scheme which came into operation in 1945; the social demand model of education made education free from kindergarten to the university and this,

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[110] Newman, John Henry. The Idea of a University. New York, 1959.

undoubtedly, made a massive contribution to the modernization of the country. This entitlement, which came along with this development, has placed a tremendous burden on the Universities in Sri Lanka. The system is swamped with students and they have not been properly trained in the secondary schools to take full advantage of a university education. It is this fact, which partly encourages student indiscipline, which, in many ways, has become a de-stabilishing factor in the Universities.

The gross enrollment ratio is still a matter for concern, and effective programmes and policies are necessary to increase the enrollment rate. In the last decade, the world has witnessed a massive expansion in the enrollment rate, and most of it occurred in the developing countries where the rate has doubled from 29.3 - 58.3 million.[111] The growth rate in countries in transition and developed countries are 3.3 percent and 2.5 percent respectively. The highest enrollment took place in China (8.3 million) followed by India (5.6 million).[112] The modern research university, which has been built on the principles advocated by Wilhelm Von Humboldt, has become far too expensive to accommodate all who aspire to higher education. Sri Lanka Universities, on the contrary, are not exclusively research universities; they are primarily undergraduate universities where the post-graduate element is very small and negligible, because of which there is no effective post-graduate intellectual culture in the Universities. The existing universities in Sri Lanka are able to give the students a university education that is more fitting to their aptitudes and at a lower cost. The problem is that students are not capable of benefiting from a traditional degree course offered at a traditional University. The core of the question is whether the University has to produce only a pure research worker or a pure scientific scholar. The specific task of a university is to produce a good scholar or a good citizen, and this question belongs to the realm of the social activities of the undergraduate. The argument here is that the role of the university cannot be judged purely on scientific grounds; it needs to be recognized that a university is a training-institute for higher skilled personnel who will apply their knowledge and skills in social circumstances. Therefore, the university needs to be recognized as training ground for good citizenship. Despite advances in modern technology which have given a new dimension to both teaching and learning,

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[111] Higher Education in India. University Grants Commission, New Delhi, 2008, p.30.
[112] Ibid; p.30

the modern university cannot shun the responsibility of training citizens who are skilled in using technology for the benefit of the society.

In Sri Lanka, the inability of the State funded system to provide additional access has given rise to a large number of private providers, and they cater to at least 45,700 students attending more than fifty private institutions engaged in the provision of higher education.[113] This sector encompasses a diversity of providers, including degree-awarding institutions, institutions offering lower level Diplomas, Certificates, short courses and professional qualifications. The degree awarding institutes are small, consisting of 10 Institutes with an enrollment of 2500; these Institutes are affiliated to foreign Universities. Though official announcements have been made that there are 78 such private providers, they do not come within the category of degree awarding institutes; Institutes have operated for more than two or three decades. Therefore, the label that these are private Universities is erroueous. In addition to such providers, there are cross-border providers which include higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, students, programmes and provider cross national borders. The cross-border higher education began in 1980s, and it offers increased opportunities for improving skills and competencies of individual students. It is only through a national quality assurance mechanism and a National Qualification Framework that low quality provision of higher education and disreputable providers of cross-border higher education could be arrested. The establishment of a quality assurance system has now become a necessity, not only for maintaining standards in higher education delivered in the State system, but also for monitoring of quality of cross border institutions engaged in higher education.

Many social and economic factors could be attributed to the sudden growth in the number of providers. The private sector is the fastest growing segment in higher education. During the last decade, more private institutions than public have been established in most developing countries and emerging economies of the world. The question of private providers, including the establishment of private Universities, has now become subject for discussion and debate; it has become a major issue in the public discourse on higher educational policy. It has invited the attention of the well-

[113] Towers of Learning, World Bank publication, p.22.

to-do classes who can afford to send their children to the private universities, and it is this element in society which is enthusiastically pushing the case forward. In any country, it is the middle class which recognises higher education as the gateway to a secure future; it was the English-educated middle class which advocated the establishment of the University of Ceylon in the forties, and it was to this social stratum that the University of Ceylon catered in its early phase. In Sri Lanka, in the sixties and seventies, the higher education, which, in the forties, remained as the exclusive preserve of the middle class and upper classes, began to change; special emphasis was given to students from poor backgrounds, and it was they who entered the Universities in large numbers. In the process, a certain category of students of the middle and upper classes was left out of the system. In Sri Lanka, as a result of the limited access to the State Universities, the growing middle and upper classes, who send their children to private and international schools, look for alternative channels.

The demand for private providers of higher education has increased due to a number of important reasons. The first is the limited number of places available at public universities, as the annual intake to all the public Universities has not still reached 25,000. There is a private tertiary education sector which provides opportunities for qualified secondary school leavers who cannot gain admission to the public universities. Another reason is that students are not admitted to programmes and universities of their choice, and this is because of the fact that the admissions are centrally controlled. Such students prefer private institutions, and these institutions offer courses with a job relevance, which guarantees employment. Those who graduate from private institutions have a better command of English and soft skills. The academic calendar in public universities is often interrupted by boycotts and strikes by students and this interferes with the completion of the degree within the stipulated period. Other factors such as ragging, political activism and student unrest discourage a certain category of students from entering the public universities. In addition, there is high unemployment among the graduates of public universities. Yet another significant fact is the large number of students studying at institutions outside the country, and parents, who can afford to spend abroad send their children to foreign universities, which has become the recent trend. In 2005, it was estimated that more than 10,000

students were studying abroad, an increase of 46 percent from 2001.[114] This trend has developed as a result of the limited number of places available within the State system and the moderate quality of public higher education in Sri Lanka. The partnership programmes of foreign universities – development of partnerships with local providers – have also become popular. The question is whether some of these institutions, though not Universities proper, may come within the category of 'deemed universities' – the institutions doing the work of a high standard institution with specialized academic fields comparable to a university. There are 'bogus' providers who run 'degree mills', and this is a new trend developed along with internationalisation of higher education; therefore effective measures are necessary to prevent the growth of such 'bogus' providers. Degree mills are a part of academic corruption that has accompanied the growth of access and participation in higher education world wide.[115] All these facilities and opportunities are attractive alternatives available to students who prefer private institutions of higher education.[116] The available opportunities are being used by the emerging middle class, which strives for an educational advantage.[117] The country, at this stage of her development, needs a more pragmatic approach to higher education, and the public Universities need to be directed to focus on subjects of obvious value to the economy.

The relevance of the social demand model of education, under which the free education scheme came into existence, has attracted the attention of both politicians and educationists; it is being discussed today and the subject, though controversial a matter given its importance in the political culture of the country, has generated much discussion. For the first time, the issue of privatization of higher education has entered the general political discourse in the country, and the Government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa has officially announced that it would take steps to establish private Universities in Sri Lanka, and the very existence of a large number of private providers in different fields has been seized as the reason in favour of the establishment of private Universities. The growing middle and upper classes, whose income status is different from the mass of the rural people, seem to

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[114] World Bank. Towers of Learning, p.23.
[115] UNESCO. Towards Effective Practice. Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education, 2009, p.1.
[116] See for details on foreign providers. Quality Assurance and Accreditation. Information on Degree Awarding Private Higher Education Institutes in Sri Lanka. December, 2009.
[117] Ibid; p.11.

welcome the idea of private Universities. The Government, with a view to satisfying the middle class, is perhaps willing to abandon the tradition of the free higher education. There is a school of thought that the establishment of private universities would serve as a panacea of all the economic ills of the country; in fact, the argument has been made that it would result in foreign exchange. The dismantling of the free education edifice, which still remains the window of opportunity for the rural child, would result in disastrous social consequences. In addition to social implications, there are equally powerful political implications as the free education scheme has become a part and parcel of the vibrant political culture of the country. It needs to be realized that in Sri Lanka, it is the rural majority, not the urban middle class minority, that plays the determining role in the political conflict of the country. The establishment of private Universities is, therefore a, major political decision, and should not be an attempt to kill the goose.

Yet another significant argument is that the establishment of private universities would introduce an element of competition into the system which hitherto remained totally State funded, and it, in addition, would help in the enhancement of quality and standards. Yet standards could be restored by developing an effective post-graduate culture in the University. A private University is a university that is run without any Governmental control. In Bangladesh, the private University system came into being in 1992 and they were established under the Private University Act, 1992. In India, privately funded institutions have been in existence since independence but they were not recognized as private Universities. In Pakistan, there are 29 private sector institutions engaged in higher education. The rationale for private Universities in these countries is the same; it has emerged as a form of satisfying the soaring demand for higher education. Yet another argument is the decline in the State sector; most of the private universities are based on the profit motive – functioning for profit. In India, the private institutions account for 43 percent of the total institutions in the country, and share in the total enrollment has increased from 33 percent to 51 percent. It has certainly contributed to the expansion of access, but educational costs in these institutions are simply unaffordable to a vast majority of the student community. It would be the same in Sri Lanka as the vast majority of aspirants to higher education are in the rural areas of the country. The social background of the students began to change in the sixties, largely as a result of the impact of free education scheme. Nearly

40 percent of the students admitted came from the working class and peasantry backgrounds, and therefore, more than 45 percent came from rural backgrounds.[118] This information is based on data collected in the mid-nineties, and according to information now available, more than 68 percent of students came from rural areas. The establishment of private universities cannot attract rural students as they cannot afford the fees.

Prof. Bhalachandra Mungekar, writing on New Dynamics of Higher Education, stated that 'the spread of private institutions are also uneven, mostly concentrated in urban areas, and the fear is that it is tending to commercialise education which is essentially a public good'.[119] In India, there is a set of Universities called 'deemed' Universities, and they have failed as Universities and this has resulted in de-recognition of 44 such Universities. The proliferation of universities, without proper legislative mandate, is certain to create such a situation, under which certain parties sought the intervention of the Supreme Court in India. In another instance, the Supreme Court of India declared illegal, Section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, which enabled the executive to grant 'deemed' university status to an educational institution. The argument was that this Section in the UGC Act, 1956, allowed the Commercialisation of the system of granting degrees; such institutions that have no standards to be recognized as universities indulged in conferring degrees for profit. The Chief Justice of India, K G Balakrishnan stated that 'the innocent student, after having invested time, money and effort, receives a piece of paper which has no value or substance'.[120] Such strictures by the Supreme Court and the report of the Tandon Committee, in the end, compelled the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Kapil Sibal to take a policy decision to do away with all the 'deemed' universities where more than one hundred thousand students were enrolled. It was Radhakrishnan Commission on University Education (1948-49), which proposed the concept of 'deemed' universities and the University Grants Commission was given the power in 1956 to award this status to institutions doing the work of a University.

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[118] Weeramunda, A.J. Socio-Political Impact of Student Violence in Universities and Tertiary Education Institutes. National Education Commission, May 2008, p.30

[119] Mangekar, Bhalachandra. Facing Global and Local Challenges. The New Dynamics of Higher Education. UNESCO, New Delhi, 2007, p.6

[120] Vice that speech of G Winckler, President of European University Association, arch, 2009

The maintenance of quality has been the problem with regard to cross-border universities, and this has been first highlighted in Europe; the European University Association, in 2005, wanted 'European Standards and Guidelines' established for the purpose of ensuring quality.[121] All types of Universities – private, deemed and cross-border – are the main sectors in this game of proliferation of higher learning; the objective is to cater to the growing demand for higher education in the emerging competitive higher education market. There are two fundamental reasons which support this trend; one is that students look for short cuts to education credentials and secondly, there are unscrupulous individuals exploiting the current demand for higher education in many countries. Higher education in Sri Lanka has followed the British model, and it, therefore, has been narrow, inflexible, elitist, and totally State-funded; though the model changed with cursory attachments to its traditions, there are only 17 Universities in the country and the oft-repeated criticism is that the enrollment rate is insufficient. [122] In neighboring India, a country with a population of 111 crore, there are 400 Universities, both in the public and private sector; the enrollment rate of eight percent is alarmingly low compared to the UNESCO average of 20 percent. The Knowledge Commission of India recommended that India should have at least 2000 Universities. This, the Commission says, needs to be done as an immediate necessity. Foreign Universities have come to India; some of them are reputed ones while there is an equal number of less reputed ones which are of dubious quality but exorbitant. The Universities are mostly 'bucket shop' universities that do not have proper credentials in their own countries, and students are duped into courses that are of poor quality and less relevance to the emerging employment market. One can say that this is due to the lack of regulations to monitor such institutions. Regulations are necessary because certain institutions are 'foreign' only in name. The advocates of foreign Universities, strongly repeat the argument that they will set higher standards for everybody. The establishment of foreign universities would answer this

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[121] According to the World Bank, the gross enrollment rate (GER) is 21 percent in 2007, which is above the expected value for the country's level of per capital income. See World Bank. Towers of Learning, p.4

[122] According to the World Bank, the gross enrollment rate (GER) is 21 percent in 2007, which is above the expected value for the country's level of per capital income. See World Bank. Towers of Learning, p.4

question of inadequate access, and this is the major argument flaunted in Sri Lanka in support of this venture.

Access is certain to be expanded, but the main issue is the cost. Most of these foreign players are looking for profit. Yet another argument, which has not been discussed in Sri Lanka, is that these foreign Universities conduct courses tailor-made to suit global standards. This is subject to controversy. Mere licensing an institution is not what the country needs; therefore, whatever regulations we formulate should concentrate on quality and accountability. The higher education policies, formulated and articulated by the Ministry of Higher Education in close collaboration with the University Grants Commission and the National Education Commission are of crucial importance as it has embarked on an ambitious process of economic development. These policies are of great relevance for the foreign universities waiting to set up their institutions; still a lot of interest has not been shown by reputed Universities to exploit the comparatively lucrative but limited higher education market in Sri Lanka. Some foreign universities are already working in Sri Lanka in collaboration with Sri Lankan parties; they are not Universities with a global status, and safeguards have to be introduced before they become a major problem as in the case of 'deemed' universities in India. UNESCO, once in relating to 'Degree Mills', stated that 'they are easy to start, difficult to eliminate, at least to date, relatively immune to regulations'.[123] Sri Lanka, without dampening her half-hearted enthusiasm for foreign investment in higher education, should take note of this observation by the UNESCO. It cannot be denied that Sri Lanka has a significant demand for higher education access. But what the country perhaps needs is high quality higher education, probably based on the new concept of the Third Generation University, under which the Humboldt principle is to be expanded to cover 'the entrepreneurial university' with a global outlook. In this changing scenario, some international providers believe that higher education is simply a saleable commodity which can be bought and sold internationally by opening borders without restriction. This is the perspective on which the foreign providers are presently working; those who work on the thesis that education is more than a commodity are concerned with the hasty rush towards importing and exporting Universities, and in the process, important and relevant

[123] UNESCO. Discouraging Degree Mills in Higher Education, 2009, p.1

objectives such as academic programmes for citizenship, encouragement of critical thinking and similar 'public good' goals are lost.

It is the market principle which, in the final analysis, is determining which course is to be taught. Foreign universities would not encourage 'a research tradition', nor will they be interested in enhancing both access and equity for the benefit of those disadvantaged groups in society. All Universities, whatever the route via they come, would enter the Sri Lankan higher education market to make profits by offering academic programmes in fields that are in high demand, for instance Medicine in Sri Lanka. Yet another important consideration is that foreign universities would not be ready to invest in high-cost academic structures such as laboratories and research facilities. The principle which guides them is the maximization of profits with minimum investment. Both the United Kingdom and Australia have established a national policy on higher education, the primary objective of which is to earn profits from exporting higher education. The traditional role of the British Council, in the context of the above policy, has undergone a change; the British Council is no longer in information business but its mission is focused on promoting the export of higher education. The United States of America essentially follows the same policy, but it varies because the structure of Universities is very different. In the USA, there is no centrally administered higher education policy; higher education policy is the responsibility of States and a similar situation exists in Germany with the Lander enjoying the responsibility for higher education. In the United States, there is a strong private sector in higher education and the private Universities and Colleges follow a very aggressive policy to attract overseas university students. In 2006, of the foreign students in USA, 15 percent came from India and a majority of them pursued PhD and Masters programmes.[124] The Universities, which prefer to enter Sri Lanka, as in India, will include low quality private institutions seeking to earn a profit.[125] Yet the Sri Lankan higher education market is comparatively small compared to that of India. India is seen as an emerging economic power house in the region, and foreign universities would prefer to tap into one of the world's largest higher education

[124] Vide Hindu of 26th November, 2007.

[125] There are two largest players in the USA – Laureate Education Inc and Appolo Group. Laureats Group purchases Universities outside USA and they already own 29 such institution. The Manipal University in India is another such organization in university business

markets. A small country as Sri Lanka with a good human resource base and a good university tradition, must take extreme precaution in allowing foreign universities to establish a foot-hold. Before a policy is framed on this matter, the policy-makers will have to carefully weigh the following:

- What is the motivation of the foreign university?
- Is the whole process transparent?
- What is the status of the foreign university in its own country?
- Is the foreign university capable of offering the same quality education in Sri Lanka as it does at home?
- Is it a quality institution in its home country?
- Does it have the appropriate infra-structure?
- Is it capable of sustaining its academic programme in Sri Lanka for a long period of time?

The fundamental requirement is to ensure that Sri Lanka has control over higher education which they deliver. As there is a demand, to which the Government is ready to respond, Sri Lanka, at this juncture, needs to establish higher education links with the rest of the world, and the point stressed here is that it should not be at the expense of academic sovereignty protected since the establishment of the unitary residential university in 1942. The advocates of foreign universities, who include politicians, academics and intellectuals, need to be reminded that higher education, as they think and discuss in the course of the debate on the question, is not purely a commodity to be bought and sold on the international market. It represents an essential part of the country's heritage and the primary route to the country's future prosperity.[126] It is true that Sri Lanka needs a new higher education structure, in which a reduced role of the State is expected, as the State finds it difficult, given the current fiscal constraints, to continue funding the State Universities which eventually have become a burden on the State. This, however, does not mean that the State should withdraw its role as the provider of higher education, and the system, along with the private providers, could be successfully managed with the establishment of the right regulatory mechanism; the Central Bank of Sri Lanka has concluded that increased private investment in University education, while increasing the overall resource

[126] Albatch, Phillip. Beware of the Trojon Horse, in Hindu of July 15, 2008.

utilization, would help improve the quality of education with increased competitiveness.[127] It, therefore, is satisfying to note that the Governments, which hither-to remained embedded in their commitment to preserve the free education scheme as an integral aspect of the political culture and social welfares in Sri Lanka, have now realized that Universities, in the global context of advances in all areas of knowledge, have become the key partners in socio-economic development in Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka, higher education, in the given context, faces an enormous challenge, and in order to achieve some measure of success, it will be necessary to administer this transformation process with extreme care as the changes proposed should ensure both internal social efficiency as well as stability of the system. In any system of higher education, with numerous global implications, the cooperation with other players is fundamentally important, and cooperation and partnerships have to be conceived as an integral aspect of the institutional missions of the institutions of higher learning. It is in this context that public/private partnerships are vital for the realization of multi-dimensional objectives of higher education. The UNESCO state that 'partnership based on common interest, mutual respect and credibility, should be a prime matrix for renewal in higher education'.[128] The new institutions have to be Universities; if they function as affiliated Colleges, it would lead to problems as in India where the National Knowledge Commission described them as marginally better than good higher secondary schools. It was their view that the lack of a proper regulatory mechanism led to the existence of both good and bad institutions in India. The National Knowledge Commission, therefore, recommended that there is a clear need to establish an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education, and it has to be established by an Act of Parliament. It would be the only agency that has the power to authorise the establishment of degree awarding institutions, and it would be responsible for monitoring quality and standards. It will enjoy the power to grant accreditation and licensing status; the powers and functions accorded to it indicate that it would take over most of the powers and responsibilities of the University Grants Commission. The proposal has already gone into controversy. In the case of Sri Lanka, with the arrival of foreign universities, if at all they come, a regulatory

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[127] Annual Reportg of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2009, p.73.
[128] UNESCO. Higher Education. An Open Door to 21st Century, in Dialogo, Noivember, 1998, p.29.

framework has to be established. The Indian experience in respect of affiliated Colleges, which Indian critics described as the curse of Indian higher education, needs to be closely examined. Universities in the developing countries do not have sufficient resources to offer courses in all subjects, specially those subjects attractive to the job market; there is the danger of the identifiable 'brain drain' as well.

It is the common belief today that the traditional conventional University, with its traditional disciplines, is not what the country requires at this juncture; the country needs a set of new Universities which could specialize on courses of studies that are immediately relevant to economic development. Above all, the new courses need to guarantee employability. This was the basis of the development-oriented higher education policy which came to be articulated since 1994, and innovative policies are now required to get these institutions of higher learning to fall in line with global expectations. Higher education, in the given context of Sri Lanka, is of permanent importance for both economic and social development, and stability in the country. The Sri Lankan system of higher education, based on a rich historical tradition, could be reformed with a proper development-oriented policy initiative, utilising the existing system to contribute to both development and change on the basis of both local and global considerations.

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About the Book.....

This is a study on the evolution of the system of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. Unlike the studies of the past on this subject, this study is a comprehensive examination of the system of Higher Education in the country and this has been done on the basis of the historical evolution of the system. It covers a long period beginning from colonial times up to date, and the challenges which the systems faces today has been analysed from the point of view of the need to reform the system to suit the emerging challenge in a globalised world. This study by a former Minister of Higher Education, who was a University Don for more than three decades, contains an introduction and eight chapters on the subject of Higher Education; the chapters follow the historical pattern of the evolution of the system of Higher Education in Sri Lanka. This study, which evaluates the nature and content of Higher Education in Sri Lanka, is a complete study of the subject and it, therefore, is an important contribution to research and scholarship in the field of Higher Education. This is yet another landmark publication by the author.

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