

## **British Council reveals research findings on Transnational Education in Sri Lanka**

Taking yet another step to demonstrate our thought leadership in Higher Education and reinforcing the links between UK and Sri Lanka, British Council Sri Lanka commissioned a customized research report on **‘Transnational Education in Sri Lanka – An overview of the current landscape, potential opportunities and challenges’** from the Economist Intelligence Unit in October 2014. This research was commissioned with the objective of attaining greater insight into the increased expansion of partnerships between higher education institutions in Sri Lanka and other countries around the world, particularly UK.



Niroshi Siriwanasa, Manager International Higher Education, British Council Sri Lanka, shared some of the key findings of the report: the delivery models, upcoming investments, support by the government, case studies from UK and Australia on in-country-delivery and the future of transnational education in Sri Lanka. There was also focus on specialized skills that graduates require for booming industries, appetite for online learning, projected employment demand and a probe into the required skills for the expanding industry sectors as well as the opportunities available.



The inaugural Transnational Education sector meeting was held on the 04<sup>th</sup> of November 2014 in order to share the findings of the report and to present the report officially to Dr. Sunil Nawaratne – Secretary to the Ministry of Higher Education. Heads of over 30 transnational education providers were present at this occasion which was followed by a networking reception at the British Council Library.

The aim of this meeting was to share the findings of the report to the wider sector and to discuss the systematic changes needed to develop higher education through private sector education providers in Sri Lanka.



A working committee was appointed to work with the British Council Higher education team to achieve the discussed objectives.

Dr. Sunil Nawaratne, Secretary to the Ministry of Higher education addressed the gathering and emphasized the importance of private sector involvement in higher education. He also mentioned “In order to achieve the government goal of becoming a Hub of Excellence in Higher Education, the non-state sector plays an important role. We want to attract world class universities to set up their campuses in Sri Lanka and at the same time make our universities world class to attract foreign students to study in Sri Lanka.”

Keith Davies, Country Director British Council Sri Lanka said “The growth in Transnational Education is probably the biggest change affecting the sector in my lifetime. It’s here to stay and it will continue to grow and to diversify with greater inclusion of digital elements and blended learning. Quality assurance is the key (as identified in this important survey) and if this is done properly, everything else will fall into place”.

The meeting ended with a round of comments from some of those present:

Visakha Nanayakkara, Deputy Director, HETC Project (World Bank) commented “It would be good to incorporate a graduate development programme as part of transnational education in Sri Lanka. The higher education sector in Sri Lanka struggle at the moment with graduate employability; we can look at some of the best practices from the UK Higher education sector and see how we can map this into our student experience.”



Dr. Chandra Embuldeniya from UCLAN said “Having a British education hub in Sri Lanka will be of great value to both countries; it is a great opportunity for transnational education providers to promote and meet business partners.”

Commenting on possible improvements, Nigel Browne from VHEC said “There is a need for internal quality assurance policies to be monitored. We should also look closely into activities that can be done to increase the interactive participation of students.”