

# PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON UNIVERSITY EDUCATION REFORMS

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The National Education Commission, having conducted an in-depth study of University Education in the country, compiled a document titled “ National Policy for University Education “ in 1996. Her Excellency the President appointed a Presidential Task Force chaired by the Hon. Richard Pathirana, Minister and Hon. Viswa Warnapala, Deputy Minister of Education and Higher Education. The Task Force consisted of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the National Education Commission, Chairman, Deputy Chairman and member of the University Grants Commission, the Secretary Ministry of Education of Higher Education, all Vice Chancellors and some leading members drawn from the Private Sector. This Task Force was mandated to make recommendations on Reforming the University Education of this country with plans for implementation.

The Presidential Task Force, at its first meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1997 , appointed 9 Technical Committees to report on identified Key Areas, in the University Education System. The reports of the Technical Committees were presented in summary form, to the Presidential Task Force at its second meeting. Having discussed the summary report, the Presidential Task Force decided that the report should be sent to the **Vice Chancellors of all Universities**, requesting them to have the document discussed by their Faculties and Senates. The Vice Chancellors were requested to send in comments from their institutions to Dr. K.D. Arulpragasam, who was requested to compile a summary statement incorporating the observations of the Universities.

The Presidential Task Force met on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1998 to discuss the observations made by the various Universities. The document that will be presented to Her Excellency is a consensus document which outlines Proposals for University Reforms and the Actions that need to be taken for the Implementation of the Proposals. Also, included in the report, are the Agencies who should take responsibility for Implementation of the said Reforms.

## 1. Expansion of University Education

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### 1.1 Proposals

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- i. Increase annual intake to 20,000 by 2005, circa one University per million population.
  - ii. Universities of Colombo, Peradeniya, Kelaniya, Moratuwa and Sri Jayawardenapura will not have their combined intake increased by more than 1,500.
  - iii. Universities of Rajarata and Sabaragamuwa, the Eastern University and the South-eastern University will have total increase of 2,000.
  - iv. The balance increase will be taken up by the proposed Wayamba and Uva Universities
  - v. Adequate financial, material and human resource, provision should be made in respect of any expansion of existing Universities and for the establishment of new Universities.
  - vi. External Degree programmes serve large numbers of students and these should be expanded.
  - vii. The Open University programmes already serve young, as well as, mature students and can serve the needs of the life-long learning process.

*Arif & Lakshmi*

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#### Actions

- i. Upgrade and expand physical plant, make increased financial provision as required and develop the necessary human resources.
- ii. Rehabilitate the University of Jaffna and the Eastern University Sri Lanka.

Agencies: Universities, UGC, MEHE.

### 1.2 Proposals

- i. New Universities will not be developed in the traditional mould. New courses with bias towards technological, cultural and science based content will characterise specific institutions.
- ii. All Universities will be encouraged to develop special degree and post-graduate diploma and degree programmes.
- iii. All Universities will be multi-cultural and multi-ethnic.
- iv. There will be provision for student mobility and transferring of credits between Universities.

#### Actions

- i. Plan academic approaches and content of courses, to develop special biases, as desired.
- ii. Provision should be made for teaching in all three media., where appropriate.
- iii. Introduce appropriate regulations allowing for transfer of credits and student mobility.
- ✓ iv. Establish a Board of Accreditation and Quality Monitoring at the UGC.

Agencies : Universities, UGC, MEHE

### 1.3 Proposals & Actions

- i. Admissions to State funded Universities will be regulated by Government, but steps should be taken, in due course, to permit Universities to handle their own admissions.
- ii. Universities and other Higher Education Institutions will recognize work carried out at Research and Development Institutions in partial fulfillment of requirements for award of degrees, diplomas.
- iii. Duration of academic programmes will be flexible.
- iv. Higher priority will be assigned to Science and Technology related courses.

Agencies : Universities, UGC, Research and Development Institutes.

## 2. Diversification of University Courses & Curricular Reform.

### 2.1 Proposals

- i. Revise curricula, expand and diversify courses.
- ii. Afford students with wider programmes and opportunities of study.
- iii. Relate diversification and expansion to National needs.
- iv. Provide course structures which include an 'year out of University'.

#### Actions

- i. Diversify Course Offers and permit cross - department and cross - faculty combinations of courses / modules.
- ii. Allow maximum flexibility in choice of course combination by students.
- iii. To facilitate flexibility introduce modular structure into courses.
- iv. Offer continuing Education courses for mature students.

Agencies : University Senates, New Universities to pay special attention.

### 2.2 Proposals

- i. Introduce greater flexibility in course duration and examination structure.
- ii. Reduce weightage given to end of year exams.

#### Actions

- i. Set maximum and minimum duration of courses and provide flexible examinations time frames.
- ii. Reduce weightage given to end of year exams and increase weightage for independent assignments.
- iii. Assign greater weightage for dissertations, as appropriate.

Agencies : Senates of Universities

## 3. University, State, Private Sector Linkage.

### 3.1 / 3.2 Orientation of Graduates to meet the needs of the Private Sector, State Sector Industries, Commerce and Agriculture.

#### Proposals & Actions

- i. Appropriate short term exposure in order to develop Social Skills & English usage
- ii. Restructure courses, especially, non professional courses to meet need of public-private sectors and service sector.

- iii. Include necessary practical orientation and skills development related to new Technologies

### 3.3 Proposals & Actions

- i. Institute Out-reach Programmes involving Community and Industry
- ii. Introduce sandwich course structure, where appropriate, credit being given for work & experience in the Private and Public Sectors.

### 3.4 Proposals & Actions

- i. Encourage University, Private Sector, Public Sector collaboration for national development.
- ii. Provide tax incentives to encourage PS to participate, actively, in the implementation of the Sandwich Course Programmes.

**Agencies : Government, UGC, Universities & Private Sector**

### 3.5 Proposals and Actions

- i. Make formal arrangements within the University System, whereby academics can carry out Reseach Projects serving industry and other natrional needs, Consultancies, training programmes and other services for the public and the private sectors
- ii. Ensure that such participation does not interfere with the effecient delivery of the normal services of academics to the University system.

**Actions : UGC, Universities , Private and Public Sector**

### 3.6 Proposals

Councils, Senates & Faculties to draw in active numbers from Private Sector, Industry and State Sector.

#### **Actions**

Change statutes and regulations, as necessary

**Agency : UGC & Universities**

### 3.7 Proposals

- i. Develop undergraduate , Private Sector and Industry interaction .
- ii. Institute short and long term, in-plant training courses and placement procedures.

#### **Action**

Establish a Liaison Office at each University to work in collaboration with Chambers of Commerce.

**Agency: Universities and Chambers of Commerce**

### 3.8 Proposal

- i. Senior Academics should serve on Boards of Management of State and Private Institutions.
- ii. Academic staff should serve as local consultants on foreign funded projects as their expertise is more relevant to their development needs.

#### Action

- i. Make appropriate regulations
- ii. Encourage mobility of staff, without prejudice

Agencies: UGC Universities, Public and Private Sector

### 4. Career - Guidance and Counseling

#### 4.1 Proposals

Develop skills in graduates relevant to employment opportunities.

#### Actions

- i. Develop courses in areas like English, Computing and Communication for appropriate skills development.
- ii. Make computer facilities as accessible as possible to under graduates.
- iii. Establish Student Services Centres at each University .

Agency: UGC. Career Guidance Units of Universities.

#### 4.2 Proposals

- i. Encourage formal collaboration of University, Industry, Private & Public Sector in research and development.

#### Actions

- i. Set up a University Research Centre, at each University, each with its own Board of Management.
- ii. Provide the necessary funding for the efficient functioning of the above centres.

Agencies : UGC, Universities, MEHE.

#### 4.3 Proposal

- i. To develop Business Management skills.
- ii. Guide graduates to self employment opportunities.
- iii. Provide financial, technical and managerial support for entrepreneurship development.

#### Actions

- i. Establish appropriate Management Organisation with inputs from Banks willing to participating in these programmes. ( The University of Colombo has tried a similar programmes with success )
- ii. Boards of Management should includ Universities, Chambers, Industries and participating banks.
- iii. Select and orientate appropriate graduates for support under this programme.
- iv. Monitor progress of projects and take remedial measures, as required.

Agencies : UGC, Universities, Career Guidance Units, Banks, Ministry of Finance.

To develop an employment data bank with up to date information on available jobs

**Actions**

- i. Arrange for inputs from employers to data bank on a continuing basis.
- ii. Data Bank and graduate profiles to be maintained at UGC.
- iii. Career Guidance Units to access data bank for graduate placement.

**Agencies : Public Sector, Private Sector, UGC Data Bank and Career Guidance Units.**

**4.5 Proposals**

Improve employability by enhancing skills and widening interest.

**Actions**

- i. Expand extra mural courses and increase their range.
- ii. Give credit to such courses in student evaluation.

**Agencies : UGC & Universities.**

**4.6 Proposal**

Establish Career Guidance Units to centralize information on job opportunities and to guide students to appropriate placements.

**Actions**

- i. Set up CGUs at Universities and UGC, manned by competent trained staff.
- ii. Maintain up-to-date Data Bases. CGUs would liaise between students and employers.
- iii. CGU Head should be given the status of a Dean and adequate support staff and facilities should be provided.
- iv. Trained part time staff from Faculties would assist CGU and be remunerated appropriately, for their services.

**Agencies : Universities, UGC**

**5. University Administration and Management.**

**5.1 Proposal**

Job description and profile for every cadre position should be defined.

**Actions**

- i. Define functions and responsibilities of each positions.
- ii. Adjust cadre accordingly
- iii. Modify schemes of recruitment and/or develop new schemes.
- iv. Determine optimum hierarchical levels to attain maximum efficiency.
- v. Introduce the concept not only of financial accountability but also of accountability for actions taken and consequences.

**Agencies : UGC, Universities, Consultants**

## 5.2 Proposal and Actions

Provide for contract appointments to be made as and when required.

**Agencies : Universities, UGC, Consultants**

## 5.3 Proposals

Review and reformulate the Universities Establishment Code and UGC circulars.

### Actions

- i. Compile a new University Establishment Code and a Code of Ethics.
- ii. Reduce delays in decision making by reducing requirements of referring decisions on administrative matters to the UGC.
- iii. Appoint a Reviews Committee for this purpose. Committee to be headed by a senior academic, with administrative experience, and including a Registrar, a Bursar and a few others with appropriate experience.

**Agencies : UGC with inputs from Universities.**

## 5.4 Proposal

Universities to draw Corporate Plans covering a minimum 3 year period and commence implementation.

### Actions

- i. Councils to draw up guidelines for Corporate Plan.
- ii. Corporate Plans to be drafted by Consultant/s upon guidelines.
- iii. Implementation of Corporate Plan.

**Agencies : Councils of Universities , UGC**

## 5.5 Proposals

Establishment of a Management Information System with comprehensive Data Base which is readily accessible for use.

### Actions

- i. Establish a Data Base Unit at each University.
- ii. Data Base to include student records, exam results, academic and another programs.
- iii. Comprehensive Data Base on Staff.
- iv. Appropriate Data Base on Finances.

**Agencies : UGC, Universities & Consultants**

## 5.6 Proposal

To revise Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, as amended, in order to meet current trends and University Reforms.

### Action

- i. Appoint a Committee which includes University Personnel and Legal experts to draft outline lines
- ii. Committee to receive inputs <sup>7</sup> from all sectors of the University Commu

- iii. Produce the guidelines under which Legal Experts can draw up a new Universities Act.

## 6.0 Staff training development and Assessment.

### 6.1 Proposals

- i. Orientation programme for new recruits, including a course in pedagogy.
- ii. Creation of a clear grasp of responsibilities and how they should be carried out.

#### Actions

- i. Set up a Staff Training Unit, with full time Head, adequate trained staff and sufficient funds.
- ii. Conduct compulsory Staff Training Courses for periods of 6 months.
- iii. Evaluate performance and certify.
- iv. Submit evaluation reports for use in confirmation of probationers.
- v. Provide adequate funding for local post-graduate research, split Ph.D. Programmes and Post-graduate work in foreign Universities, where deemed necessary.

Agencies : UGC , Universities, Staff Training Units.

### 6.2 Assessment of Teacher Performance

#### Proposals

- i. Annual assessment of teacher performance and report on performance.
- ii. Reports to be used as an important measure for promotions/ increments

#### Actions

- i. Contract entered into between Head and Teacher, defining responsibilities during ensuing year.
- ii. One to one review, Head and Teacher ,to assess achievement in relation to goals set in contracts.
- iii. Reports submitted on teacher performance to be considered in deciding on increments/promotions
- iv. Review Board for Senior Teachers to consist of Head and two outside experts in relevant field.
- v. Review on basis of goals achieved in relation to the contract signed

Agencies: Senates, Faculties and Departments.

### 6.3 Teacher development

#### Proposals

To upgrade knowledge and skills base of teachers and obtain training in research methodology.

#### Actions

- i. Training under local specialist
- ii Working towards Post-graduate programs local split programs and foreign degress .



- iv. Upgrading of knowledge and skills through local & foreign workshops and exposure.
- v. Training of academic staff in management practices.
- vi. Make provision for academics to move into administrative positions.

Agencies : Senates , Faculties, Departments.

#### 6.4 Training of new recruits to non academic cadre to ensure efficient functioning in University system.

##### Proposals

- i. Training in appropriate administrative and management skills for probationers.
- ii. Evaluation of attainment in training and report on performance.
- iii. Exposure of trainees to a wide range of job activities in University administration and management.
- iv. In-service training of senior staff and hands on experience on all aspects of University administration management.

##### Actions

- i. Six months training course for new recruits. Successful completion essential for confirmation.
- ii. Short term courses delivered through Private Sector groups, such as NIBM, SLIDA
- iii. Increments and promotions to be based on attainment and output.
- iv. Annual review of performance of permanent staff on the basis of contract and goals set by Head and evaluated by a designated Board.
- v. Provide opportunities for periods of training in various branches of University Administration.

Agencies : Staff Training Unit, Private Sector, Universities and UGC.

#### 6.5 Proposal

- i. Conduct training courses for newly recruited Laboratory Technicians.
- ii. Develop necessary skills in new recruits.
- iii. Upgrade skills of mid level and senior cadres.

##### Actions

- i. Six months training for new recruits in Laboratory Practice by appropriate specialist.
- ii. Evaluation and report for confirmation.
- iii. Upgrading of skills of middle and senior cadres through training workshops.
- iv. Annual work assignment contract with Head and assessment of achievement by Head or designated officer.

Agencies : Dean / Faculty, Head / Department, Designated Officers

### 7.1 Proposal

Increase Government grant from the present 0.4% GDP - 1.0% GDP by 2001. ✓

#### Actions

- i. Negotiate with Treasury for increase.
- ii. Establish two Universities - Wayamba & Uva
- iii. Expand Rajarata , Sabaragamuwa & South-Eastern Universities.
- iv. Rehabilitate of University of Jaffna and Eastern University.
- v. Expansion of established Universities.
- vi. PIP Projects implementation ( 1998 - 2000 )

Agencies : Treasury, Universities.

### 7.2 Proposal

Develop a formula of funding on cost / student Faculty-wise

#### Action

- i. Appoint an expert panel to carry out this Task.
- ii. New Universities must given larger allocations as startup funds.
- iii. Expansion of existing Universities should not suffer because of funding being directed to new University development.

Agencies : UGC , Consultant, Treasury

### 7.3 Proposals

Seek funding for specific projects from local and foreign sources.

#### Actions

Draft and prioritise projects - for infra - structure development, new academic programs and staff development programmes.

Agencies : Universities, UGC.

### 7.4 Proposal

Develop methods by which Universities can generate income and strengthen their own resource base.

Actions Provide core funding and provide Government grants.

- i. Government funding should continue on cost / student basis.
- ii. Income generated by Universities above current funding levels, to be retained by Universities.

Agencies : Universities , UGC.

### 7.5 Proposal

Establish a Business Office in each University to mobilise funds and improve efficiency of resource use.

### **Actions**

- i. Conduct fund raising campaigns
- ii. Cost recovery and surplus generation on all Post - Graduate programs
- iii. Costing services, rationalising rents and fees for hostel accommodation.
- iv. Review of Registration and Admission fees
- v. Operating commercial ventures such as Book stores
- vi. Cost cutting by control of electricity and water use and other services.
- vii. Adopt measures to increase internal efficiency.
- viii. Establish a Business Office at each University, with trained core staff, and carefully planned work program.

**Agencies : Universities and CVCD**

### **7.6 Proposal**

To establish University consultancy service. Generate income to supplement government grant.

### **Actions**

- i. Set up Companies to co-ordinate and manage consultancy services.
- ii. Conduct training of personnel required by various sectors outside the University.
- iii. Provide laboratory and analytical services to outside agencies and provide technological inputs.

**Agencies : Universities**

## **8.0 Students issues**

### **8.1 Proposals**

Prepare students selected for university entry and awaiting admission to adapt themselves to life and work in a University environment.

### **Actions**

- i. Develop appropriate induction programs, to develop the correct approach to University Education and life .
- ii. Such programmes should include clear indications of rights ,duties and responsibilities of individual students and student groups..
- iii. The importance of strengthening leadership qualities and proper attitudes should be emphasized.

**Agencies : UGC Universities , Students welfare units**

### **8.2 Proposal**

Give a comprehensive orientation programme for freshmen and help them adjust to University life.

### **Actions**

- i. Provide written guides, orientation lectures and discussions
- ii. Conduct students on campus tours and render other assistance

### **8.3 Proposals**

- i. Aim to develop the total personality of graduates produced and make them responsible citizens who can make meaningful contributions to National Development.
- ii. Make provision for necessary support and supplies as may become necessary.

#### **Actions**

- i. Assess requirement periodically and take necessary steps.
- ii. Help needy students through scholarships and bursaries
- iii. Ensure making of payments on time with minimum red tape.

#### **Agencies : Student Welfare units**

### **8.3 Proposals**

- iii. Provision of accommodation for needy students

#### **Actions**

- i. Determine criteria for selection of students who need accommodation
- ii. Build hostels on a planned basis or rent accommodation, as required.

#### **Agencies : MEHE , Universities, UGC**

### **8.3 Proposal**

- iv. Provide necessary infrastructure and encourage participation in sports activities

#### **Actions**

- i. Establish sports councils in every University , with funds for full range of Sports activities.
- ii. Organize regular intra-faculty, inter-faculty and inter University tournaments
- iii. Ensure fullest participation of academic and non academic staff with students in these activities.
- iv. High performers should be given recognition . Participation also to be given weightage.

#### **Agencies : Students Welfare Units, Students Councils , University councils**

### **8.3 Proposals**

- v. Participation in students societies, which may be subject related or otherwise.

#### **Actions**

- i. Encourage establishment of range of societies and provide adequate funding to help sustain them
- ii. Students society should be managed by students but must have maximal staff support and participation.

#### **Agencies : Students Welfare Society Deans of Faculties Academic staff**

### 8.3 Proposals

- vi. To provide for Student Councils and Faculty Councils whose main function would be to look after student welfare and interests.

#### Actions

- i. Establish Students Councils whose primary responsibility will be student welfare.

Agencies : University councils, University Welfare units, Students unions

### 8.3 Proposals

- vii. Provide counseling in regard to careers and personal matters.

#### Actions

- i. Establish Career Guidance Units and appoint trained Career Guidance and Counseling Officers to these Units.
- ii. Involve appropriate trained academic staff to help, all academic staff should participate in respect of students in their charge.
- iii. Involve senior students in this exercise.

Agencies : Council Senate, Welfare units, Students unions.

### 8.3 Proposals

- viii. Maintenance of students discipline ensuring smooth working of academic and other programs.

#### Actions

- i. Revise and standardize regulations regarding conduct and discipline
- ii. Students to sign legal document allowing for enforcement of rules.
- iii. Establish Boards of Discipline to deal with offenses and decide on punishment, expeditiously .
- iv. Where necessary offenders should be brought before courts of law
- v. Examinations timetables , location of hotels , selection of inmates should be the responsibility of the appropriate University bodies.
- vi. Students should be consulted, as appropriate, in the decision making process at all stages

Agencies : University Councils , Students Welfare Units , Student Councils

## 9.0 Post-graduate Research and Training

### 9.1 Proposals

Provide sufficient funds to improve quality of research in Universities.

#### Action

Give high priority to funding of research.

Agency : UGC, Treasury

### 9.2 Proposal

Review periodically the progress and quality of research in Universities.

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Review periodically the progress and quality of research in Universities.

### Action

- i. Establish an Inter-University Council for the above purpose.
- ii. The Council should make recommendations to improve research quality and also report on progress.

Agencies : University Councils and UGC

## 9.3 Proposal

Monitor and Review progress and quality of research in departments and facilities available.

### Action

- i. Appoint departmental Research Review Committees.
- ii. Committees to make regular reports and suggest remedial action, where appropriate.

Agencies : Senates, Faculties and Departments

## 9.4 Proposal

Encourage formal linkages with Institutes like TRI, CSIR, MRI, IFS, CRI, RRI.

### Action

- i. Establish links that permit training and research, and use of equipment and resources.
- ii. Recognize Research Institutes for training related to the award of Post Graduate Degrees and Diplomas, by the Universities.

Agencies : UGC , Universities, Research Institutes

## 9.5 Proposals

Develop close collaboration with Private Sector in identification of Research Projects and funding for projects and monitoring of progress.

### Actions

Take necessary steps for the implementation of this proposal.

Agencies : UGC, Universities, Private Sector

## 9.6 Proposal

University Research Programmes should be related to national imperatives.

### Actions

Universities should pay more attention to applied research, though pure research should not be neglected.

Agencies : Senates, Faculties, Departments

**9.7 Proposal**

Provide ready access to University Researches to Sources of information in Government departments and institutions.

**Agencies : UGC, Universities, Government and Semi-government Institutions**

**9.8 Proposal**

Update and equip University Libraries to serve expanding research needs.

**Agencies : UGC, Universities**

**9.9 Proposal**

Attendance at International conferences, workshops should be permitted according to rules laid down by UGC. Approvals should be by the UGC. Present practice should be replaced.

**Agencies : UGC**