

A PARADIGM SHIFT: REVOLUTIONISING SRI LANKAN HIGHER EDUCATION WITH E-LEARNING

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E-learning has generated a paradigm shift in the Sri Lankan education system, facilitating learning opportunities for wider communities. Sri Lanka, which is a developing country with limited resources and outsized student population, intend to eliminate the education divide in the country with the use of e-learning, innovative educational technologies and online learning course delivery methods in the higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

It is a long term plan in Sri Lanka to increase educational opportunities throughout the country for secondary school graduates who cannot attend conventional universities due to limited capacity. Several courses in various educational institutes in the country have been initiated online course delivery using e-learning concepts and innovative educational technologies to deliver courses in the online delivery mode. This new delivery model has been recommended and supported by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank as one of the key approaches to reduce the education divide in the country. These transformations in the Sri Lankan education system provide better learning experiences to the learners assisting to achieve higher education qualifications to enhance skills and knowledge to gain employment opportunities. Efforts to develop new online learning materials for course delivery have been well embraced by many higher education institutions in Sri Lanka.

The research was carried out in Sri Lankan higher education institutes using qualitative data gathering methods including interviews, focus groups and observations. The data gathered was analysed via a constant comparative method of data analysis, to gain insight into the current teaching and learning practices within higher education institutes in Sri Lanka. Grounded theory was used to proceed with the research to identify the emerging themes that are outlined discussing potential capabilities of the future of the Sri Lankan higher education system.

The key research objectives were to find the current trends, issues and plausible solutions to improve online education within the Sri Lankan education system. The paper reports the research findings of the identified developments, and key challenges within the Sri Lankan higher education institutes that have enhanced higher education opportunities for students.