

## **KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY: WHERE ARE SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITIES?**

**S.K. Hennayake**

*University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka  
dvc@pdn.ac.lk*

In the modern world, the commodity known as “knowledge” has come to dominate the economies and thus the quality of life of people. As the centers of production of knowledge, the Universities have assumed a commanding place in modern knowledge economy. Thus, the dictum “Where goes the University, so goes the nation.” The production of knowledge requires equal commitment of three pillars namely the institution, the university teacher and the student. The institution is the factory where the knowledge commodity is produced. The library is the centerpiece or the core of any university. Research in hard sciences is conducted primarily in laboratories. The state of the art lecture halls are the place where the knowledge is disseminated. Taken as a whole, in all these areas Sri Lankan Universities have a long way to go. The academic staff is the lifeblood of the University. The only way a university could have highly qualified staff is by recruiting absolutely the best and once recruited promoting absolutely the best. Research, seeking new knowledge, is the prime activity of a university academic. Research should invariably lead to its logical end, which is publication. A publication if it is to be accepted in the modern knowledge economy has to be in a reputed international academic journal. As a system, the Sri Lankan universities have a long way to go even in this case. The students today are the future of the University. The students should have high expectations whatever the chosen field is. In the knowledge economy the vast quantum of knowledge is generated and imparted in the English language and thus English competence is a sine-qua-non for a University student. The University students should also master the “effective literacy” which includes managerial skills, self-conviction, independence, critical thinking, self-confidence, national and global literacy, civic mind and finally humanism. Here too Sri Lankan University students have a long way to go. In the knowledge economy wealth is generated by producing high quality knowledge products and selling them. This requires that Universities are also driven by profit motive, if not economic then social. Profit is nothing but generation of capital that is essential in development and improving the quality of life. The Sri Lankan Universities have the longest way to go in this profound attitudinal transformation. In a knowledge economy, only the best production centers will survive. This is the challenge to the Universities in Sri Lanka.