

Way to the Bachelor's Degree in QS

I still remember my school: Central College, Eheliyagoda, where I received my primary and secondary education. It was my dream to become an engineer, but did not have a clue how to fulfil that dream. It was not only my dream; it was the hope of my beloved mother and father as anybody's parents. My parents told me that there was only one path to becoming an engineer as my dream: work hard, and cram all night, no cricket, no trips and no fun at all and get through my GCE (A/L) examination and enter a university in Sri Lanka. I accepted challenge of this uphill task which I knew was a near impossible challenge before me despite the commitment I put into it. I knew that it was near impossible because it takes only 10% of the students who qualify are admitted to university in Sri Lanka regardless of how much effort I put in, (only xxx students were enrolled out of xxxxxx students who qualified for university education in 2013) and regardless of my mother and father, like all other mothers and fathers in the country, paying a good amount as government taxes and rates out of their hard earned government monthly salary. As I saw it in the end it was a near impossible mission and I ultimately became a non-graduate citizen along with the rest of the 90% who faced the same fate – no further university education opportunities within Sri Lanka!

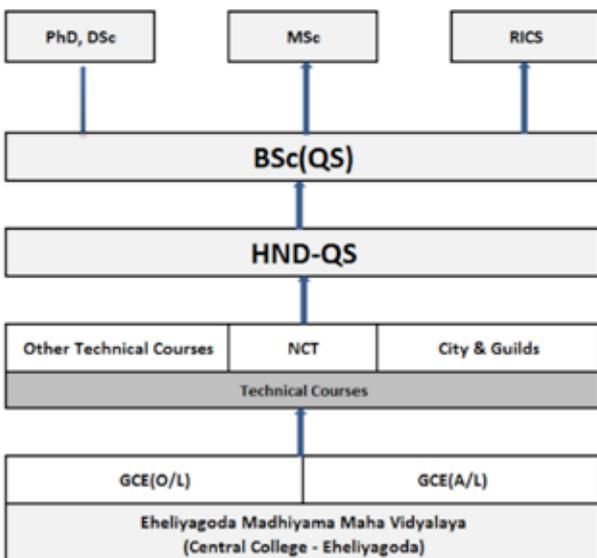
As nothing could be done in Sri Lanka to realize my dream and my parents' dream, which was for me to become an engineer, my ambition remained a dream. Since I could not enter university in Sri Lanka, the door was closed for me and the other 90% of the students who were eligible to a university education forever. That was and this is the system put in place by not only the politicians but also by academics that shut out many of our brothers and sisters from a university education. But I had a dream! The next lower level of higher education for those who could not enrol in a Sri Lankan university is to follow a technical course in technical teaching institutes such as a Technical Colleges, Polytechnic Colleges, and Hardy Technical Institute. I chose a technical course where I was moulded into a hardened civil engineering technician which was well short of my parent's dream and their sole ambition to see their children's educational progress. I did not stop there. My journey had just started to cruise through uncountable obstacles -not much financial support, no opportunity to further my ambitious higher education

dream, no good career and employment opportunities within Sri Lanka. If it had been an open door policy for university education with student loans rather than just scholarships for those who enrolled in universities and higher technical college education, etc. those 90% of the students who could not enrol in university would have graduated from a Sri Lankan public university.

Although, successive governments have drawn various blueprints to expand university education for Sri Lankans of whom just 0.01% get university education under the free education scheme, none could be properly implemented due to the shortsightedness and our brothers and sisters who are fortunate enough to enter university. With proposals like a private medical college in Ragama, education white papers, establishing private universities and colleges were implemented in the late 80s, we would have been a nation that is the wonder of education. Our neighboring countries which commenced similar institutes in the same period have opened their doors to many overseas students and our parents have to send their beloved children to such countries. Sri Lanka is a country surrounded by the sea and with very limited natural resources. Our products are raw materials to the other developed countries to produce value added final end products like tea bags, tyres, garments, jewellery with our gems, etc. To bring one Japanese car to our Island we have to export at least three container loads of our raw materials or more and depend on the world market demand and price to the end producer. Our invaluable natural resource is nothing but us, our people, our human resources. Countries like India, Malaysia, Korea, Singapore, and China excel with their human resources to make them economically powerful nations on the world map by giving the highest possible quality education to their youth. They are not locked within their domestic system but extend it to foreign sources and private investors in their university education system. They derived the results of that policy; they export quality human resources worldwide. Sri Lanka should enhance the quality of our human resources by giving university education to the majority of our citizens. It is the demand of the world market, a quality and highly educated human resources.

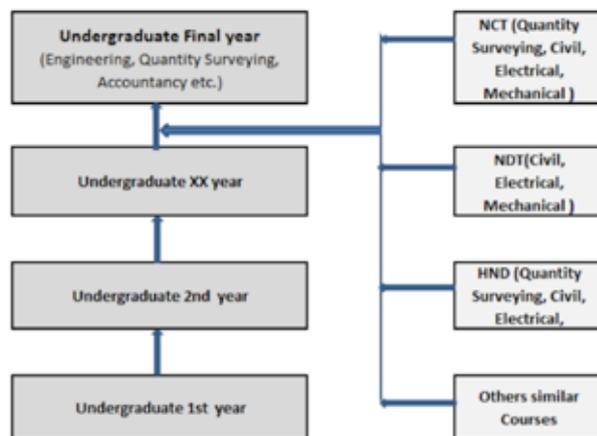
A good example is the recently implemented laws by the majority of Middle Eastern countries which is the

biggest human resources market in the world. Hereafter, they need only the bachelor's degree qualified quantity surveyors. They don't want me. They don't need my NCT (QS), they don't need our HND (QS), Diploma in QS, City and Guilds in QS but all they need is a BSc in QS. So I have an unfinished job to finish. I have to explore around the globe except Sri Lanka where no opportunity is available for me to become a BSc (QS). My career path experienced a turning point once I came across the path called Top-up Degree to become a BSc (QS). Thanks to SLQS UAE for allowing me to recognize the threats and opportunities. Also I thank many visionary universities with higher rankings in the world's universities for their initiation in commencing various types of degree programmes for non-graduates in the field of quantity surveying. My basic qualification of GCE (O/L), GCE (A/L), and my technical education gave me a ladder to top-up my knowledge and it was recognized by foreign universities unlike our own universities in Sri Lanka. My Higher National Diploma of two years is well recognized by these universities to permit me to follow the degree course in quantity surveying; my ladder of progression to become a BSc(QS) through the Top-up degree mechanism as illustrated below:



I wish it were not necessary to limit the lateral entry for the universities for the Top-up degree for the quantity surveying courses; it should be extended to all practically possible courses to have a Top-up degree mechanism through lateral entry. This is a very popular and effective mechanism to enhance the level of education of the people. I wish decision makers and administrators in the universities in Sri Lanka would soon realize the benefit of such an entry mechanism to the universities in Sri Lanka. This entry path would fulfil our parents' humble dream hope of their children receiving

a good education and an eastern mind-set of our parents which at least could be fulfilled through a Top-up degree. The diagram below clearly illustrates how our dream can materialize in our society and the nation as a whole. I would pray that our politicians, academics, and our brothers and sisters who were fortunate enough to enter university in Sri Lanka would think about the 90% of their fellow students who have qualified for university education but fall by the wayside bereft of a university education with a more realistic and meaningful attitude towards this national crisis.



Source: Institute of Incorporated Engineers of Sri Lanka, UAE Chapter, Annual Report 2013

Finally, I believe that my presentation above would lead the SLQs - Sri Lankan Quantity Surveying groups in the UAE, Qatar, Sultanate of Oman and Bahrain to take up this case further for the sake of the majority of SLQS members worldwide and in Sri Lanka itself. The lobbying shall further extend to university dons, undergraduates and graduates to support the lateral entry mechanism unconditionally as it will by and large enhance the quality of the profession and thereby increase the employment benefits to the Sri Lankans QSs. We should all be happy that all of our SLQS will one day be holders of the bachelor's degree in QS, BSc (QS) which would increase our competitive advantage in a challenging international market.



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