

Committee IV
The Modern University in Transition

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**DISINTEGRATION OF THE RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY CONCEPT
AND EXTERNAL DEGREE FACULTY**

by

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INTRODUCTION

That Contemporary life, any where in our globe is characterized by multifarious curses as political, cultural, religious, economic, environmental, social, etc. The expressively significant thing for us, academics, certainly is the academic aspect of the eligible young men and young women of the younger generation on which cast gloomy shadows of these crises. A good proportion of our eligible younger generation remains therefore basically alienated and frustrated. My proposal here is directed to alleviate the alienation as far as as possible by way of opening up extra facility wherever possible to eligible young men and young women to pursue a kind of university of education. My proposal, accordingly, centres around an alienation-reduction university academic programme for eligible young men and young women who are denied a place for them in the residential university for a no fault in themselves.

RESIDENTIAL TYPE OF UNIVERSITY--APROBLEM

The university education in the Third world countries, very generally speaking, at present faces its most significant challenge. There is an insatiable thirst for higher education, knowledge, on the one hand and on the other, ominously, the tragic inability of the residential type of university educational system to meet this demand. A genuine way out should emanate from the university academics themselves. At this point I limit my area of discourse (or as L.Wittgenstein, a key philosopher of our century notes--the language game) to South Asia region, very specially to Sri Lanka. For groves of Academe as made available in Great Britain or in Canada or in the United States of America are though pleasantly welcome, are highly unimaginable--Utopia;

and therefore, groves of Academe in South Asia, now, increasingly and alarmingly getting shut to a good number of qualified young men and young women who are eligible themselves to a some kind of university education only to discover their failure to enter due to no fault of them but to lack of space in residential universities. Professor Dr. Tamas Kozma's following statement possibly, should be valued in this context: "ICUS gives an outstanding possibility for transcontinental and international comparisons in that universities (as is shown by research) are nearly the same all over the world and are facing nearly the same challenges but not necessarily providing the same answers."(1) I believe that the problem I now address is implicitly contains (though yet to be made explicit) in Dr.Kozma's far reaching statement. The issue of lack of space and shutting the eligible young men and young women from pursuing higher studies is rampant in Sri Lanka since 1970s or so and may be found in some form in other parts of the Third world; or possibly a common challenge being faced by universities the world over. The Reverend Sun Myung Moon's revelations pertaining to global issues are

rightly appropriate here: "A human being has both a physical body with material desires and material senses and a spiritual self with spiritual desires and spiritual senses. The world is nothing but an extension of the human being with these two-fold aspects; in other words, the interrelationship of human beings with their two-fold aspects determines the order within societies and among nations."(2) That is to say, peace and order within societies are lost, ipso facto we are lost indeed. So the issue to which we plunge into here may not necessarily be a localized one in any way. It has however developed into a crisis level in Sri Lanka which is substantiated as follows:

It has been found that of those who are qualified to

pursue higher education, about 25% only gain admission to university faculties.(3) Of the others, a relatively small percentage seeks admission to various other mid level certificate programmes or obtain employment. As such, a large number complete their 13 years of schooling and are unable either to continue their education at such formal institutes as

university or university college or obtain employment. That groves of Academe need to be kept open for them. It is desirable that these needs have to be met to some extent early, should alienation-reduction be our key aim pertaining to 75% of the qualified young men and young women noted just now. In the sequel I shall make explicit, in brief, the nature of their 13 years of schooling together with how reasonably we, academics could meet this challenge. A comprehensive solution is certainly not possible; yet an easing-out is what is attempted here. To put it differently, the world over, as aptly noted by Dr. Kozma, challenges in this context are nearly the same, though solutions should be different.

EXISTING OPPORTUNITY FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION OUTSIDE RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The system of formal education in Sri Lanka as at present comprises the school system encompassing 13 years of compulsory schooling. The breakdown of the 13 years in school is as follows: (i) An open-access span of 11 years for every child of

school-going age. Entry to the open-access span is at year 1 on completing 05 years of age on January 31 of the year of admission. At the end of 11 years of schooling, children are expected to sit the General Certificate of Education (ordinary level) examination.

ii) On the performance of this examination, children are selected to follow a two-year course in years 12 and 13 at the end of which they are expected to sit the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) examination. Entry to a university faculty depends strictly on the higher credits earned in this examination; and the stiff competition to enter makes 75% of the eligible candidates being debarred from gaining admission. The pivot on which my thesis in this paper revolves around is the concept of 75% of the eligible candidates, though satisfy the said advanced level requirements yet being kept aside for lack of space in the existing universities. Their alienation and frustration need no mention. It is the operative cut-off point schemes adopted by universities that make these qualified young men and young women being debarred from gaining admission to a

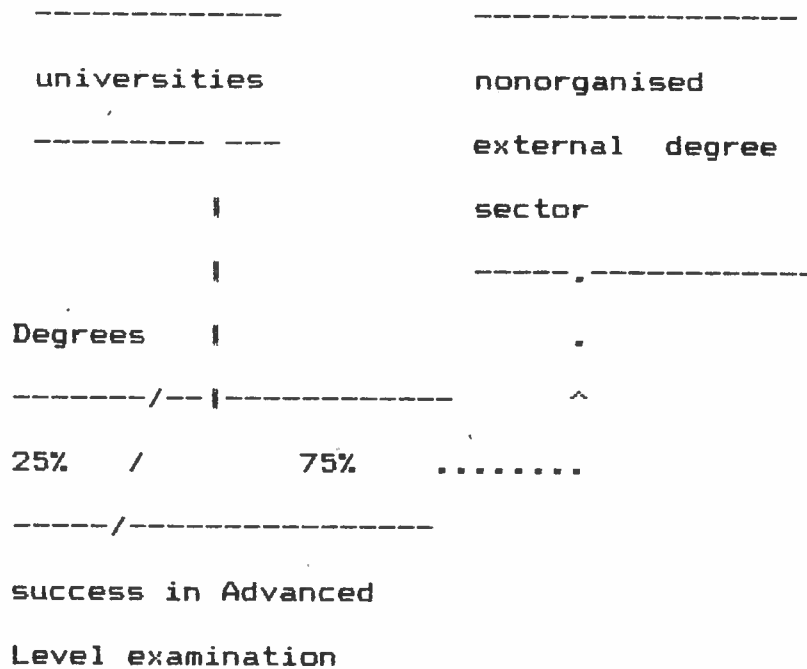
university faculty. With reference to Sri Lanka, the following grim statistics point to an emerging serious problem. It is as follows:

year 1990: population in Sri Lanka:	16.9 million
the younger generation below the age of 21 years -----	08.5 million
Sat General Certificat of Education, advanced level (all streams)	149000
Satisfied requirements for eligibility to <u>gain admission</u> to a university faculty (gross)-----	34491
Gained admission to a university faculty (net)-----	07152
Did not gain admission-----	27339
% of net admission -----	20.73%
year 1988/89: % of net admission -----	20.67%
year 1987/88: % of net admission -----	25.86% (4)

As such, statistics cry out for a much fair accommodation for these very unfortunate young men and young women who are in this plight not because of a serious fault in them but because of the rigid system now in operation. That avenues of higher education need to be kept open for them also. Only a few of them wish to get for gainful employment or middle level certificate-programmes or mangagement, technical, commercial, agricultural programmes.

The above data on these key ideas are diagrammatized as follows:

CHART 1.1



----- } |
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|
----- } |
middle level } |
certificated- } |
programmes, } |
management, } |
technical, } |
commercial, } |
agricultural } |
programmes ** } |
----- } |

----- |-----
General Certificate in
Education (Ordinary
Level) |
----- |-----

** basically negligible

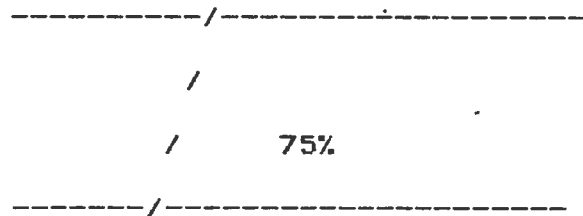
INNOVATIONS AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Presently, only one out of the eight universities in Sri Lanka, namely, the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, has even a nonorganized external degree section which conducts examinations only--(i) first examination in Arts and Sciences, and (ii) final examinations in Arts and Sciences. I depict it as "nonorganized" simply because it needs, sooner the better, (i) a formalized organization and (ii) a pleasant and congenial academic atmosphere for our eligible young men and young women.

For very little is accomplished should the future university degree holders lack character building and personality development. A kind of total development of the student--a human being-- must also be envisaged. The Reverend Sun Myung Moon rightly emphasizes this noble point: "Without the ultimate purpose, the human being cannot stand independently and even discover the right direction."(5)

We now go back to the suspended conceptual unit in the previous diagram, namely:

CHART 1.2



Should the existing nonorganized external degree sector as noted above be revamped, revitalized, reorganized and formalised, a good part of the suspended 75% could be redirected to continue their higher education and accomplish pleasant goals in their lives. But, then, (i) how do we set about the task? And (ii) why do we do it when there are eight universities already? We shall answer question no. (i) first, all the more so because it sheds illuminating light on towards preparing a logical base for an answer to question no. (i). The existing

universities, all in all,¹³ cannot cope with all the young men and young women who satisfy criteria laid down by the advanced level examination. Therefore, universities have adopted admission-criteria in addition to examination-criteria. Avenues of higher education, ipso facto, remain shut to about 75% eligible candidates who satisfy examination-criteria only. To put the point yet more explicitly, assuming that a candidate who scores an aggregate of 241 marks in a given advanced level examination, to a great extent satisfies both examination-criteria as well as admission-criteria of a university. But a candidate who scores an aggregate of 240 (just 01 mark less) for instance, may satisfy examination-criteria only as the cut-off point happens to be an aggregate of 241. As such, he or she is denied a placement in a university faculty in Sri Lanka. All the more so because of his or her failure to satisfy both criteria stipulated-- (i) examination and admission. From a glance, it appears that universities should not be blamed for this sombre state of affairs; for the epidemic of unrestrained population growth has outstripped the available avenues of higher education. But there is

an expressively significant point which is directed against the university. That is, the contemporary university in any post-colonial nation-state is a costly unit for the state coffers. Over the years, a key sub-unit called 'administration' has grown in most universities in post-colonial university system which was/is costing a lot money owing to unnecessary expenditure being incurred on automatic office equipment, vehicles for university officers, secretaries, storage facility, etc. The so called university 'administration,' inter alia, is a white elephant, yet retained in its most expensive present form, probably to satisfy a set of false values. Should funds be diverted away from 'administration' to enlighten and enlarge the existing university academic section, its blessing is beyond description. This is possible only after enlightening as to the very nature of the existing set of false values in the society at large. It is certainly not impossible though painfully difficult. The view is still very much in its early stages but it is a good start indeed.

While entertaining these two views about 'university' in Sri Lanka, now I turn to question no.

(i) raised above: "How do we set about the task of creating extra avenues for the suspended 75% to continue their precious higher education? This is a very progressive and creative question which if dealt with meaningfully, can immensely contribute a great deal towards alleviation of alienation and hopelessness amongst those qualified young men and young women. Should the situation remain as it is, namely, a denial of alternative avenues for furthering their higher education and accomplishment of their cherished goals, the following is reminded: "The proverbial man who fell from the tree only to be butted by the proverbial ox." A soothing remedy is highly desirable. Professor Kozma rightly notes the point: "The real challenge of the universities is their relation to politics. In other words, whether or not they can contribute to the future of the world, and if so, on what basis."(6)

Ipsa facto, it is emphasized that all universities not only in Sri Lanka but also in other parts of the world need to open up alternative avenues for their qualified young men and young women to pursue higher studies by way of faculties of external

degree programmes. Academic Deans have to head these faculties. The work in these faculties is not only challenging but also exciting. All the more so because students who enrol in these faculties are but external undergraduates. Inter alia, they cannot be given the option to follow lectures or evade them as is the case in residential university faculties. That is to say, the token of excellence of an internal undergraduate entails lectures, tutorials and guided examinations; this is not the hall mark of an external undergraduate. In this exercise of expanding tertiary education, clear distinction has to be made between the two models of tertiary education, viz., one placing emphasis on imparting theoretical knowledge by the component of lectures and tutorials and the other on imparting theoretical knowledge in a less expensive way taking a longer period of time. It leads, thereby, to a host of counter pressures but certainly obeying no single logic. As such a tinge of flexibility is logically contained together with an avoidance of bursting the bounds. The concept of a residential university, to a great extent is a model reminiscent of prestigious British universities,

however, is on the decline, inter alia, due to its failure to deal competently with the problem of accommodation of large qualified numbers, who wish to pursue some kind of higher education. A recipe prescribing some kind of flexibility of courses offered together with a longer period of time for a student to accomplish his or her lifelong ambition, namely, obtaining one's university degree, is recommended.

The proposed university external degree faculty performing its duties very differently from its residential university counterpart suggests not only erosions but also promotions. As we are already aware of its well defined deviation, so we now concentrate only on its promotional aspects. They are as follows:

PROMOTIONAL ASPECTS

(i) It is desirable to give share of a grove of Academe or university faculty, though ceremonial aspects are axed. But, then, how do we set about the task? Obviously, the difference between secondary education and tertiary one has to be noted, and

promoted also. The existing external sector fails here and, therefore, a supplement is suggested. That is an introduction of a concept of an intensive teaching programme so designed to show the external undergraduates some significant guidelines towards organoizing their respective academic activity.

(ii) This programme, in general, comprises the following: (a) short term week-end programmes to be held during university long vacations. This recommendation is amply justified by the following statistics of the existing External Degree sector of the university of Peradeniya:

CHART 1.3

First examination in Arts Qualifying

year	number sat	passes	% of passes
1984	4049	353	08.71
1987	6725	336	04.99
1990	14988 (results to be released)(7)		

Highlighted here is the poor examination performances of the external undergraduates.

(iii) After winning their respective independence from colonial powers, the Third World countries, inclusive of Sri Lanka, quickly adopted their national languages as official languages. In Sri Lanka, ominously, quality volumes in the official language are hard to come by; the situation gets worsen by the year also; hence written local material in the forms of handouts, guide lines, tutorials, seminar papers, possibly books (paper editions) must be available for use by the undergraduates. As such, it is highly suggestive that provision be made to establish printing units to facilitate reproduction of the above material for use by the external undergraduates. The responsibility of preparation of these items should be with academics themselves, under the supervision of the academic Deans.

The recommendation above has the vigour to enhance their performances while giving some kind of psychological satisfaction pertaining to their university career. As such, reduction of aliention amongst eligible young men and young women is also attained, considerably,

CONCLUSION: A SOLUTION via RIGHT APPROACH

In the text, I addressed myself to a problem which has arisen in higher education in Sri Lanka with substantial statistics wherever necessary to highlight it. Similar problems in the context of higher education may have arisen in the world over although not yet made explicit sufficiently. Ipsa facto, contemporary research on higher education has to move into an area of discourse or language-game involving not so much the conditions as one of contents of higher education. The central theme in my conference draft thereby is made consistent with Professor Dr. Tamas Kozma's text, namely, "The Modern University in Transition." In it he notes: "From a brief overview of the topics of on-going research on higher education, it becomes clear that contemporary scholarship is mainly concerned with the conditions rather than the contents of higher education."(8) The issue is of wide distribution, possibly global, and, therefore, absolutistic in form. By implication, the concept of a new value system and a new world culture

1988, 1989.

Colombo, Sri Lanka: 31

4. Ibid: 1991: 31

5. "Absolute Values and the Reassessment of the Contemporary

World," (op. cit.): 32

6. "The Modern University in Transition": (op. cit.): 2

7. University of Peradeniya, Faculty Board, 58th Meeting: Peradeniya, Sri Lanka: 1990.

8. "The Modern University in Transition:" (op. cit.): 3.

SYNOPSISDISINTEGRATION OF RESIDENTIAL UNIVERSITYCONCEPT AND EXTERNAL DEGREE FACULTY

The residential university concept, inherited from the colonial masters, has now begun to disintegrate in Sri Lanka. It has also been sounded that similar issues possibly occur in other parts of the world. Some on-going researches appear pointing remarks in this regard. In the context of Sri Lanka, the limited residential university fails to accommodate 75% of the eligible young men and young women who satisfy examination-criteria in the appropriate examinations. As such, to us academics, whose key purpose is but imparting knowledge to all those who are eligible, this is an exciting challenge; locally as well as globally. But, then, as the residential university is shut to those eligible, they are not only engulfed in but are also alienated. A genuine problem is posed to which not so much a comprehensive solution is sought as one of right approach. That is an extension of higher education via External university faculties, characteristic of flexibility, different from rigid

residential university faculties. Thereby a reduction of alienation amongst our eligible young men and young women is sought together with quenching of thirst for knowledge, to a great extent. By implication, this programme, inter alia, should implicitly contain such course-areas as absolute ethics and absolute value systems together with an emphasis on practice of these proper values.