

An Architectural Perfection for University Education

**Representing Academic Governing
Council, NSBM Green University**

Senior Professor Sudantha Liyanage

Vice Chancellor, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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n academic with vast knowledge and over three decades of experience in academia, Prof. Sudantha Liyanage is the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. He obtained his B.Sc. Special degree in Chemistry at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and his PhD in Synthetic Inorganic Chemistry from the University of Wales, Cardiff, the United Kingdom, in 1996. Prof Liyanage is also the recipient of Post-Doctoral Research

Fellowships from the University of Cardiff, UK and the University of Ibaraki, Japan. He has been serving as a member of the Governing Council of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura from 2010 to date.



What is your perspective on the role of NSBM Green University as a higher education institute in Sri Lanka?

In the Sri Lankan education system, it is a known fact that both general education and higher education are entirely free of charge. Consequently, I believe that a dearth exists in relation to opportunities available in the higher education sector. Honestly speaking, more than a hundred and fifty thousand students are eligible to enter universities annually, passing the G.C.E. They advanced Level examination. The discrepancy here is, though it is assumed that there are equal opportunities for the school leavers to enter a state university, the reality unveils that only a limited number of students are fortunate to pursue higher education at the state universities in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, with a demi-justifiable formula like z-score, sometimes excellent performers fail to succeed in the competition to access tertiary education. Therefore, when considering all the aforementioned justifications, I strongly aspire to the development of non-state sector higher education institutes/ universities.



At present, twenty-three non-government institutes are provided with the degree awarding status in our country. Among them, undeniably, NSBM Green University is one of the best leading universities which caters to undergraduate requirements, benefiting them with an all-encompassing university experience. In contrast, many of the other non-state sector institutes in our country usually begin their journey at a rented building and continue their service giving much prominence to education in terms of academics. The uniqueness of NSBM lies here as Green University envelopes all sorts of facilities, ranging from academics to extra-curricular activities, which ultimately result in producing career-ready professionals who have the potentials to compete in the modern job market. As a matter of fact, NSBM, from its initial step, thrived on providing a holistic university experience to young adults. Especially, I am pleased to witness the astounding infra-structure facilities at NSBM that have led the way to transform a typical higher

education institute into a world-class university. Adding to that point, I believe NSBM undergraduates are well privileged, as even in state universities, some faculties are not on par with the status of the Green University. So, as per my insights, this could be the top secret behind the ceaseless high demand for NSBM. When students are facilitated with everything they require, the Green University automatically becomes the spotlight among other higher education institutes.

What is your standpoint on the initiative taken by NSBM to emerge as a higher education institute in Sri Lanka?

If we look at the Sri Lankan education system, it is obvious that less opportunities are there for students who face the A/L examination in the Commerce stream. Nevertheless, in other streams like physical science and arts, many students receive the opportunity to enter the state universities. The interesting point

here is, despite the fact that a huge competition is there in the Commerce stream, the demand for the Commerce subjects is surprisingly increasing day by day. The statistics from the previous year's G.C.E. A/L results best prove this idea. Therefore, at the onset of its opening, NSBM Green University appeared as an invaluable platform to provide a solution to this deep-seated concern which has been there since the past. As there are less opportunities for Commerce students in the government sector universities still, I admire NSBM's practical approach taken at the right time.

How can you comment on the current status of NSBM?

A university is discerned as a multifarious institution comprising of different graduate and professional schools that confers a plethora of degree programmes in various fields of study. This is a predominant feature that should be reflected in the university culture. NSBM's efforts

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in pooling and upgrading physical and human resources and social infrastructure have a tremendous impact on creating a live university culture. All things considered, I believe that NSBM is now on par with the state universities in Sri Lanka. Similarly, as far as the world rankings are concerned, NSBM Green University is swiftly moving up in the rank list. It is enthralling to say that NSBM is already maintaining high standards in both academic and non-academic activities to form stellar graduates. Along these lines, NSBM should continue to strive for perfection in quality.

What are your recommendations for the future of NSBM? How can it help to redefine the Sri Lankan Higher Education System in an international context?

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that there is a “vacuum” in Sri Lankan higher education. So, it is

of paramount importance to cater to this by bridging any gaps in the teaching-learning process. My advice here is, both teacher quality and teaching quality should be earnestly taken into consideration. I believe NSBM should now focus more on strategies such as modifying the curriculum and upgrading the quality of human resources. In my opinion, NSBM should further concentrate on improving its rankings as it can be used as a valuable marketing insight. With the introduction of the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF), now all the state universities are working towards ameliorating the quality of the Sri Lankan higher education system.

Furthermore, most international universities now calculate both staff-to-student ratio and doctorate-to-bachelor's ratio when assessing different aspects of quality. So, I believe now it is high time for NSBM to start working on converting all the lecturers into PhD holders. In this endeavour, NSBM could subscribe to government scholarship positions and discuss the possibility of

getting PhD placements for young lecturers at NSBM with its affiliated universities. That can also be a great initiative to promote the research culture at NSBM.

What is the message that you would like to extend on the 5th anniversary of NSBM?

As a very senior academic, I am beyond elated to witness the massive progress of NSBM. Although NSBM has commenced the journey from the Faculty of Business, the university stepped towards immense success with the gradual development of its other faculties; Faculty of Computing, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Science. Most importantly, I am impressed to witness the progression of many more novel faculties in its second phase. With the expansion of the university's second phase, NSBM has taken another commendable step towards advancing towards success. In my opinion, the initiative to provide hostel facilities for both boys and girls will be a great benefit for the students.

I also really appreciate the efforts of NSBM in rendering quality service to the young generation of the country. NSBM is already showing signs of significant improvements in the time to come. That is largely manifested in the current student population of the university. With the new faculties opening up at the university, I believe it will unfasten the latches of many new doors for those who want to quench their thirst for learning. Thus, I am pretty sure that NSBM will soon become one of the top-class universities in the world. ■

By Gishan Abhayagunaratna and Isuri Caldera