Higher Education In The UK: Nurturing Skills To Achieve Ambitions



Kalpanee Gunawardana is professional model and the Proprietor of Kanmaych, an enterprise that provides custom-made corporate packaging solutions.

A lifelong ambition to be an entrepreneur, Kalpanee Gunawardana says, was nurtured at The University of Bristol in the UK. There she was actively involved in the University of Bristol Enterprise Society and the Bristol University Business Angels (BUBA), a company run by students with support from the University. As she learned the fundamental tenets of entrepreneurship, it became the platform that transformed her ideas into success.

Kalpanee received her primary and part of her secondary education at Museaus College, Colombo, before she joined Stafford International School to pursue her Advanced Level studies. She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Bristol in 2009.

A degree in Law, according to Kalpanee is relevant to all fields of work and hence transferrable, and has in fact helped her understand many legal aspects of operating in the corporate sector.

Her residency at the University of Bristol was life-changing. “I was quiet and demure when I joined the University. The process that made me a confident woman is priceless. While the standard of education at the University was of the highest quality, the greatest impact was in instilling the belief that I can do anything. The confidence I gained at the University has helped me share my business ideas positively and with conviction.”

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Kalpanee was determined to pursue her goal in Sri Lanka. Being always interested in socially driven causes and enterprises, her desire was to invest in a social enterprise that balances the twin ethos of benefitting society and the environment, in this case artisans, while generating a profit.

“My entry into an industry that involves established artisans and the bureaucracy was quite a formidable experience. It was a long learning curve of interacting with State agencies and artisans. Fortunately, studying in the UK held me in good stead, as I was able to balance the two different business settings. The University of Bristol is not a traditional Business School, but the administration provides a tremendous amount of resources to engender entrepreneurship among students.”

An entrepreneur and a professional model as well, Kalpanee believes that her degree from a UK university has also positively impacted her view on work. As an

educated woman, her foray into modelling is thus, shaped by her desire to change the stereotypical representation of beauty in Sri Lanka. In addition, the exposure she received at university, also inspired Kalpanee to launch Kaneve, a venture that provides Ushers and Guest Relations Coordinators for events. It is a part-time option for the youth of Sri Lanka.

With the invaluable lessons learned through her education, Kalpanee believes that she has succeeded in differentiating her work from the traditional trajectory of doing business, while being able to passionately pursue her dream of being a socially responsible entrepreneur.

