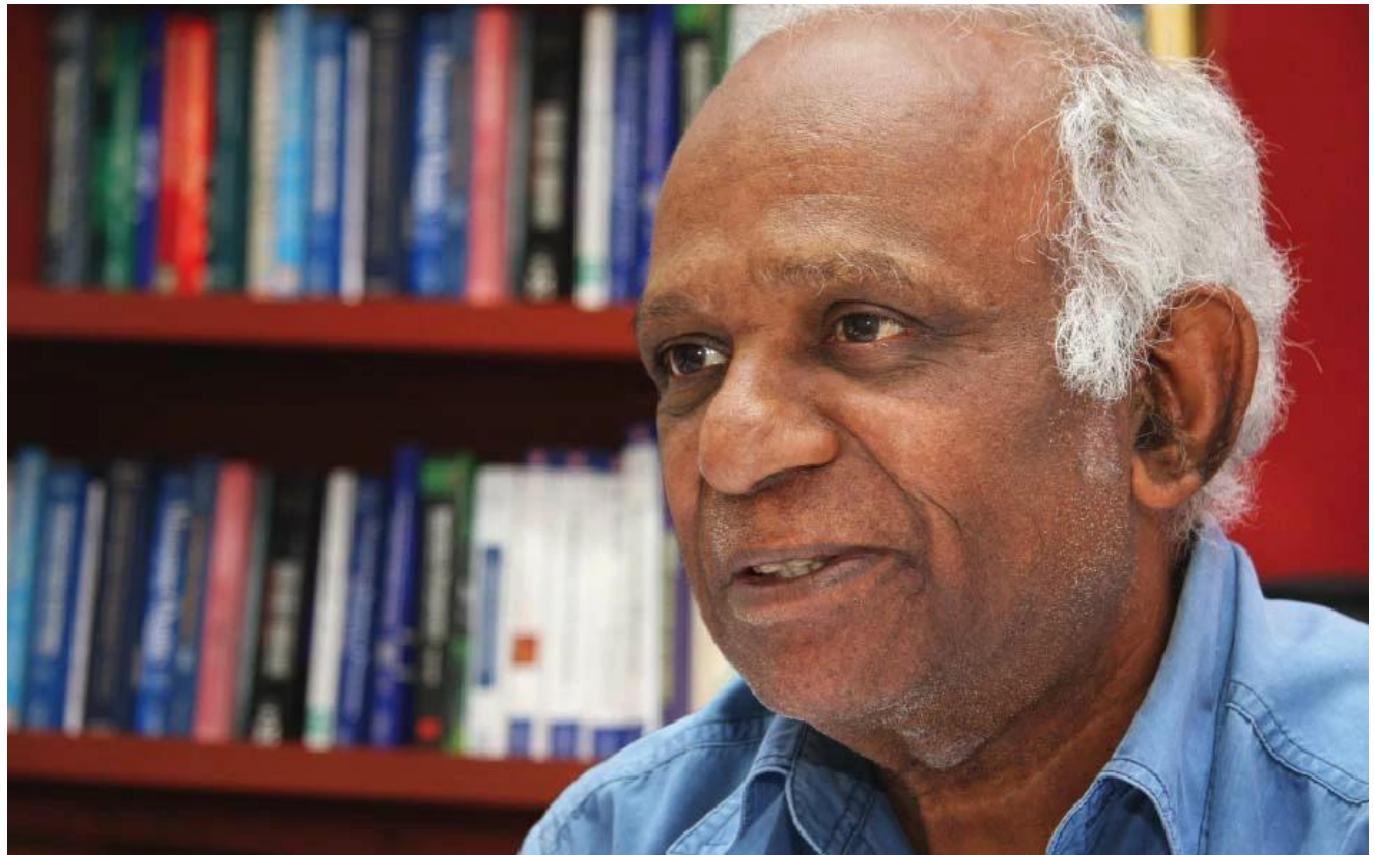


Imperial Institute Of Higher Education: AN EDUCATION PAR EXCELLENCE

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By Prasadini Nanayakkara

Founded in 1996 the Imperial Institute of Higher Education provides tertiary education of indisputable standards. This is evident through the views shared by Dr Thilak Weerakoon, CEO/Academic Director of the Institute, which are reflected in the Institute's doctrine of a quality assured well-rounded education. "One of the

most important things for anybody who is pursuing higher education in Sri Lanka is to make sure you are enrolling in a programme which is recognised internationally so that the time and the money that you are spending is worthwhile." states Dr Thilak Weerakoon, adding that a prospective student should conduct adequate research on any institute prior to enrollment.

The programmes offered currently at the Imperial Institute of Higher Education (IIHE) at the Undergraduate level are the BSc (Hons) in Business Management (with specialisations in Human Resource Management, Marketing and Finance) and the BSc (Hons) in Computing with Software Engineering and Management. At the post graduate level IIHE offers an MBA with specialisations in Marketing, Finance and Human Resources Management. These are all Internal Degrees of The University of Wales.

The significant difference between IIHE and other education institutes is the foolproof validation system that is the basis of the degrees offered. This is to ensure that the courses are of the identical standard offered by the University of Wales, which is assured by the direct involvement of the University. The setting of question papers, marking of question papers and assignments are all subjected to scrutiny of the examiners of the University who spend a number of days at the institute to serve this purpose.

Every aspect related to the Institute's academia is carried out with the approval of the University of Wales including recruitment of faculty and even placing of advertisements calling for student enrollments. "If you go on to the Wales University Website it lists Imperial Institute of Higher Education as the only institution they are associated with in Sri Lanka for BSc. (Management & Computing) programmes & MBAs", says Dr Thilak Weerakoon as a direct affirmation of this affiliation.

The teaching methods offered at the Institute are designed to reinforce skills beyond knowledge development to produce graduates prepared to take on the job market. "Our graduates are absolutely employable without any training, which is why all our graduates have been recruited by Blue chip companies of Sri Lanka immediately after graduation and even before graduation." says Dr Weerakoon.

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In their final year, students undertake a real life problem-solving project. After 14

weeks of study a report by the students is presented to the company's Board of Directors and evaluated as a part of the degree programme. "No graduate has waited more than a couple of weeks to get a job. That is the endorsement of the quality of the programme and the employability of the graduate." says Dr Weerakoon.

In the second semester students are also required to conduct seminars in marketing or finance where a company may be set up, to market a product and make profits. In one such instance the students made profits of Rs 1.5 million within 14 weeks. This, they donated to charity giving an indication of the well-rounded professionals with CSR values, moulded at the institute.

The numerous presentations students have to conduct throughout the years develop necessary soft skills apart from the technical knowledge acquired. What sets the IIHE graduates apart from others is also due to the dissertation they have to submit in their final year. A culmination of their studies, here again the students endeavour to seek a solution to a problem faced by the society through scientific research methodology.

The MBA programme also requires the completion of a dissertation. "That makes a big difference and matures them to a level of managers to think rationally and objectively." says Dr Weerakoon stressing its importance.

With 300-400 students enrolled at present at various stages of the programmes the Institute also hopes to launch new courses including Masters courses in Marketing and Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) within the next year. Another course of interest that the Institute hopes to launch in April of this year is the Foundation Course. In order to enable students to enroll in degree programmes on time, which is hindered due to results of national courses such as the Advanced Level Examinations not being released on time, the foundation course hopes to act as an equivalent. A one-year intensive course, the foundation course will enable students to gain admission to any university in the UK. This course will also be validated by the University of Wales and will also have the versatility to give students the added advantage of employability.

The Institute will also be launching a part time programme of the well tested BSc in Business Studies. This will enable those already in the work force to enroll in the degree programme while continuing employment. Moving away from the academics, additional future plans of the Institute include the launch of

management training and also programmes in the area of ICT. An education complete in all aspects imaginable the Institute stands resolutely on its affirmed high standards. Of the scores of graduates with business and management degrees that pass out each year the well rounded graduates of Imperial Institute of Higher education venture into the work force a few steps ahead of the rest.

