



CEYLON  
ASSOCIATION OF  
SHIPPING AGENTS

**BRIDGE**  
February 2018 1<sup>st</sup> Edition

## **Introducing Logistics Education in Schools**



**Dr. Lalith Edirisinghe**

### **Logistics**

Do you love high definition smart TVs, comfortable furniture, and fast cars? Do you pay on-line and expect your new mobile phone or your dream sound system to reach your home tomorrow (if not today)? Do you order the best flowers or the most expensive cake for your daughter on her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday to be delivered at the right time while you are thousand miles away from home? Who makes these difficult tasks possible for you? How does produce get to your grocery store? How do meat and seafood reach your meat counter? Just imagine a world where nothing is delivered or transported between places. Not only is logistics vitally important to the distribution industry, it has made distribution prompt and efficient. Without logisticians (of course supported by the

modern technology) we'd be living in the dark ages – literally, thus it is imperative that logistics plays a prominent part in every aspect of modern life. Therefore, it is logical to improve the knowledge and competence of the future generations in logistics industry. This phenomenon is highly relevant to Sri Lanka considering its relatively poor ranking in the logistics performance indicator (LPI) published by the world Bank. In other words, 'logistics quality and competence' of Sri Lanka is ranked at 67 out of 167 countries based on results across four editions namely, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. Given the strategic geographic positioning and national vision to make the country a 'logistics hub' such ranking and a paradoxical global perception may create a serious impediment. Therefore, it is timely to explore ways and means to mitigate such deficiencies due to lack of logistics competence through short, medium, and long-term strategies.

### **Education in Sri Lanka**

Education is an essential element of competency. Logistics education in Sri Lanka is only open to students at tertiary level in the education system. Handful of state and private universities conduct undergraduate degrees in logistics transport, shipping and supply chain management. In addition, there are some certificate level programs and diploma courses being offered by few professional institutes. Logistics is a vital part of any business model as it controls the flow and storage of goods into and out of a business. Irrespective of the efforts on financing, manufacturing and marketing of an organization, the logistics management is responsible for satisfying the ultimate demands of customers. As mentioned in the beginning of this article it is the logistician who makes the most perplexing tasks of making the entire process practically possible and creating the visibility into a company's supply chain.

A decade ago there were hardly any academically or professionally qualified people in the logistics and supply chain management sector in Sri Lanka. However, with gradual penetration of undergraduate degree holders in logistics and transport sector now the organizations have realized the multiple advantages of recruiting qualified people to these specific jobs. The students that follow four years honours degree in relevant subjects usually attend a six months internship training in the same field and then write their thesis before their graduation. Accordingly, the graduates who successfully complete their four-year full-time education are 'work ready' and add a lot of value to their organization and to the industry. If this positive contribution could be objectively enhanced through a policy level approach in the country's education system, it will help raising the LPI rank of Sri Lanka. Education progressively demands knowledge and preparation for work, but it is also important for social image or status. Education is increasingly important not only for the growing demand of technology, science and other fields, but also for improving individuals' prospects, hence gaining better opportunities for employment [1]

In several countries, Vocational Education and Training (VET) could be attended either at the secondary level, at the post-secondary or at the tertiary level. It was noted that some countries namely, Austria, Czech Republic and Germany, encourage pre-vocational education as an option at lower secondary school. Depending on the organization of education systems in each country,