

REPORT OF THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON THE EDUCATION OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: REPORT ON MINI-LAUNCH IN SRI LANKA

The launch was held on 8 June 2012, at HARTI Auditorium, 114 Wijerama Mawatha, Colombo 7 under the joint sponsorship of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka (NASSL) and the Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists (FOSME). It was attended by 76 participants from the higher education and health sectors as well as reporters from two national television channels (see Annex 1).

The meeting was inaugurated with lighting of the traditional oil-lamp. Dr Kingsley de Alwis, President NASSL, delivered the welcome address and explained the purpose of the meeting. Prof Malkanthi Chandrasekera then spoke briefly on behalf of Prof Gamini Samaranyake, Chairman UGC, regarding the role of the UGC in Higher Education in Sri Lanka.

Professor Arjuna Aluwihare, Fellow NASSL, and ex-UGC Chairman, then presented the report and highlighted its main points: the need for setting up the Commission; its major findings; and the recommendations in the report regarding reforms for a second century of health professions education around the world. He was followed by Prof Lai-Meng Looi, Co-Chair of the Inter Academy Medical Panel (IAMP), who addressed the gathering via a Skype link, and spoke on the role of the IAMP and national science academies in disseminating the Report of the Global Commission.

In the next session, Prof Malkanthi Chandrasekera, member of the UGC, spoke of the role of universities in the education of health professionals in Sri Lanka, while Dr Jayasundara Bandara, Deputy Director General Health Services, spoke of the role of the Health Ministry in the education of Health Professionals and the need for engaging in this along with the universities. In the final session for the morning, Dr Gominda Ponnampuruma (FOSME Council Member), spoke on transformative learning in the context of the Report of the Global Commission.

In the post-lunch session, participants gathered in two groups to discuss the findings of the report and the lessons that it may contain for Sri Lanka. In the final plenary session for the day, the two groups reported back on their deliberations. The main points were as follows:

1. The principal issues that need to be dealt with are:
 - a. Curricula for health professions education are fragmented;
 - b. The training of health professionals is largely hospital-oriented;
 - c. There is a high level of compartmentalization between professions (identified in the Report as 'tribalism').
 - d. Equity in distribution of health services

2. The Ministry of Health needs to develop a long-term vision of the health services required by Sri Lanka and work together with the universities to develop a work force that can turn this vision into reality. The job descriptions for Health Ministry personnel can serve as the basis on which competency-based curricula are developed in order to produce professionals who will best meet the needs of the country. This resonates with proposed reform no 1 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Adopt a competency based curriculum').
3. Educational institutions and study programmes need to be developed in order to facilitate the training of many different categories of health personnel in a harmonious manner, through the adoption of common training modules. This will also work towards reducing the extreme compartmentalization and tribalism that exists at present between different categories of professionals in the health sector. This would be a first step towards implementation of proposed reform no 2 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Promote interprofessional and transprofessional education').
4. It is necessary to adopt innovative, interactive teaching/learning methods including IT based learning. The extent to which distance learning can reduce the scarcity of resources and facilitate inter professional learning and lateral entry needs to be explored. This resonates with proposed reform no 3 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Exploit the power of IT for learning').
5. The Health Ministry should seek to involve the UGC's Standing Committee on Medical and Dental Sciences in relevant areas of the 5-year plan that is being currently drawn up by the Ministry, so that there is joint planning for the future. This resonates with proposed reform no 7 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Establish joint planning mechanisms').
6. There is a pressing need to upgrade the education of para-medical personnel, in such as way that study programmes combine the scientific basis of the profession with practical training, in an optimal manner. This could be done by affiliating the current Health Ministry training institutions to universities, and by encouraging the development of networks of institutions rather than stand-alone, solitary institutions. This resonates with proposed reform 9 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Link through networks, alliances and consortia').
7. Changing curricula to introduce transformative learning, particularly through the use of reflective practice and portfolios, is not easy because it needs re-training of staff, but it can be done. The use of portfolios has already been introduced in some of the newer study programmes; the practice needs to gain much more widespread acceptance. This resonates with proposed reform no 10 of the Report of the Global Commission ('Nurture a culture of critical inquiry').
8. The selection of students for admission to training programmes based purely on the results of the GCE Advanced Level examination as done at present for university

degrees, is not satisfactory. Selected students must have other attributes which are not well identified by GCE AL examination results alone.

9. Curricula need to move away from being almost entirely hospital-oriented, to serving the health needs of the community as a whole. The necessary corollary is that the health needs need to be identified in an active and dynamic way- and the competencies to deal with these, need to be identified. Then the curricula have to change as often as necessary to produce personnel with the competencies needed to deal with the health needs. A wide range of training settings must be employed, including primary care settings, peripheral health care institutions and the community for training.
10. There needs to be regulated public-private partnerships in training of health professionals

The participants recommended that immediate follow-up action should be as follows:

1. Copies of the Global Commission's report should be sent by post to all those who were invited to participate in the mini-launch, together with the report on the mini-launch. Recipients should be asked for their views on the report and the recommendations, and such comments should be compiled for further follow-up action.
2. The Deans of Medical Faculties should be invited to one or more, smaller, more informal meetings that take up the recommendations listed above, so that there is on-going dialogue and deliberation on these matters.



Dr Kingsley de Silva, President NASSL lighting the oil lamp at the inauguration



Dr Jayasundara Bandara, Deputy Director General Health Services, lighting the oil lamp



Dr Kingsley de Silva delivering the welcome address



Prof Malkanthi Chandrasekera speaking on the role of the UGC in Higher Education in Sri Lanka



Prof Arjuna Aluwihare presenting the report on the Education of Health Professionals for the 21st Century



Group discussion on lessons to be learnt from the Report, in relation to Sri Lanka



Final plenary session with presentation of deliberation at group discussions

Annex 1. List of participants

1	Dr.Kingsley De Alwis President National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka	2	Prof. Arjuna Aluvihare Representative National Academy of Sciences of Sri Lanka
3	Prof. Malkanthi Chandrasekera Member University Grants Commission	4	Dr. Jayasundara Bandara Deputy Director General (Dental Services) Ministry of Health
5	Prof. Nilanthi De Silva President Forum of Sri Lanka Medical Educationists	6	Prof. Upul B. Disssanayake Dean, Faculty of Dental Sciences Peradeniya
7	Dr. Gominda Ponnampereuma Senior Lecturer/ Medical Education Development and Research Centre University of Colombo	8	Prof. Mohan De Silva Dean, Faculty of Medicine University of Sri Jayawardenepura
9	Prof. A.R. Wickramasinghe Dean, Faculty of Medicine University of Kelaniya	10	Prof. K. Sivapalan Dean Faculty of Medicine University of Jaffna
11	Dr. Sampath Gunawardena Dean Faculty of Medicine University of Ruhuna	12	Dr. K.E. Karunakaran Dean, Faculty of Healthcare Sciences Eastern University of Sri Lanka
13	Prof. T.R. Weerasooriya Dean, Faculty of Medicine Kotalawala Defence University	14	Prof. P.T. Jayawickramarajah Dept. of Medical Education & Research Faculty of Healthcare Sciences, Eastern University of Sri Lanka
15	Mr. T. Sathaananthan Dept of Medical Education and Research Faculty of Healthcare Sciences, Eastern University of Sri Lanka	16	Dr. K. Arulanandem Primary Health Care Faculty of Healthcare Sciences, Eastern University of Sri Lanka
17	Dr. I.V. Devasiri Faculty of Medicine University of Ruhuna	18	Dr. Avindra Jayawardena Faculty of Medicine University of Ruhuna
19	Dr. K.D. Mahinda Faculty of Medicine, University of Sri Jayawardenepura	20	Prof. S.G. Yasawardena Dept of Anatomy, Faculty of Medical Sciences University of Sri Jayawardenepura

21	Prof. Saman Gunathilake Dept of Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences University of Sri Jayawardenepura	22	Prof. S. Sivayogan Department of Community Medicine, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayawardenepura
23	Dr. Rasika Perera	24	Prof. Carlo Fonseka President, Sri Lanka Medical Council
25	Dr. Ananda Hapugoda Member, Sri Lanka Medical Council	26	Dr. N.J. Nonis Registrar, Sri Lanka Medical Council
27	Dr. Thyahini Navarathnaraja Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists	28	Dr. Sisira Dharmarathne Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists
29	Dr. Rikaz Sheriff Forum of Sri Lankan Medical Educationists	30	Dr. Kithsiri Edirisinghe International Institute of Health Sciences
31	Ms. Mihiri Jansz International Institute of Health Sciences	32	Col P.T.R. Makuloluwa Senior Lecturer in Physiology Faculty of Medicine, Kotalawala Defence University
33	Dr. Indika Karunathilaka Faculty of Medicine University of Colombo	34	Prof. Nelun De Silva Professor of Microbiology Faculty of Medicine, South Asian Institute of Technology & Medicine
35	Dr. Nandalal Gunaratne Senior Lecturer, Department of Anatomy and Surgery Faculty of Medicine, South Asian Institute of Technology & Medicine	36	Dr. Keerthi Attanayake Senior Lecturer Department of Biochemistry Faculty of Medicine, South Asian Institute of Technology & Medicine
37	Dr. D.B.M. Wickremaratne Dean, Faculty of Allied Health Science, University of Peradeniya	38	Ms. M.H.F.Sakeena Lecturer/Department of Pharmacy Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya
39	Dr. (Mrs. S. Ambikaipakan Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Anatomy University of Jaffna	40	Mrs. D. Thabotharan Head/Allied Health Sciences Unit University of Jaffna
41	Prof. S.J.De S. Hewavisenthi Professor of Pathology, University of Kelaniya	42	Prof. H.T.C.S. Abeysena Head & Professor in Public Health University of Kelaniya.

43	Director, Nursing Public Health Services, Ministry of Health	44	Director, Nursing Medical Services, Ministry of Health
45	Director, Nursing Education, Ministry of Health	46	Principal, School of Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy, National Hospital Sri Lanka,
47	Director, Castle Street Hospital for Women, Colombo 8.	48	Director, Chest Hospital, Welisara.
49	Director, Teaching Hospital, Colombo North, Ragama	50	Director, Teaching Hospital, Karapitiya.
51	Director, Teaching Hospital, Jaffna.	52	Director, Teaching Hospital, Kandy.
53	Director, District General Hospital, Hambantota.	54	Director, District General Hospital, Kalutara.
55	Principal, Post Basic School of Nursing, Colombo 10.	56	Principal, School of Nursing, Sri Jayewardenepura,
57	Principal, School of Nursing, Kandana	58	Principal, School of Nursing, Rathnapura.
59	Principal, School of Nursing, Kandy.	60	Director General Hospital Polonnaruwa
61	President, Sri Lanka College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, No. 112, Model Farm Road, Col. 8	62	President, Ceylon College of Physicians, Rajagiriya.
63	Principal, School of Nursing, Matara.	64	Principal, School of Nursing, Hambantota.

65	Principal, School of Nursing, Ampara.	66	Director, Dental Institute, Maharagama
67	Director, Teaching Hospital, Batticaloa.	68	Director, District General Hospital, Nawalapitiya.
69	Director, District General Hospital, Matara.	70	Director, District General Hospital, Nuwara-eliya.
71	Prof. I Thabrew Member, National Academy of Sciences, Sri Lanka	72	President Sri Lanka Dental Association
73	Asst. Lecturer Sri Lanka Dental Association	74	Dr. Ruwan Jayasinghe Faculty of Dental Sciences University of Peradeniya
75	Dr. R Surenthirakumaran Actg. Head/Community & Family Medicine University of Jaffna	76	Dr. (Mrs) M.G. Sathiadas Head/Community & Family Medicine University of Jaffna