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DIMENSIONS OF 'QUALITY' IN THE CASE OF FOREIGN DEGREE AWARDING INSTITUTES OF SRI LANKA: A MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education,

The University of Auckland, 2015.

Abstract

The provision of quality higher education is of critical importance for the economy of a developing country like Sri Lanka. This research considering the quality issues of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka investigates the dimensions of quality in relation to these institutes from a multiple stakeholder perspective. The central argument of this thesis is that it is necessary to understand what constitutes as quality in order to improve it. Thus, the study is aimed to identify various understandings of quality in relation to these institutes and their consequences to various stakeholders of these institutes. The study identifies key definitions, purposes and practices associated with the term quality. The students' and the professionals' perceptions of how these institutes implement and maintain the key quality criteria and the key issues arriving from the various understandings of quality are also investigated from the receiver country's perspective.

The study adopted a mix of vertical case study and mixed methods approach and worked within a pragmatic paradigm. A questionnaire survey, semi structured interviews and documentary data served as sources of data. The perceptions of students, lecturers and senior managers of five selected foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka and the officials of three government higher education organizations were sought to achieve the research objectives.

The findings revealed a variety of definitions of quality and also various meanings to these definitions, indicating the elusive nature of quality. It was revealed that quality is shaped by external factors such as economy, culture, gender and social class. The different viewpoints of these stakeholders also created confusion, discrepancies and many challenges to quality in these institutes. The findings revealed that the quality of these institutes analysed are neither up to the standards of the government universities of Sri Lanka nor to the standards of their home universities. The way that some of these institutes studied, implemented and maintained quality did not resemble their claimed definitions, purposes and practices of quality, and these mismatches brought out several consequences to the stakeholder groups, while also making a negative impact on the higher education sector of Sri Lanka. The study provided recommendations to the key stakeholder groups to overcome these identified issues of quality.

Acknowledgements

“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it”

(William Arthur Ward)

This PhD journey was not a journey that I came alone and the people who accompanied me should be acknowledged and thanked. I would like to extend my profound gratitude to my supervisors Dr. John Hope and Associate Professor Eve Coxon for their expert guidance and encouragement. Completing this thesis would not have been possible without their advice and inspiration. I owe my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Roger Dale for providing me with scholarly advice and for enhancing my analytical thought. Dr Susan Carter, Dr. Barry White, Dr. Marion Blumenstein and Dr. David Pang of the Student Learning Services and the staff of the Graduate Centre of the University of Auckland also supported me in numerous ways and I truly value their assistance and kindness.

I thank all the participants of this study for sharing their valuable ideas. I am grateful to the staff of all the chosen institutes and the government organizations of this study for providing their assistance without any hesitation.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Dayantha de Silva and Mr. Amila Liyanage for their invaluable support and encouragement. Special thanks to Mrs. Olivia Sheehan, Mrs. Rachel Burrowes and Mr. Raashid Sudin for their encouragement, love and friendship. I would also thank Rev. Chandawimala, Professor Lakshman Jayathillake, Dr. Airini, Ms. Kamala Gamage, Dr. P.M.C. Thilakarathna and Professor Colin Peiris for their generosity and assistance.

I am deeply grateful to my loving parents, sisters and all other family members for their emotional support, love and encouragement.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iii
Table of Contents iv
Abbreviations x
Chapter 1 Background and Rationale of the Study 1
1.1 Background 1
1.2 Statement of the Research Problem and Rationale of the Study 2
1.3 Research Aims and Questions 8
1.4 Cross Border Higher Education as a Key Term 11
1.5 Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Key Themes 11
1.6 Overview of Research Methodology 16
1.7 Organization of the Thesis 17
Chapter 2 Literature Review 18
2.1 Introduction 18
2.2 What is Higher Education? 18
2.3 Defining Quality in Higher Education 20
2.3.1 Different Definitions 21
2.3.2 A holistic view of quality 25
2.4 Key Terminology : Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement 28
2.5 A Quality Improvement Model: The Deming Cycle 29
2.6 Criteria Leading to Priorities for quality 30
2.7 Purposes of Quality 33
2.8 Implementation of Priorities for Quality 34
2.9 Quality in the Sri Lankan Context 36
2.10 Key Issues and Possible Solutions 40
2.11 Basis for the Pressure Cooker Model 44
2.12 Public and Private Provision of Higher Education 46
2.13 Financing higher education 47
2.14 Nature of Cross Border Higher Education 49
2.14.1 The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Education 50
2.14.2 UNESCO/OECD (2005) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education 53

2.14.3 UNESCO-APQN Toolkit: 'Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education' 54
2.14.4 International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as a Tool for Improving Quality 55
2.15 Chapter Summary 56
Chapter 3 Background and Context of the Study 58
3.1 Introduction 58
3.2 Background of the Country 58
3.3 Overview of the Education System of Sri Lanka 60
3.4 Overview of Higher Education of Sri Lanka 63
3.5 Background to Private Higher Education of Sri Lanka 68
3.5.1 Overview of the Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka 68
3.6 Key Quality Initiatives 72
3.7. Chapter Summary 74
Chapter 4 Research Methodology 76
4.1 Introduction 76
4.2 Design of the Research Questions 76
4.3 Research Approaches 77
4.3.1 Why Case Study Methodology? 78
4.3.2 Generalisability: a Recurring Stated Limitation of Case Studies 81
4.3.3 Why a Mixed Methods Approach? 81
4.4 Pragmatism as a Philosophical Underpinning of the Study 82
4.5 Data Sources 83
4.5.1 Data Collection Methods 85
4.6 Ethical Considerations of the Study 97
4.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study 98
4.7.1 Internal Validity 98
4.7.2 External Validity 98
4.7.3 Reliability 99
4.8 Analysis and Presentation of Information 99
4.8.1 Analysis of Research Question One (RQ1) 101
4.8.2 Analysis of Research Question Two (RQ2) 103
4.9 Overview of Methodological Decisions 104
4.10 Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants 105
4.11 Chapter Summary 106

Chapter 5 Findings and Analysis - Part 1 Definitions, Purposes and..... Practices Associated with Quality 107
5.1 Introduction 107
5.2 Definitions of Quality 107
5.2.1 Students' Definitions of Quality 108
5.2.2 Lecturers' Definitions of Quality 116
5.2.3 Senior Managers' Definitions of Quality 122
5.2.4 Government Officials' Definitions of Quality 127
5.2.5 Priorities for Quality 130
5.2.6 Definitions of Quality- Key Themes 134
5.3 Purposes of Quality 137
5.4 Practices of Quality 143
5.5 Chapter Summary 146
Chapter 6 Findings and Analysis - Part 2 Stakeholders' Perceptions of Implementation . and Maintenance of Quality 147
6.1 Introduction 147
6.2 Quality Evaluations and Verifications 147
6.3 Student Admission 163
6.4 Financial Support 171
6.5 Teaching and Learning 176
6.6 Chapter Summary 194
Chapter 7 Integration, Conclusions and Recommendations 196
7.1 Introduction 196
7.2 Conceptualizing Quality as a Pressure Cooker Model 196
7.3 Understanding stakeholders' perceptions of quality in the context of the foreign.... degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka 200
7.3.1 Conclusions 200
7.4 Significance of the Study 209
7.4.1 Theoretical Implications 209
7.4.2 Methodological Contribution 210
7.4.3 Significance of the Study in Policy and Practice 211
7.5 Recommendations 212
7.6 Limitations of the Study 215
7.7 Suggestions for Further Research 216
7.8 Concluding Remarks 216
References 218

Appendix A: Pictures of Student Protests Against Private Universities 238
Appendix B: John Godfrey Saxe's (1816-1887) Version of the Famous Indian Legend.....239
Appendix C: Comparisons of Quality Concepts.....241
Appendix D: List of quality criteria with their citations.....242
Appendix E: Sri Lanka: Country Profile 243
Appendix F: List of Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka 244
Appendix G: Roadmap for Investigating the Overarching Research Question.....248
Appendix H: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Students' Questionnaire.....249
Appendix I: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior Managers'/ Government Officials') Questionnaires.....252
Appendix J: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Students' Interview 255
Appendix K: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior Managers'/ Government Officials') Interview.....258
Appendix L: Sample of a Consent Form for Student Interview 261
Appendix M: Sample of a Consent Form for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior…… Managers'/Government Officials') Interview.....263
Appendix N: Student Questionnaire 265
Appendix O: Lecturer Questionnaire.....270
Appendix P: Senior Manager Questionnaire 275
Appendix Q: Government Official Questionnaire.....281
Appendix R: Interview Questions for Students 286
Appendix S: Interview Questions for Professionals (Lecturers/Senior Managers/ Government Officials).....288
Appendix T: Demographic Data of the Students of Questionnaire and Interviews 290
Appendix U: Demographic Data of the Professionals of Questionnaire and Interviews 291
Appendix V: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Students.....293
Appendix W: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Lecturers.....294
Appendix X: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Senior Managers 295
Appendix Y: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Government Officials.....296

List of Tables and Charts

Table 3.1	Higher Education Enrolments by Type of Institution and Mode of Delivery 2006/2007	66
Table 3.2	Graduate Output (2008 - 2010)	70
Table 4.1	Questionnaire survey sample	89
Table 4.2	Interview sample description	95
Table 4.3	Overview of the research lenses of the study	104
Table 4.4	Profile of participants	105
Table 5.1	Ranking of the definitions of quality by the stakeholder groups	109
Table 5.2	Definitions of quality derived from student responses	110
Table 5.3	Definitions of quality derived from lecturer responses	117
Table 5.4	Definitions of quality derived from senior manager responses	123
Table 5.5	Definitions of quality derived from government official responses	127
Table 5.6	Top five priorities for quality	131
Table 5.7	Top purpose of quality of stakeholder groups	143
Chart 6.1	Quality of student admission procedures	169
Chart 6.2	Academic culture of the institutes	184

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The Plan, Do, Check, Action cycle (PDCA).....29
Figure 2.2 The ISO 9000 process approach.....55
Figure 4.1 Framework of the study for a vertical case study approach.....80
Figure 4.2 An overview of the structure of the data analysis of the study.....100
Figure 7.1 Pressure Cooker Model.....199

Abbreviations

APIIT	Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology
APQN	Asia-Pacific Quality Network
BOS	Board of Studies
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CINEC	Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CIMA	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
ESDFP	Education Sector Development Framework and Programme
FUTA	Federation of University Teachers' Associations
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GCE A/L	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
GCE O/L	General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSM	Graduate school of Management
HETC	Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century
IB	International Baccalaureate
ICBT	International College of Business and Technology
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IRQUE	Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
IUSF	Inter University Students' Federation
NAAC	National Assessment and Accreditation Council
NEC	National Education Commission
NIC	National Intellectual Council
NSBM	National School of Business Management
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
QAA	Quality Assurance and Accreditation
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SLIATE	Sri Lanka Institute for Advanced Technological Education
SLQF	Sri Lanka Qualification Framework
TNS	Taylor Nelson Sofres

TQM	Total Quality Management
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Chapter 1 Background and Rationale of the Study

1.1 Background

> Knowledge and advanced skills are critical determinants of a country's economic growth and standard of living as learning outcomes are transformed into goods and services, greater institutional capacity, a more effective public sector, a stronger civil society, and a better investment climate (World Bank, 2013, para.1).

As indicated in the quote above, higher education is increasingly being identified as a key factor in the transformation of countries. The term '**Higher** education' itself in its literal sense implies an education which goes beyond an average education. Of particular importance for developing countries is the World Bank (2013) assertion that higher education assists in producing the high level capacity needed for development. However, this appears questionable in some cases, because when the higher education institutes fail to maintain the quality of their institutes and courses, it is difficult to provide the high level capacity required for development. As the higher education systems of many nations become commercialized, private educational institutes tend to be more competitive in the drive for financial gains. This may lead to the exploitation of higher education resources and activities unless there are effective quality monitoring systems which scrutinize each and every aspect of the activities of these institutes. Thus, the quality of higher education has become a crucial issue for the wellbeing of countries in contemporary times (UNESCO, 2004).

In order to understand the quality of the higher education institutes it is necessary to explore how they implement and maintain quality and the key issues they face in maintaining the quality of their institutes. Gibbs (2010) supports this idea by identifying 'process' which conveys that 'what occurs while students study in the institutes' is important to understanding the quality of higher education institutes. The practices that the higher education institutes adopt and the purposes and the different meanings that they attach to the term 'quality' are also vital when investigating the quality of higher educational institutes. In terms of the latter point, the way they implement and maintain quality is determined largely by the meanings they attach to quality. Many researchers (Abukari & Corner, 2010; Ehsan, 2004; Gibbs, 2010; Green, 1994) highlight that because of its elusive nature quality can be defined in numerous ways. Thus, in order to obtain an in depth understanding of the nature of quality of higher education institutes, it is necessary to identify how different stakeholders of higher education,

such as students and lecturers, perceive and define quality. This is especially crucial when higher education institutes based in one country engage in education activities in other countries, as each country's education system, including higher education, is embedded within its own social, cultural, educational, political and economic values and conditions.

In recognition that the effectiveness of higher education depends on its quality, many researchers (Gibbs, 2010; Lim, 2010; Mishra, 2006; Zachariah, 2007) have investigated the quality of higher education. However, as Zachariah (2007) argues, many research studies on the quality of higher education investigate quality from the students' perspective and they have not examined the views of other stakeholders adequately. This argument applies to the Sri Lankan research context in relation to higher education; when an attempt was made to search for literature materials on quality of higher education of Sri Lanka, very few empirical studies could be found that considered the views of stakeholders or stakeholder groups, apart from students. Therefore, the focus of this research lies on the views of multiple stakeholders in the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka and the dimensions of quality of these institutes.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem and Rationale of the Study

Physical Context and Conceptual Rationale

Higher education is of prime importance to a South Asian developing country like Sri Lanka. In 1998, the Minister of Higher Education, Professor Wiswa Warnapala, highlighted that the media repeatedly informed Sri Lankans about the rapid change in technology, how globalization links societies and how societies are increasingly becoming knowledge based. He argued that in order to compete in global markets the developing countries have to achieve a high level of productivity and efficiency in their economy and that "a growing stock of high level manpower and skills is required to effectively manage this transition" (Warnapala, 1998, p. 2). He acknowledged tertiary education as a vital instrument in this process and therefore an area of priority within the overall system of education (Warnapala, 1998). The Minister of Higher Education in 2011, the Honourable Mr. S. B. Dissanayake, also confirmed this idea from the former Minister of Higher Education by pointing out that by being a Middle Income Country, the future of Sri Lanka will rely on knowledge intensive tasks. He argued that:

> In this context, intellectual and human capital is of vital importance to enable Sri Lanka to develop and compete effectively in the global knowledge economy of the twenty-first century. Sri Lanka urgently needs a higher education system that can produce well-educated, skilled, hard-working and enterprising graduates and innovative researchers capable of promoting dynamic economic development (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011, p. 11)

The admission to internal degree programmes of public universities in Sri Lanka is highly competitive. Dr Sunil Jayantha Nawarathna, The Secretary to Ministry of Higher Education, points out that even though every year about 120,000 students qualify to enter a public university out of the total of 300,000 students who sit for the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level examination, the fifteen public universities in Sri Lanka can cater only for around 20,000 students (Nayakaratne, 2013). The undergraduate studies in these universities are free of charge and most of the students' expenses will be covered through different kinds of state financial assistance. The students receive financial aid via the Mahapola fund, bursary and endowed scholarships (Government Information Centre, 2009). The government finds it difficult to expand public university education or increase access to these universities since the government has to spend a significant amount of money for those students' education. The civil war in the North and East of Sri Lanka which lasted for about two decades also caused heavy economic losses to the country (Ganegodage & Rambaldi, 2013; Warnapala, 1998). The country's military expenditure as a percentage of the Gross domestic product (GDP) rose from 1.6 to 3.5 from 1983 to 2008 due to the war crisis (Ganegodage & Rambaldi, 2013). The ongoing costs to the government for the reconstruction of war affected areas means that in order to expand higher education there is a need for alternative provision.

The private higher education institutes which make up 12 percent of higher education enrolments[1] are mainly the foreign degree awarding institutes which play an increasingly significant role in higher education. The term 'Foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka' refers to the institutes which offer degree programmes of foreign countries in Sri Lanka. Upon successful completion the students receive their qualifications from the foreign

1. Table 3.1 that is presented in Chapter 3 (see section 3.4) clearly demonstrates the 'Higher Education Enrolments in Sri Lanka by Type of Institution and Mode of Delivery'. Section 3.4 also provides an overview of the range of providers operating, and the type of regulation they are subjected to when providing education service in Sri Lanka.

university or college. However, they are not considered as private 'universities' as Sri Lanka Law still does not permit them to use the title 'University'.

These foreign degree awarding institutes are also known as 'colleges' and therefore, the terms institutes and colleges are used interchangeably in this study. A World Bank report (2009) highlighted that these colleges absorb some of the qualified high school graduates who do not enter a public university in Sri Lanka. The Nation (n.d.) and World Bank (2009) describe other factors which indicate the importance of Sri Lankan private higher education as follows.

(a) Even though public university education is free, many students select private higher education institutes when they are not admitted to the programmes and public universities that they prefer.
(b) Private higher education institutes offer curricula which are more applied and perceived as more relevant to the job market.
(c) The graduates of the private higher education institutes have better command of English and better developed soft skills which employers consider as important.
(d) The public universities are forced to close regularly due to strikes and this lengthens the time it takes for students to complete a degree.
(e) There are concerns about the influence of political parties in student affairs and safety of the students at public universities.
(f) Unemployment is high among the graduates of public universities.
(The Nation, n.d.; World Bank, 2009, p. 22)

It appears that the private higher education institutes have the potential to overcome the main weaknesses of the public universities by providing programmes that are more effective. The main reason behind this is the cross border aspect of these private higher education institutes. Since the students mainly follow foreign degree programmes of leading countries in higher education such as UK, USA, and Australia, these programmes are seen as meeting global needs and thereby appear to be more effective. Warakaulle (2005) argues that "The most important development in cross-border higher education in Sri Lanka has been the granting of franchises by various universities in the UK, USA, Australia, India and Russia to institutes to conduct their degree courses in Sri Lanka" (Warakaulle, 2005, p. 7). He points out that this franchising is useful to students who are unable to study at a public university in Sri Lanka and also to the students who do not have enough finance to study overseas. He identifies two significant results of this cross border education. Firstly, it reduces the government's burden in providing places in the public universities. Secondly, which is more important, these students

stay in Sri Lanka while pursuing a foreign degree course and thereby are more likely to assist national development with the education they receive (Warakaulle, 2005).

Though the presence of foreign degree awarding institutes emerges as useful to the higher education sector of Sri Lanka in many ways, some major issues in relation to the implementation and maintenance of quality in their institutes need more investigation. As reported by the World Bank report (2009), the stakeholders are concerned about the variability of quality of some private higher education institutes in Sri Lanka. These perceptions of private higher education's quality may also obstruct the approval process of these institutes by the University Grants Commission (UGC) (World Bank, 2009). "This is particularly true given that much of the private HE sector has only recently been set up, and is seeking to establish a strong track record of producing high quality graduates" (World Bank, 2009, p. 47). Negative publicity about private institutes which provide low quality service could also be seen as harming the reputation of the private higher education sector as a whole and thereby having a negative impact on its capability to attract students (World Bank, 2009).

The quality of these institutes and their programmes has become a major factor that decides their survival and development. It is maintained here that the quality issues of these institutes need more research as there are many conflicting perceptions. On one hand, there is bad publicity about their poor quality and on the other hand they provide programmes perceived as more effective and appropriate. Also there is strong ideological opposition [2] to the establishment of private universities (World Bank, 2009) which provide foreign degree programmes and as it appears from the ideological protests, quality is one of the factors that the opponents raise[3]. They show their resentment about use of the term 'university' for these private institutes since they have doubts whether some of these institutes maintain high quality. Although the private higher education institutes are a growing area they are also in an unstable situation due to perceived issues of quality. It appears that the stakeholder groups understand the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes somewhat differently as there are multiple views about the level of quality of these institutes. The institutes tend to implement and maintain quality based on their understanding of what quality is and the way

[2] As the World Bank report (2009) implies some student unions and some political parties do not agree with the establishment of private universities, arguing that the private universities have a negative impact on public universities, on higher education and on the country.

[3] Appendix A provides a visual representation of the quality issues that prevails in Sri Lanka with regard to the private institutes and universities.

they perceive the meaning of quality. The purposes that they associate with the term quality may also contribute to the implementation and the maintenance of quality of these institutes. It can be argued that quality becomes an outcome of these various understandings of the stakeholders, thus giving rise to the question, has quality become about performance rather than a definite meaning? Thus, it is necessary to understand how the key stakeholder groups define quality, the purposes that they associate with quality, and their perceptions of how these institutes implement and maintain the priorities for quality in order to understand and improve the quality of the institutes.

A key contributing factor to the research problem explored in this thesis, is that it appears that Sri Lanka has allowed the foreign degree awarding institutes to operate in a '*caveat emptor'* (Latin for 'let the buyer beware') (Juran & Defeo, 2010, p. 27) environment as there is "no quality assurance process" from the government for the private sector institutions of Sri Lanka (World Bank, 2009, p. 50). As per the existing legislation and policies, any organization can provide private education services in Sri Lanka under a business registration, without using the term 'university' for their institutes. Thus, students themselves and their families have to identify the genuine institutes and it is their responsibility to protect themselves from bogus higher education providers. Powerful and massive marketing strategies are used to attract students to these institutes and this may misguide students and parents when they seek higher education institutes for education purposes. Some institutes spend heavily on advertisements in order to make their institutes popular, but in some cases "Parents and students have been taken for a ride by the business companies that claim foreign accreditation and international recognition, charging large sums of money without providing quality education" (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007, p. 2). Since the policy environment in relation to private higher education sector is under developed (World Bank, 2009), it allows some foreign degree awarding institutes to operate in an irresponsible manner. These institutes' different understandings of quality, its value and the practices they adopt based on their understanding of quality may provide different consequences to various stakeholders of these institutes. It is unfortunate that the foreign degree awarding institutes are given less priority in terms of government policy. Also of concern is the lack of research to inform the development of policy in the area.

Given the lack of academic research into the dimensions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, this study deemed it necessary to address the gaps in the literature in relation to different dimensions of quality of this growing private sector. This required exploration of the different meanings and purposes associated with the term quality; the implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality; the key issues arising when

implementing quality, and the possible solutions to the problems of ensuring the quality of what foreign degree awarding institutes offer to Sri Lankan students. Also necessary was the undertaking of empirical investigation on this subject in order to inform debates and decisions about the quality of higher education at institutional and system levels for the various stakeholder groups in private higher education. Considering the above factors this study investigated the dimensions of quality in the case of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. This was considered timely as, despite strong opposition from the student unions of government universities and some political parties, the government was planning to formally establish private 'universities' in Sri Lanka.

The former chairman of UGC, Sri Lanka, Samaranayake (2011) stated that the Ministry along with the UGC are considering the options of establishing private universities or branch campuses of recognized international universities and offering degree awarding status to the existing institutes which satisfy their standards in order to increase access and maintain equity**.** By pointing out the importance of quality in the private universities he argued:

> However, we have to be mindful of the fact that such steps require feasibility studies, good monitoring mechanisms that regulate the quality of education offered and national policies and imperatives on higher education that create the ambience for such institutions to thrive and develop while safeguarding our own national universities (Samaranayake, 2011, para. 10).

The Quality Assurance Agency of Sri Lanka (QAA Council), which monitors and assures the quality of both the government universities and the local degrees of the private institutes of Sri Lanka also supports the above view by suggesting the need for quality assurance activities to assure the quality of private institutes of Sri Lanka. This agency proposes several activities such as 'Quality assessment of the foreign degrees and their delivery arrangements', 'Recognition of foreign degrees accredited by Foreign Quality Assurance Agencies' and 'Establishment of internal Quality Assurance Units in private institutes' (Peiris, n.d.) for improving the quality of private higher education of Sri Lanka.

Wijewardena (2010) also brings out the importance of dimensions of quality such as quality implementation and maintenance of the foreign degree awarding institutes by highlighting that the private higher education institutes should maintain quality in order to justify their existence to society. He argues that quality is crucial since the Sri Lanka government intends to set up a knowledge hub in order to fulfill a part of its development strategy. Thus, it is important to

undertake focused research as a contribution to debates surrounding the quality issues of these institutes.

Personal Motivation

I acquired a thorough understanding about the background and culture of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka by serving in several of these institutes in the positions of lecturer and student counselor. I also completed several short courses in two private institutes of Sri Lanka after completing an undergraduate degree in a government university in Sri Lanka. When I interacted with the various stakeholders, including students, parents, lecturers and other staff, I realized the need for research on the dimensions of quality of these institutes and in particular, to provide an understanding about quality implementation and maintenance of these institutes to the various stakeholder groups.

The reasons for undertaking this study are summarised as follows.

1. There is a shortage of research on the quality of private higher education of Sri Lanka. It is hoped that this study will fill the theoretical gaps in literature related to a number of dimensions of quality of foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.
2. Since the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka are an increasingly growing sector with debatable quality issues it is timely that consideration is given to investigate dimensions of quality in these institutes.
3. By exploring quality issues this study will fill a knowledge gap; it is hoped that the findings will provide guidance to the stakeholders of the foreign degree awarding institutes and will enhance their understanding about the quality issues.
4. My personal experiences and interest in the dimensions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institute also served as a motivation for this study.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The overall aim of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of how the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka define, perceive and implement quality and the key issues they face when they implement quality, and to provide suggestions for the improvement of these institutes. Since there is a shortage of studies in this area it is believed that this study has the potential to help the decision makers of these institutes to improve the quality of their institutes, and to assist the stakeholders of these institutes when they make decisions in relation to them. The World Bank report (2009) which provides an overview of the higher

education of Sri Lanka has had a significant influence on this study in that it assisted in formulating the research aims and questions. Although the report covers the whole higher education sector, it does not undertake an in-depth investigation into the dimensions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes. This study therefore intended to build on and extend the ideas related to the quality dimensions of the foreign degree awarding institutes mentioned in the World Bank report, by employing an extensive literature review and empirical study.
The key aims that determined the overall focus of this study are as follows:

1. To discover what quality means in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.
2. To identify the key purposes and practices associated with the term quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.
3. To investigate students' and professionals' perceptions of how these institutes implement and maintain their identified priorities for quality.
4. To explore the issues these institutes face when implementing and maintaining quality in their institutes and the possible solutions to their problems.

The following overarching research question was identified to achieve the above aims.

- How is 'quality' understood, by whom, with what consequences for whom, in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

Giertz (2000) argues that it is important to understand what quality is and what should be achieved in order to decide quality in each type of institute, because this varies in line with the different kinds of higher education institutes within the higher education sector. The public or the private nature of the institutes also may influence the meaning of quality and, if cross border engagements are involved as in these foreign degree awarding institutes, then the expectations of host countries will also contribute to the meaning of quality. Also, as Watty (2006) points out 'the stakeholder approach' (p. 292) is important in defining the quality of higher education. This approach recognises the potential for a number of different perspectives of quality to be defined in the higher education environment. These perspectives reflect the views of a variety of stakeholders who, it is claimed, have legitimate authority to voice their perspectives (Middlehurst, 1992; Vroeijenstijn, 1992). It is also worth considering how these different understandings of quality may bring out different consequences and difficulties for different stakeholders of these institutes. This research attempts to gather the perceptions of professionals, namely, lecturers at foreign degree awarding institutes, lecturers who work both

in the government and the foreign degree awarding institutes, senior managers of foreign degree awarding institutes who also can be the owners of these institutes and officials of three government organizations including policy makers. The professionals' perception of the quality of these institutes is seen as enhancing the value of this research. The study also intends to gather the students' perceptions of quality of these institutes. It is important to identify quality from the students' perspective since students are the real consumers of education, as supported by Gallifa's study (2010) which conducted research on student perceptions of service quality in a multi-campus higher education system in Spain. It is necessary also to identify how the quality of these institutes is assured in terms of structures and processes such as quality control mechanisms, accreditation processes and accountability. Considering the above factors, two key research questions were formulated to answer the overarching research question, each of which is supported by two sub questions, as follows.

1. What definitions, purposes and practices are associated with the term 'quality' by foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?
    - What are the main definitions and purposes of 'quality' in the perspectives of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?
    - What are the main practices associated with the term 'quality' of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

2. What are students' and professionals' perceptions of the ways the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality in their institutes?
    - What are the students' perceptions of the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?
    - What are the lecturers', senior managers' and the government officials' perceptions of the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

Due to the limited time period available for this study, the dimensions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka were explored only from the receiver country's perspective. The study was also limited to the face to face delivery of foreign programmes in Sri Lanka and it does not include distance learning programmes.

1.4 Cross Border Higher Education as a Key Term

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines (2005) "cross-border higher education includes higher education that takes place in situations where the teacher, student, programme, institution/provider or course material crosses national jurisdictional borders" (UNESCO/OECD, 2005, p. 12). This may consist of tertiary education by private/public and for profit/not-for profit providers. It includes a variety of delivery methods which vary from face to face delivery to distance learning (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). Yadong & Yanqiao (2009) support these guidelines by highlighting three main ways to provide cross-border education services. These are cross-border movement of programmes, cross border movement of people (students and lecturers), and cross-border movement of institutions. As can be seen from these definitions, the foreign degree awarding institutes become a part of cross border higher education, and the major cross border movement in these institutes is the cross border movement of programmes.

There are some other terms which are used interchangeably with the term 'cross border', such as, trans-national, offshore, borderless and international. This study adopts the term 'cross border higher education' for two main reasons. First, it is used extensively by international agencies such as UNESCO and OECD (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011). Secondly, the term 'cross-border' shows the existence of borders and thereby implies the main challenges that a person or a programme might face when s/he or it crosses borders. This complexity may include cultural, social, political and economic differences between the provider country and the receiver country of cross border education. Knight (2011) also identifies 'cross border' as a preferred term as this kind of delivery of higher education involves complexity, as is the case in cross border higher education of Sri Lanka. Considering the broadness of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka, this study limits its scope to 'the foreign degree awarding institutes' of Sri Lanka.

1.5 Overview of the Theoretical Framework and Key Themes

This thesis argues that 'quality' has different meanings and that different dimensions of quality, such as the implementation and maintenance of quality, are determined by the way that the stakeholders understand the meaning of quality and the importance they give to

quality. Thus, this study attempts to explore the views of different stakeholders of foreign degree awarding institutes about 'quality' in order to understand the differences and assumptions in how they perceive quality. The purpose is to 'identify' what matters as quality with regards to these institutes in order to improve it. If we want to know about foreign degree awarding institutes and their status and consequences to stakeholders such as students and government, it is necessary to understand and establish the ways in which quality is used and how it is understood in different contexts. It is also necessary to be aware of the fact that "a whole series of key concepts for the understanding of society derive their power from appearing to be just what they always were and derive their instrumentality from taking on quite different forms" (Smith, 2006, p. 628). To cite some examples of different meanings given to quality in higher education, 'quality' is identified as consumer protection (Singh, 2012), excellence, perfection, fitness for purpose, value for money and transformative (Harvey & Green, 1993). Thus, many meanings can be drawn out from the term quality, making quality a highly contested phenomenon as discussed in chapter two.

Considering the importance of conceptions of 'quality' in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, this study intends to fill the gaps in the literature in relation to the quality of these institutes. No academic studies could be found on quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka which offer degrees from a number of developed countries as well as from developing countries and, most importantly, no research has attempted to identify the definition of quality in relation to these institutes of Sri Lanka. The following four main themes enhance the value of the theoretical framework of this study.

1. A holistic approach to the study via perceptions of multiple stakeholders of these institutes.
2. The private nature of the foreign degree awarding institutes and its consequences.
3. The nature of cross border higher education and international relations.
4. The background of the country and the higher education of Sri Lanka and their outcomes.

A brief overview of each theme is provided as follows.

<u>Holistic Approach to the Study via Perceptions of Multiple Stakeholders of these Institutes</u>

This study adopts a 'multiple stakeholder perspective' towards investigation of dimensions of quality by arguing that in order to understand the whole picture of an issue it is necessary to understand it from a collection of different viewpoints and interests in the subject. This

concept is derived from the famous Indian tale ‘Blind Men and the Elephant’ which was later published as a poem in English language by John Godfrey (Yen, 2008) (refer Appendix B). Buddhist culture and also the Jain and Sufi Muslim cultures have also adopted a version of this story (Wordfocus.com, 2014). The parable is centered around six blind men who describe the appearance of an elephant by touching it. Each person touches a different part and describes the elephant only by touching one part of the elephant. Even though they were correct in stating their own perspective, it is necessary to combine all those perspectives to identify what the elephant really looks like. This signifies how crucial the holistic view is when making decisions. Therefore, this study utilizes views of multiple stakeholders - lecturers, students and senior managers of selected foreign degree awarding institutes, and the officials of three government organizations – in order to obtain a holistic approach to the study.

The parable is also translatable to the concept of quality when focusing on the quality of higher education of Sri Lanka and the use of the metaphor Elephant is appealing to Sri Lankan culture, as the Elephant is iconic to Sri Lanka in terms of its symbolic, cultural and economic importance to the country. The education system symbolizes the ‘Elephant’ while the key stakeholder groups can be compared to blind men. Stakeholder groups, like the blind men, touch only a part of the education system and describes how it looks based on their limited perspective. Thus, they describe only an aspect or aspects of quality of the education system. This ‘Elephant and the Blind men’ concept can be considered as a ‘quality centred’ concept. It asks what the education system looks like in each case (as shown in the poem) and also asks by whom, implying various stakeholders such as students and lecturers.

These different stakeholder groups may hold contradicting viewpoints and a consultation of the views of these multiple stakeholders may assist in making more fruitful and appealing higher education policies. The National Education Commission of Sri Lanka which is the key responsible body for education policy making in Sri Lanka is a good example of stakeholder consultation as it consults various stakeholder groups during the policy forming process of higher education in order to take a holistic approach towards policy forming. The Commission arranges a public hearing in Colombo and some more remote areas during its higher education policy forming process and the representatives of political parties, students, chancellors, laymen and clergy usually respond to this public hearing. The views of specialists and experts of various ministries including the Ministry of Higher education are also obtained during the policy forming process (National Education Commission, 1993). These various stakeholder groups may present their views based on their perspectives and they may have an impact on the policy forming process based on the importance of their ideas and the amount of power

they hold to influence the process. Thus, it is important to take a holistic approach via a multiple Stakeholders' perspective.

Private Nature of the Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes and its Consequences.

Sri Lanka has a long established history of free undergraduate education in the public universities. The establishment of private universities is seen as a threat to this prevailing undergraduate education of the country by some public university student unions and teacher associations (De-Alwis, 2012 a; World Bank, 2009). These parties who protest against the establishment of private universities of Sri Lanka argue that these institutes treat students as customers and education as a commodity that is affordable only to some people (Wijesinghe, 2012). They argue that the quality is compromised since their main target is to earn profits. Unlike government universities which receive government funds to maintain university activities, these institutes generate their income mainly via student tuition fees and survive in a highly competitive environment as each institute tries to attract more students over the other.

The market driven approach of the foreign degree awarding institutes tends to clash with the ideologies of the public universities. The profit oriented nature of these colleges may also involve deception and exploitation of higher education activities (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007). On the other hand, these foreign degree awarding institutes absorb some students who are eligible for university education, but could not enter a public university in Sri Lanka due to insufficient funding of places in those universities (Premarathna, 2011). Thus, by increasing access to higher education in Sri Lanka these institutes provide justice to students' right for education to some extent. But it also appears that these institutes increase access to higher education only to students who can afford to pay, those students who have the buying power, unless scholarships are offered to them by these institutes.

Nature of Cross Border Higher Education and International Relations

A significant cross border higher education initiative that prevails in Sri Lanka is the franchising of academic programmes from other countries to Sri Lanka. This kind of provision of higher education is seen as McDonaldization of Higher Education (Hayes & Wynyard, 2002). 'McDonaldization' is a fast food culture which represents a globalized process and it relies mainly on four elements, namely efficiency, calculability, predictability and control (Ritzer, 2010). As Ritzer (2010) conveys, McDonald's provides marked efficiency when delivering food to customers by offering easy ways such as 'the drive- through' for buying food. Similarly, the foreign providers also attempt to maintain efficiency by means of degree completion without long delays and fast track programmes. The calculability element of the

McDonaldized system conveys that quantity is equal to quality. It is debatable how this marketised view be appropriate when offering programmes across borders because providing the same programmes with many modules may not bring quality if the curriculum is irrelevant to the country. The third element of McDonaldization predictability gives the assurance that the products and services that the consumers receive in all the locations will be the same. The cross border provision of programmes requires the same level of resources and facilities in the Sri Lankan institutes in order to provide the same level of higher education service in Sri Lanka, and this may be a difficult task due to the differences of the provider country and Sri Lanka. The last element 'control' conveys that people are controlled in a McDonaldized system by providing them with control mechanisms such as limited menus and lines. This control is strengthened with the use of new technologies (Ritzer, 2010). The cross border education provision in Sri Lanka within this type of a commodity model indicates a highly mechanical approach where the individual differences of provider countries and Sri Lanka are ignored.

The distance created by the borders makes it readily avoidable for the universities of the provider countries to adequately monitor their cross-border institutes. So although some would uphold the globalization processes linking countries through cross border higher education, it is possible that they ignore some of the gaps created by the economic, social, cultural and political differences between countries. Sri Lanka faces challenges with regards to cross border higher education since most of these foreign degrees are provided to less-developed Sri Lanka by the developed western countries. It is debatable how well a programme of a developed country can be positioned in a third world developing country like Sri Lanka without destroying its essence and values.

Even though, the World Bank shows interest in the quality of higher education of Sri Lanka by funding many projects and research (World Bank, 2015), De-Silva (2012) argues that the World Bank is devoted "to the ideology of free market" (p. 66) economies and they do not consider cultural and other individualities of countries. Furthermore, he asserts that the World Bank gets the advantage of shaping education policies of developing countries by being the funding body and by using its research strength. This suggests that decisions related to the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes should also consider these institutes' real contribution to the country and their functionality, and not on ideologies of specific groups.

Background of the Country and the Higher Education of Sri Lanka and their Outcome

University education in Sri Lanka which commenced during colonization initially retained its prestige by limiting higher education to the privileged elite class (Warnapala, 2010). Later, along with the introduction of free education, many talented ordinary people got the opportunity to pursue higher education. This expansion of higher education in Sri Lanka demanded the government to increase access to higher education. Increasing demand for higher education and the government's inability to provide free higher education to meet the demand due to fiscal constraints, led Sri Lanka to deviate from the culture of the public university monopoly. Sri Lanka, which had to spend a large sum of money for a civil war for 26 years, welcomed private higher education as a way to increase access to and equity in higher education. However, this transition also caused some chaos due to the paucity of policies and legislation related to higher education in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the political influences on the higher education system, and the cultural, educational, economic, social and gender aspects of Sri Lanka, also make an impact on the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes. These aspects are elaborated in chapters two and three of the thesis.

1.6 Overview of Research Methodology

A blend of case study methodology and mixed methods approaches were utilized to address the research questions within a research paradigm of pragmatism. A vertical case study was employed as the vertical case study allows comparisons of both similarities and differences across multiple levels, and thereby avoids an overemphasis on either similarity or difference across cases (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). The mixed method approach was selected because it allows both quantitative and qualitative data to be used for the purpose of the research, although this study gives priority to qualitative data when collecting and analysing data. A pilot study was carried out to test the survey questions and also to decide whether the study was feasible since a focus on quality of these institutes involves some sensitive issues. This increased the internal validity of the research. Five foreign degree awarding institutes and three government organizations which play a vital role in the field of higher education served as sources of data. The data were collected using a questionnaire survey, semi structured interviews, and document analysis. Four stakeholder groups - students, lecturers and senior managers of five foreign degree awarding institutes, and officials of three government organizations - participated in this study in order to provide a multiple stakeholder perspective of quality. Ethics of the research were maintained by adhering to the guidelines of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC). The research methodology is explained in detail in chapter four.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

Chapter two reviews the key literature materials related to the quality of higher education. These include significant literature on the definitions of quality, criteria which lead to priorities for quality, purposes of quality and the implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality. Literature highlighting the public and private nature and cross border aspects of higher education is also reviewed.

Chapter three provides an overview of the country context and the education system of Sri Lanka. Higher education of the country covers a major part of this discussion with special reference to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Chapter Four presents the research methodology adopted in this study, the data collection methods and a rationale for the methodological decisions. The data analysis techniques used in this study are then discussed. The ethical considerations of the study, aspects of validity and reliability are also presented in the chapter. This chapter also provides an analysis of the demographic data of the participants.

Chapter five presents and discusses the findings of research question one. The definitions and the purposes of quality are discussed by using the participants' responses while the practices are discussed by analysing several documents.

Chapter six presents and discusses the results of research question two which focuses on the implementation and the maintenance of the priorities for quality. The students' and the professionals' perceptions of quality are discussed in this chapter under four key themes.

Chapter seven has two parts. The first part of the chapter discusses a pressure cooker model to conceptualize quality in relation to this study and draws conclusions with regard to the research questions by utilizing the findings identified in chapters five and six. The second part of this chapter details the significance of the study and provides suggestions for the key stakeholder groups to improve the quality of these institutes. The limitations of the study and implications for future research are then presented in this concluding chapter.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the body of literature that informs the theoretical background of this study. Because the study focuses on an aspect of higher education, the chapter begins by introducing several definitions of higher education. Various definitions associated with the term quality are then discussed in relation to higher education with an emphasis on the holistic view towards quality through multiple stakeholder perspectives. An elaboration of the criteria of quality which lead to the priorities for quality are presented in the chapter as they assist in identifying the purposes of quality. The chapter also explains the key terminology 'quality assurance' and 'quality improvement'. A discussion on how quality assurance in cross border higher education is implemented and maintained is presented along with the key issues arising from their attempt to implement and maintain quality. Several possible solutions are also identified from the literature materials and a pressure cooker model is introduced as a suggested solution. The public and private nature of higher education in relation to this study is then reviewed by drawing on several key literature materials.

2.2 What is Higher Education?

The Online Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) defines higher education as "Education at universities or similar educational establishments, especially to degree level" (p. 4136). However, as Dias (1998a) pointed out in the World Conference on Higher Education: Vision and Action, held in Paris in 1998, it has become a strenuous task in contemporary times to provide a definition for higher education as numerous changes and diversifications have occurred within higher education (Dias 1998a). He maintained that there is a need to take a pragmatic and more comprehensive viewpoint towards the definition of higher education, that should include "…all types of education (academic, professional, technical, artistic, pedagogical, long distance learning, etc.) provided by universities, technological institutes, teacher training colleges, etc... , which are normally intended for students having completed a secondary education, and whose educational objective is the acquisition of a title, a grade, certificate, or diploma of higher education" (para. 2). Furthermore, Dias (1998b) reported that the basic mission of higher education links to four principal objectives, and they are:

1. The development of new knowledge (the research function)
2. The training of highly qualified personnel (the education function)
3. The provision of services to society
4. The ethical function, which implies social criticism

(Dias, 1998b, p. 368)

Warnapala (2009), while discussing some policy aspects of higher education of Sri Lanka, admits that higher education is of prime importance to the creation of a society that is knowledge based and that its development depends on a country's ability to generate and utilize knowledge for developmental purposes. The above idea is in line with the objectives described above to a great extent. The report on the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education discusses the social responsibility of higher education as enhancing our understanding on various social, cultural, economic and scientific issues, and our capability to respond to those issues. Also stated is that the higher education environment should be autonomous and that institutions should fulfil their missions through efficiency, transparency, quality, relevance and social responsibility (World Conference on Higher Education, 2009). However, as argued elsewhere, higher education institutions live in a state of everlasting crisis, because they have an obligation to adapt to continuous social changes due to their entrenched links with society (Dias, 1998b). Globalization is one factor which in recent decades has led a vast change in social and economic structures with the consequence that higher education institutions have faced often drastic internal changes due to the growth in their student populations, the increase in delivery costs and the reduction of public funding (Dias, 1998b; Findlay & Tierney, 2010).

The World Conference on Higher Education (2009) reiterated the view of higher education as a public good, and argued that a country's higher education system should be the responsibility of all types of stakeholders, especially the government. Because Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasizes that everybody should have equal accessibility to higher education on the basis of merit (United Nations, 2013), it also argued that it is not acceptable to exclude anyone on the basis of age, gender, race, language, religion or any social or economic conditions when granting access to higher education (World Conference on Higher Education, 1998). In relation to the study explored in this thesis, this view of higher education clashes with the nature of private higher education of Sri Lanka. How this plays out within the context of this study will be discussed and explored below. The necessity to consider the aims of quality, equity and relevance concurrently when expanding access to higher education (World Conference on Higher Education, 2009), is upheld in this

discussion. Equity is not merely increasing access but also involves providing student welfare including suitable financial and educational support to the poor and other marginalized groups (World Conference on Higher Education, 2009). Thus, the role and nature of a developing higher education system can be described as very complex (Abukari & Corner, 2010; Ehsan, 2004; Green, 1994).

2.3 Defining Quality in Higher Education

The Online Oxford Dictionary of English (2010) defines quality as "the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something" (p. 7393). The term quality is used in numerous ways to denote excellence or the level of excellence. In some situations the term 'quality' alone is used to denote excellence or high standard, whereas in other situations it is coupled with definers as in 'lack of quality, low quality, no quality and high quality' to indicate the degree of standard. As Stensaker and Harvey (2011, p. 223) argue, "quality is usually a highly contested phenomenon … with heated debates occurring as to what quality is". Many researchers (Abukari & Corner, 2010; Ehsan, 2004; Green, 1994) view quality as an elusive concept and, in support of this view, Mishra (2006), Parri (2006) and Eshan (2004) argue that quality means different things to different people, identifying quality as a much debated term. This obscure nature of quality is clearly described in the highly cited words of Pirsig (1974) :

> Quality… you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that's self contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about it. But if you can't say what quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes, it doesn't exist at all. But for all practical purposes it really does exist… So round and round you go, spinning mental wheels and nowhere finding anyplace to get traction. What the hell is Quality? What is it? (p. 178)

Considering the elusive nature of quality, this study explores the views of different stakeholders of higher education in order to illuminate the contested understandings of what quality is.

2.3.1 Different Definitions

Given that "Quality is a philosophical concept" (Green, 1994, p.17) different researchers bring out many different perspectives on quality. Mishra (2006, p. 11) indicates that "to some it is like 'beauty' that lies in the eye of the beholder!" This point of view towards quality supports the relativist notion of quality which conveys that "… quality is relative to the user of the term" (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 10). Harvey & Green (1993) bring out five distinct but interrelated notions of quality that are in use: Exceptional, Perfection, Fitness for purpose and Transformative. Since this notion frames a significant part of the study it is analyzed in depth in the following section.

Quality as Exceptional:

This notion of quality treats quality as something special and suggests that quality is attained if the standards are exceeded (Harvey, 2008). Several literature materials (Harvey, 2008; Harvey & Knight, 1996; Lomas, 2007) suggest that 'Exceptional' can be linked to the idea of 'excellence'. Harvey & Green (1993) demonstrate three variations of this notion of 'quality. First is 'quality as distinctive' which is the traditional notion of quality. This notion does not provide any parameter to determine quality and it is "replicated in reputational statistical ratings such as the Times Higher Education Supplement's international rating tables" (Harvey, 2008, p.6). According to this notion quality is seen as apodictic which is not measured under any criteria. For example, the distinctive and unapproachable nature of an Oxbridge education itself gives quality (Harvey & Green, 1993). This 'high class' view towards quality is also noticeable in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka as they maintain a form of exclusivity by limiting the access to the foreign degrees to a particular class in society while also cultivating the perception that the foreign degrees are elite in its nature.

A second notion of exceptional quality is 'asserting excellence' by exceeding very high standards. Excellence is frequently used interchangeably with quality (Ball, 1985). However, Excellence does not have any particular referents or content to identify as its own and this is referred to as "dereferentialization" (Readings, 1996). Excellence in relation to higher education relies on the person who defines it and their motivation behind it (Brusoni et al., 2014). Brusoni et al. (2014) argue a typical way of defining excellence is as 'fulfilling a certain standard'. This can also be viewed as fitness for purpose since this suggests a measure of performance based on a predefined set of standards. Harvey & Green (1993) convey that the idea of 'excellence' can be viewed in two ways with respect to quality as Excellence 1 and 2. Excellence 1 represents 'standards' while excellence 2 focuses on 'zero defects'. Zero defects

also become a part of the 'perfection' notion of quality indicating how coexistence may occur among the concepts of quality. Excellence 1 is similar to the 'distinction' notion of quality, but it recognizes the components of excellence, simultaneously highlighting that they are almost unachievable (Harvey & Green, 1993). This view focuses on excelling in input, and output. It is argued that an institute which recruits the best students and provides the best human and physical resources to them excels naturally despite any process they adopt (Harvey & Green, 1993).

The third variation here is of quality is a weaker notion of exceptional quality which identifies quality as "passing a set of required (minimum) standards" (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 11). The problem with this notion is that something may not be always considered as a quality product or service even if it matches with the set standards.

Perfection (or consistency):

The notion of quality as consistency denotes mainly getting things right first time with no defects (Harvey & Green, 1993). This approach emphasizes process and makes specifications that it intends to achieve perfectly (Ingle, 1985). Conformance to specification is key to perfection and thereby makes quality a relative concept. The zero defects aspect of perfection requires perfection to be consistent. The mechanisms such as ISO 9000 assures zero defects (Harvey, 2008) through proper monitoring. Many foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka also utilize ISO quality management systems as a part of their quality assurance mechanisms (Refer section 2.14.4) and thereby attempt to align with the quality conception 'perfection' to a certain extent. However, the notion of 'zero defects' or 'getting it right first time' may not be always applicable to higher education since higher education does not aim to deliver specifications as perfectly as possible. Higher education encourages analytical and critical improvement of the students and this requires continuous involvement with specifications in terms of revising and reconceptualisation (Harvey & Green, 1993). In support of this view Watty (2003) argues that it is possible to omit the aspects of quality as perfection since higher education does not intend to provide graduates with zero defects.

Fitness for purpose:

This approach indicates that quality gives meaning only in association with the purpose of the product or the service (Ball, 1985). "Quality is thus judged in terms of the extent to which the product or service fits its purpose" (Harvey & Green, 1993, p. 16). However, Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa (2007) argue that 'fitness for purpose' is empirically an empty term as it can mean anything based on what is identified as purpose. The purpose of higher education is not

understood as a single idea and there can also be multiple purposes of higher education (Westerheijden, Stensaker & Rosa, 2007). Fitness for purpose also puts forward the questions of 'whose purpose has to be met' and 'how fitness is assessed'. Broadly, this notion suggests two alternative priorities for identifying the purpose. The first priority is customer oriented and highlights that the customer specifications need to be matched (Harvey, 2008). However, it is debatable who the customer in higher education is as students may not be the only consumers in higher education (Harvey & Green, 1993). This again raises the question of 'whose purpose has to be met?' It is also doubtful whether the consumer can always determine what quality is and whether it is present. This complex nature relates back to the idea of whose definitions of quality in higher education should be considered and how it needs to be assessed (Harvey & Green, 1993). This notion also involves a developmental aspect which suggest that customer specifications require re-evaluations as the purposes of higher education which may change overtime (Harvey & Green, 1993). The second priority which identifies the purpose situates it within the mission of the provider and this idea dominates in higher education (Harvey, 2008). Sayed (1997) critiques both of the priorities as offering only partial definitions of quality because they depend on the judgment of only part of society. Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa (2007) bring out the new purpose of higher education as to "make higher education institutions more responsive to societal demands for graduates with readily usable knowledge and skills in the job market" (p.1) implying the necessity of fitting to this new purpose 'Employability'.

The notion 'Fitness for purpose' also harnesses the definition of quality 'perfection' with the idea that a perfect product or service with zero defects is absolutely irrelevant if it does not meet its said purpose (Harvey & Knight, 1996). This idea conveys how these definitions of quality can be interdependent.

Value for money:

According to this notion quality equates with value which is identified as value for money (Harvey & Green, 1993). This notion of quality sees quality in terms of "return on investment" (Harvey, 2014, analytical review, para. 4). Readings (1996) argues that higher education is seen merely as another consumer durable and therefore the value for money has become one of the factors influencing a person's choice. Williams (2014) critiques this notion of quality in higher education as viewing the university as a monetary investment in employability skills and thereby "undermines the authority and value of knowledge" (para.1). She further argues that it is more difficult to measure qualitative measures of educational development and intellectual engagement effectively.

Value for money appears to be a main concern for the government of UK as the government expects to provide value for money to the undergraduates of English universities. However, the major policies of their higher education fail to achieve this goal and stay ineffective as various institutes charge various tuition fees, some charging the maximum fees possible. An issue related to this is the question of what constitutes the 'value' of higher education as the universities and undergraduates hold different viewpoints towards value from policy makers (Strategic Society Centre, 2014). Thus, value for money may mean different things to different people. In support of this view Filippakou (2011) states "quality regimes influence intimately the manner in which we construct and organise higher education".

Transformative:

This notion of quality focuses on 'qualitative change' which is a fundamental change of the form of something. Education is not considered as a service for a customer but as a continuing process of transformation of the participant. This view relates to two aspects of the transformative quality in education. They are the enhancement and the empowerment of students (Harvey, 2008). A value-added view of quality enriches the enhancement of the students and student feedback as crucial in understanding this 'added value' (Harvey & Green, 1993). Empowerment encourages giving power to students to transform themselves. Their power may be seen through activities such as obtaining satisfaction feedback from students, allowing them to choose their own curriculum through a variety of subjects and developing their critical abilities. Transformative may also be equated with 'Exceptional' as empowering students and a value added view related to excellence 1, which is 'Exceeding high standards' (Harvey & Green, 1993). These coexistences of conceptions imply the complex nature of quality.

Cheng (2014) states that transformative includes five types of development which are intellectual, emotional, personal, physical and critical development of the students. Cheng (2014) further argues that transformation as a definition of quality is closely linked to the idea of 'transformative learning'. Considering these aspects of the transformative notion, Cheng (2014) asserts that 'transformation' has been the most suitable higher education definition and it has also become the main agenda in the United Kingdom's quality enhancement procedures. The concept 'Transformative' appears to be appropriate to Sri Lanka since Sri Lanka stays within a post conflict environment. Empowerment and enhancement of the students are necessary for reconciliation or building peace and for the development of a developing country like Sri Lanka.

Overview of different definitions

Many researchers (Ehsan, 2004; Mishra, 2006; Rué et al., 2010) adopt the five notions listed above as a "taxonomy of quality concepts" (Ehsan, 2004, p. 66) thus recognizing the significance of the work of Harvey & Green (1993)[4]. These five quality concepts may also coexist in certain situations as highlighted above.

2.3.2 A holistic view of quality

Seeing beyond TQM[5]

Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2007) bring out a new meaning to quality by identifying quality in a holistic manner. They identify two discrete types of processes in tertiary education and point out that a combination of these two types of processes gives a holistic nature to quality in higher education. These processes are:

1. The services that the higher education institutes provide to the students: in academic (e.g. enrolment, library) or administrative (e.g. Cafeterias, recreation) areas.
2. The teaching and learning (both education and research) activities (Srikanthan & Dalrymple 2007, p.178).

Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) argue that there should be two distinctive models to achieve these two types of processes within higher education institutions. They categorize these as Total Quality Management (TQM) for service areas in higher education institutes and Quality Management in Education (QME) for educational areas in these institutes. They argue that TQM is not sufficient to manage quality in higher education because of its complex nature. Many researchers (Koch, 2003; Luizzi, 2000; Meirovich and Romer, 2006; Rosa and Amaral, 2007) also discuss the difficulty in applying TQM to higher education. Meirovich and Romer (2006) argue that it is possible to implement TQM effectively only in the industrial areas of academic administration such as billing and registration where students and the suppliers do not play dual roles. The teachers play a dual role as suppliers of knowledge and also as evaluators of their students. The students also play a dual role in universities as consumers and as grade seekers (Meirovich and Romer, 2006). Thus, TQM may be congruent with

[4] See Appendix C for a table which provides a comparison of the quality concepts of Harvey & Green (1993) in order to give a clearer understanding of these concepts.

[5] TQM can be defined as "the process of integration of all activities, functions and processes within an organization in order to achieve continuous improvement in cost, quality, function and delivery of goods and services for customer satisfaction. It refers to the application of quality principles to overall process and all the management functions in order to ensure total customer satisfaction" (Ali & Shastri, 2010, p. 10).

administrative activities but not with the teaching and learning in the universities (Luizzi, 2000; Meirovich and Romer, 2006). TQM may also not be applicable to the universities as team work plays a major role in TQM. Academics may fear that they will lose their academic freedom and autonomy (Koch, 2003). Meirovich and Romer (2006) argue that TQM views high quality from the customers' perspective and since the customer in higher education is unclear, TQM is not easily adaptable to higher education. Students may not be the only customer in higher education and therefore satisfying whose needs and expectations is problematic. The use of the term 'customer' itself does not resonate in the academic culture as the higher education service differs from the normal customer - supplier relationship (Rosa and Amaral, 2007). Good teaching has a concern for the students' intellectual and personal development and this may not be a concern for a normal customer - supplier relationship (Baldwin, 1994). It is necessary to consider these aspects and overcome the limitations of TQM in order to provide a holistic view of quality.

Holistic View through a Multiple Stakeholder Perspective

In defining the term 'stakeholder' Freeman (1984) identifies stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (p. 25) and Burrows (as cited in Neave, 2002) brings out a taxonomy which contains four dimensions to view the meaning of stakeholders. The four dimensions are:

- location, that is, whether internal or external to the institution;
- Involvement status;
- Potential for co-operation or threat;
- Their stake in, and influence upon, the individual establishment of higher education (p. 21)

Benneworth & Jongbloed (2009) argue that the stakeholders are not merely passive receivers of general benefits, but they might require a more active voice to the running of the institutions to develop the value of their benefits. Thus, many researchers (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2009; Neave, 2002; Zachariah, 2007) take an interest in stakeholder perspectives when exploring issues related to higher education. Higher education includes multiple stakeholders with concurrently complementary and contradictory roles and perspectives (Conway, Mackay, & Yorke, 1994) and, therefore, to obtain an in depth understanding of quality issues in relation to higher education, it is necessary to identify these from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Beerkens (2015) further strengthen this view by conveying that the perspectives of the

stakeholders vary as their ‘stake’ is different and possess different kind of expertise and knowledge levels.

Multiple stakeholder groups chosen to participate in this study are fourfold: students, lecturers and senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes, and officials of the government organizations. External accreditors of cross border providers were omitted from the sample since this study is limited to the receiver country’s perspective and thereby limited to Sri Lanka. The employers were also excluded from the sample considering the scope of this study. Employers lie within a very broad area as businesses vary as small, medium and large scale businesses and categorized as public and private organisations. Thus, their expectations may vary greatly and therefore it would require a separate larger study to provide a broad understanding of their perceptions. Since the selected four groups represent various aspects of higher education institutes such as teaching, learning, administration and state connection, this multiple stakeholder approach will provide a holistic view to this study from the receiver country’s perspective.

It is also necessary to consider that this stakeholder influence can vary depending on the salience of the stakeholder groups (Leisyte, Westerheijden, Epping, Faber, & Weert, 2013). By referring to the stakeholder theory, Mitchell, Agle, & Wood (1997) argue that stakeholder salience which is “the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims” (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997, p. 854) depends on three factors ‘power, legitimacy, and urgency’. They recognise power as the ability that the stakeholders possess to influence the organisation in order to bring about the outcome they desire. According to them, legitimacy refers “to socially accepted and expected structures or behaviors” (p. 866) and those who have legitimate standing or a legitimate claim on the organisation are identified as the legitimate stakeholders. The third factor ‘urgency’ refers to the degree to which the stakeholders’ claims are considered as important for urgent action or for immediate attention (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Thus, stakeholder salience is vital when considering quality from a multiple stakeholder perspective.

2.4 Key Terminology : Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

According to Hayward (2006) quality assurance is "a planned and systematic review process of an institution or program to determine whether or not acceptable standards of education, scholarship, and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced" (p. 5). Quality assurance can be divided into two main procedures, internal and external quality assurance (Parri, 2006). Internal quality assurance focuses on institutional activities, institutional development and evaluation of internal accountability. In external quality assurance, assessments related to quality are done by external bodies or individuals and this occurs outside the higher education institutes.

The quality assurance process is normally conducted mainly via self evaluations, peer reviews conducted by a panel of experts with one or more site visits, the use of performance indicators or the practice of benchmarking, surveys of stakeholders such as students and employers and test of students' knowledge, skills and capabilities (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors, 2002). Even though quality assurance is crucial to a developing country like Sri Lanka, these methods of quality assurance need to be chosen wisely because a method such as self-evaluation may be unworkable in Sri Lanka if not managed effectively. For instance, even though self evaluation is an important tool which encourages self reflection, its value may deteriorate if the private higher education institutes of Sri Lanka tend to provide fake evaluations due to their market driven nature. They might breach the trust the stakeholders have in them in order to maintain their status and secure their funds. Harvey (1998) also argues that when staff members see self-evaluation as an activity related to the judgmental process in terms of status rankings or funding there will be a reluctance to reveal their weaknesses and a propensity to exaggerate strengths.

Quality improvement differs from quality assurance and as the terms themselves imply, quality assurance focuses on assuring quality and quality improvement focuses on improving processes continuously (HRSA, 2015). Quality improvement allows the institutes to obtain essential input, improve the process and increase the standards of output for the purpose of meeting set goals (Parri, 2006).

Quality improvement is also a major focus for modern national quality frameworks. For example, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK discusses the significance of promoting constant and systematic improvement (enhancement) in its quality

code. As QAA (n.d.) argues, enhancement can take place in different ways and at different levels, but a higher education provider needs to be aware that it has a responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities and it should have policies, structures and processes in place to detect where improvement is necessary.

An understanding of quality assurance and quality improvement is necessary to this study as the implementation and maintenance of quality of these colleges are also strongly related to their quality assurance and improvement.

2.5 A Quality Improvement Model: The Deming Cycle

W. Edwards Deming is considered as one of the early initiators of the Total Quality Management (TQM) and his 'Plan, Do, Study and Act' (PDSA) is a model used for the continuous quality improvement (Deming, 1994). This Deming Cycle is later known as 'the Plan, Do, Check, Action cycle (PDCA)' (also called the Shewhart cycle; see Figure 2.1). PDCA is a tool for managing processes and systems and some of the benefits of the PDCA include 'Systematic management of planning, implementation, checks and improvement of processes and the management system as a whole' and 'Better use of resources and increased accountability' (ISO, n.d.).

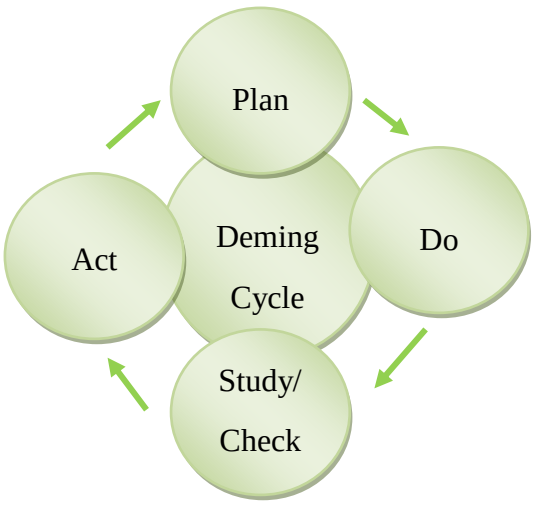

Figure 2.1: The Plan, Do, Check, Action Cycle (PDCA/PDSA)

(Beckford, 2002, p. 67)

Because the PDCA cycle provides a systematic way for problem solving, it has been employed in this study.

2.6 Criteria Leading to Priorities for quality

Criteria are defined in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) glossary as "the specifications or elements against which a judgment is made" (Stella, 2007). UNESCO defines criteria in a broader manner by describing the criteria as the "Yardsticks/checkpoints/benchmarks by which the attainment of certain objectives and/or standards can be examined" (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg, & Pârlea, 2004 p. 32). Furthermore, the UNESCO definition conveys that the "criteria describe in a certain degree of detail the characteristics of the requirements and conditions to be met [in order to meet a standard] and therefore provide the (quantitative and/or qualitative) basis on which an evaluative conclusion is drawn" (Vlăsceanu et al., 2004 p. 32). Stella (2007), by conducting a survey on indicators of quality in Asia-Pacific region, points out that different countries use different terms to indicate the indicators of quality. This study which also focuses on Sri Lanka is important since it provides a regional understanding of terminologies. Some of these synonymous terms along with the name of their respective quality assurance agency are: "Areas (Hong Kong, HKCAA), Indicators (China, SEEI), Criteria and key aspects (India, NAAC), Criteria and standards (New Zealand, NZQA), Standards and criteria (Malaysia, MQA) and Aspects (Sri Lanka, QAA)" (Stella, 2007, p. 29). This study adopts the term criteria in considering the UNESCO definition of criteria since many countries abide by the UNESCO terms and guidelines.

As Harvey (2013) argues quality and standard criteria were traditionally not expressed directly, but the current developments have made more emphasis on the transparency of these criteria. The QAA Council of Sri Lanka employs eight distinctive aspects for institutional review and programme review in its quality model. The institutional aspects are: "University goals and corporate planning, Financial resources and management, Research, Quality management and administration, Quality assurance, Learning resources and student support, External degree programs and University/ Industry/ Community/Other extension activities" (Stella, 2007, p. 30). The aspects used for programme review are "Curriculum design, content and review, Teaching, learning and assessment methods, Quality of students, including student progress and achievement, The extent of student feedback qualitative and quantitative, Postgraduate studies, Peer observation, Skills development and Academic guidance and counseling" (Stella, 2007, p. 30). It was interesting to see how different the criteria of quality in different countries and to cite one example the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in India utilizes seven broad criteria: "Curricular Aspects; Teaching-

Learning and Evaluation; Research, Consultancy and Extension; Infrastructure and Learning Resources; Student Support and Progression; Governance and Leadership and Innovative practices" (Stella, 2007, p. 30). Each of the above criteria is also provided with key aspects with specific weights for each aspect (Stella, 2007). Even though, the quality criteria for higher education can differ somewhat from country to country they have to reflect the overall aims of higher education, particularly the aim of enhancing critical and independent thinking in students and the ability of learning throughout their life (World Conference on Higher Education, 2009). This view is of key importance especially when countries engage in the provision of higher education in other jurisdictions.

The criteria or the factors determining quality of higher education are crucial to implement and maintain quality in an educational institution. Of relevance here also is that the experts who attended a meeting arranged by UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau of Education, Bangkok in August 2002 to discuss the aspects related to 'quality indicators and providing academic mobility via quality assurance agencies' identified ten key areas for quality as follows.

1. Integrity and mission;
2. Governance and management;
3. Human resources;
4. Learning resources and infrastructure;
5. Financial management;
6. Student profile and support services;
7. Curricular aspects;
8. Teaching-learning and evaluation;
9. Research, consultancy and extension; and
10. Quality assurance.

(IIEP-UNESCO, 2011, pp. 28-29).

It can be seen that this list of quality criteria is very consistent with the UNESCO (2001) definition of quality which identifies higher educational quality as a multi faceted concept that needs to include all of its functions and activities. Gibbs (2010) also supports the above view by arguing that "Education is a complex business with many interacting dimensions of quality in many varied contexts" (p. 12). He discusses '3P' model of Biggs (1993, p. 74) which is the 'Presage', 'Process' and 'Product' in relation to quality of higher education and provides a number of dimensions under each category. 'Presage' is the condition of an education context

before the students start their learning and being educated. This category includes the criteria: "funding, staff: student ratios, the quality of teaching staff and the quality of students" (p. 14). 'Process' indicates all the teaching and learning that is occuring in an education context and this category is represented by several criteria such as "the quality of teaching, the effects of the research environment and formative assessment and feedback" (p. 19). The third category 'Product' focuses on the outcomes of the education and this includes the criteria "student performance and degree classifications, student retention and persistence and employability and graduate destinations" (Gibbs, 2010, pp. 38-42). Gibbs by adopting this '3P' model provides an insight to the criteria of quality in higher education.

Chan (2011), through a student survey, ranked a list of 39 quality indicators based on their importance to Hong Kong students who follow non-local higher education qualifications. The top five indicators are "student achieves the learning objectives through the assignment, programme is accredited, reasonable tuition fees, the programme helps the student in the job-hunting process, and the content of the programme is relevant to the students' future careers" (2011, p. 81). Based on these indicators, Chan identifies 'effectiveness of learning' as a most important quality criterion.

Worthen & Berry (2002) also provide a list of measures[6] to include in the definitions of quality in higher education and argue that in practice some of these measures become priorities of quality. Any quality criterion related to higher education could be a quality priority at some point depending on what quality means to different institutes or to countries. It is not possible to achieve quality in a higher education sector without achieving these priorities and since the priorities are linked to the purposes of quality, the priorities may also help in identifying the purposes associated with 'quality in higher education'. It is even more essential to identify the priorities in cross border settings because if a transnational higher education sector identifies their priorities for quality then it will also help them to compare their priorities with the priorities of their partner countries. This cross border understanding will help them to make important decisions in relation to quality. For this study a list of quality

6 Graduation rates and totals; rates of student placement in employment and pay rates; rates of student placement in further education; scores on standardized tests; efficient use of resources; timely reporting and written accountability; accessibility of education to all those who can benefit from it; class size and faculty/student ratios; evaluations based on teaching; development of student abilities to apply new learning in practice (outside the classroom); encouragement and facilitation of life-long pursuit of learning; professional development opportunities for faculty; usefulness of learning to the students; development of skills and habits of active citizenship; development of critical consciousness; creation of a collective, respectful and reciprocal learning environment among students and teachers; and security of academic freedom of discussion for both students and faculty, among others. (Worthen and Berry, 2002, p. 1-2)

criteria identified from the literature sources included here (Refer appendix D), is compiled to inform this empirical research into priorities for quality up held by the various stakeholder groups involved in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

2.7 Purposes of Quality

A variety of purposes are associated with the quality of higher education. Several literature materials (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors, 2002; European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2009; Kis, 2005) convey a purpose of quality in higher education is to improve the education available to students in higher education institutions. Quality is also seen as a mean of obtaining public confidence in higher education in the context of Sri Lanka (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors, 2002) since the quality of private higher education institutions of Sri Lanka has become a debatable issue with multiple viewpoints about the implementation and maintenance of their quality. Safeguarding public confidence thus becomes a purpose of quality indicating how new purposes of quality may arise from the context of a country, or in other words, that it can be situational. The above purpose also indicates accountability that quality can bring to stakeholders. The QAA of UK through its quality code conveys that quality safeguards academic standards (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2015) and thereby implies how accountability is maintained via quality. Thus, accountability to stakeholders becomes a purpose of quality.

Mishra (2006) also brings out several purposes of quality by providing reasons as to why high education institutes and policy makers in education need to worry about quality. These reasons are as follows.

1. To survive in a highly competitive environment by means of attracting students and funds to each institute.
2. To satisfy students, parents or funding bodies of higher education as they demand courses which are relevant to the job market and worth for the money and time that they spend.
3. To maintain standards of the institutes.
4. To be accountable to the stakeholders with regard to the funds used.
5. To develop employee values and motivation by means of having a more systematic work environment.
6. To improve image, esteem and credibility of the institutes (Mishra, 2006, p. 14).

As these purposes indicate, higher education, which is a socially bounded system, must meet the needs and requirements of various social groups or stakeholder types, such as students, employees, and funding bodies, by means of quality. Also of interest here is the UNESCO/APQN (2006) discussion about the significance of quality in protecting students, which implies consumer protection as a purpose of quality in higher education.

2.8 Implementation of Priorities for Quality

In order to understand the quality of higher education institutions in depth, it is necessary to examine how and to what extent they implement and maintain priorities for quality. Investigating the experiences and perceptions of different stakeholder groups on the implementation and maintenance of quality in the higher education institutes under study will help to understand this aspect. Informing this study were the findings of Lim (2010) whose study on foreign degree awarding Malaysian and Singaporean private providers' experiences with their institutional quality assurance, reveals that the examination papers are set and marked in a standardized manner and this is considered as the most common control measure (Lim, 2010). However, the interviewees of the study describe that they are being granted diverse amounts of authority as the Malaysian providers have more authority when marking examination papers and the Singapore providers are under strict control of their university partners (Lim, 2010). The CEO of one of the Singapore private tertiary education providers who participated in the study conveyed why he welcomed these stringent measures as follows.

> … most important is to keep setting the examinations from the offshore schools …[This is] because if the offshore schools can set the examination, then they will try to lower the standards a bit so that more people can pass (SASM1) (p. 217).

Lim's study (2010) also indicates that the partnering universities have a limited focus on the assurance of quality while the criteria used for the assessment of academic quality in Malaysia are ambiguous and Singapore lacks quality assurance schemes. Two consequences of these circumstances are of interest to this study.

1. The four providers of higher education included in Lim's study introduced their own measures to assess quality of teaching and maintain the aspects of delivery which they

believed as important to academic quality. What is implied is that if the provider defines quality via assessment, there is no guarantee that it will be accepted by the home country.

2. As the standards they employ to assure quality of service delivery of education rely on resources and history of the institutes, they have led some institutes to struggle to achieve their income targets. Thus, they may reduce standards to attract more students (Lim, 2010, p. 218).

Lim's study (2010) is important in providing an understanding of how and to what extent 'teaching and learning', which is a priority for quality in higher education, is implemented and maintained by private foreign degree providers in Malaysia and Singapore. The above findings may be useful in the context of Sri Lanka since the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka also offer degrees of a number of countries. There is also no government body to monitor these institutes in Sri Lanka and therefore we can assume that some of the activities of quality assurance mentioned above may be related to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Chan (2011) discusses the quality assurance experiences of Hong Kong students who follow foreign higher education qualifications and identifies the importance of tutors in relation to student learning. She quotes two of her student participants as follows:

> The commitment of the tutor is influential. Some tutors would distribute a large bunch of notes. It's because they have taught in different universities, they have a lot of information. Some tutors are new, they have less supplementary information. They can't do anything.

> Communication is important. Overseas teachers will only grade us on the last lesson. Sometimes, overseas teachers will have different ideas than the local one. The course will be better if there's a tutor (Chan, 2011, p. 97).

These two quotes suggest that some of the practices adopted by these institutes obstruct the effective learning of the students, and that some practices need to be modified. Some practices associated with the cross border delivery of programmes may create more difficulties for both the provider and receiver countries if they take seriously the need to implement and maintain priorities for quality.

The findings of Lim's study and Chan's study which are discussed above also indicate that many quality issues are created by the mismatches between the purposes of quality and the implementation of quality. Lim's study discussed above demonstrates that some activities of the higher education institutes do not match with the purposes of quality which were discussed in the section 2.7. Chan's study also indicates how some practices do not match with effective learning of the students. These mismatches create pressure to the higher education system and when this pressure is not handled properly the outcome will be low quality of the programmes and lack of high quality in the graduate output.

2.9 Quality in the Sri Lankan Context

It is worthwhile to review the existing literature on different ways that the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka implement and maintain 'teaching and learning' which is a priority for quality. A marketer in a foreign degree awarding institute in Sri Lanka points out how his institute implements this quality priority as follows:

> IIHE programmes are always subject to close scrutiny by UoW, as well as by the Quality Assurance Association UK (QAA), which regulates UK universities and their overseas affiliates such as ours to ensure that UK quality standards in education are maintained here as well, and are not compromised. Additionally, quality of our programmes is further certified, both by an internal and an external examiner. Those are the levels of quality assurance that we are subjected to, ensuring that the student gets his monies worth (The Sunday Leader, n.d., para. 4).

Another foreign degree awarding institute which has also obtained local degree awarding status from the University Grants Commission (UGC) Sri Lanka, declares on its website how they implement and maintain quality of 'teaching and learning' as follows:

> Our courses have a strong focus on providing real life solutions to real life problems. Practical projects, industry placements and guest speakers are key features of our programs. We strive to provide a different learning approach, developed to maximise the student outcome and experience, as well as providing state-of-the-art facilities and infrastructure. SAITM's faculty staff is comprised of professors / senior lecturers from local universities recruited in line with the UGC

> guidelines and highly qualified visiting and overseas faculty members (South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine, 2011, para. 2).

Other sources of literature indicate how different institutes advertise different ways of implementing and maintaining the quality priorities in their institutes to promote their courses. For example, Dr. Keith Sharp, Director, University of London International Programmes at London School of Economics (LSE) expresses how the University of London's control mechanisms in relation to student assessment of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka assure and maintain student achievements of learning. He states:

> Unlike some other universities, the University of London continues to assess students by unseen written examinations as not only do we find this an excellent way of testing a student's ability , but as this method of assessment is totally secure, we can always be confident that students' achievements are indeed their own (Sharp, 2012, p. 101).

The study of Stephen (2007) which discusses the 'relevance of the foreign degrees offered in Sri Lanka and the Socio-Economic Development of the country in relation to the provision of foreign degrees' also brings out some significant descriptive statistics on the quality implementation and maintenance. Stephen (2007) describes how, from a sample of twenty five employers of foreign degree holders in Sri Lanka, 60 percent perceive that the quality of foreign degree holders is above the local graduates. Moreover, the interviews conducted with some fifty graduates who pursued a foreign degree in Sri Lanka revealed that generally the quality of education had been commendable. In support of this idea 68 percent of graduates stated that the quality of education was excellent while the other 32 percent stated the quality of education was good (Stephen, 2007). The study also conducted interviews with some fifty undergraduates who were pursuing their degree studies in several foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka; 44 percent of these students rated their degree very highly while the other 56 percent perceived it highly; 64 percent of the students stated that their lecturers subject knowledge was good, while another 24 percent rated it as excellent; 64 percent rated their course curriculum as good and 12 percent rated it as excellent; and 52 percent identify their course work as good and 16 percent as excellent (Stephen, 2007).

Although the above data implies that the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka implement and maintain the quality priority 'teaching and learning' to a great extent, it is necessary to identify these quality aspects from various stakeholders' perspectives to obtain a

deeper understanding of quality of these institutes. While the above discussed study does include employers' views the study is more focused on students' opinions which although essential to research into the area of focus, might not be a sufficient criterion for assessing the quality of these institutes. Stephen's study is also limited to one aspect of quality, which is the relevance of the foreign degrees of these institutes to Sri Lanka and their contribution to the social and economic development of the country. The present study differs from the study of Stephen as it focuses on various dimensions of quality with regard to these institutes. This study, by adopting a variety of stakeholder groups namely, students, lecturers and senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes, and the government officials, provides more insight to the quality of these institutes while also enhancing the reliability of the data. However, an interesting finding of Stephen's research (2007) into 19 institutes offering foreign first degrees was that he found that these degree courses are mainly offered in the fields of Information Technology (IT), Business Management, and Accounting, Finance, & Banking. This reflects a lack of balance of courses offered within the foreign degree awarding institutes; science related subjects such as Medicine and Engineering being particularly underrepresented in these institutes. Welch (2011) reports a similar situation in the Indonesian private higher education sector in discussing how the sciences are neglected in this sector and identifying this as a problem connected to quality.

A study by Mariampillai (2014) focuses on the perceptions of stakeholders of private higher education institutes in the UK and Sri Lanka conducting joint partnerships between higher education institutes and private for-profit providers in relation to the provision of UK degree courses in business and management field. The study reports that even though the UK degrees can be pursued in Sri Lanka at a lower cost than offered in the UK, these degrees still accommodate a certain class of people who are financially strong. The study also found that private higher education also makes a division between the students as those who can afford to pay and cannot. The study reports since government university education is limited in Sri Lanka, the cross border higher education receives more market opportunities, but it also comes with "built - in risks" (p. 165) as there are limited effective regulatory regimes or legislative tools to monitor and inspect these institutes of Sri Lanka. Mariampillai states that the perception of Sri Lanka is that "the private providers and their graduates are better" (p. 168). However, the study of Mariampillai focuses more on the UK degrees offered in the UK and only six participants were chosen to investigate the issues of Sri Lanka. Even though the multiple stakeholders were chosen, it fails to provide an in depth understanding on the perspectives of stakeholders in Sri Lanka in relation to the provision of the UK degrees offerred in Sri Lanka since the sample number is very small and does not include many

participants from each stakeholder group. Furthermore, the study is limited to the UK and also to the Business and Management courses that do not require much facilities or resources outside classroom setting. The present study, by employing a large sample group and also many participants from multiple stakeholder groups, overcomes the limitations of the study of Mariampillai in relation to Sri Lankan context. This study differs from the Mariampillai's study as this study investigates quality in relation to a number of provider countries and many number of programmes offerred in Sri Lanka. Thus, this study stays strongly within its context, the Sri Lankan perspective of foreign degrees offerred in Sri Lanka.

In a newspaper article exploring students' perceptions, a student who is studying in a foreign degree awarding institute in Sri Lanka expresses the advantages of his institute as follows, "My sister missed a place in the state medical faculty by a few points. She went to Bangladesh to study medicine, but encountered many difficulties there. So my parents decided to send me to this medical college. I see this institute as a blessing to Sri Lankans" (Fazlulhaq, 2011, para. 29). In support of the above views another student states: "I'm half-Japanese, half-Sri Lankan. The laboratory and research facilities are like those in foreign medical colleges. My brother went to Singapore for higher studies, while I chose to study here" (Fazlulhaq, 2011, para.30). These students' views convey that there are many positive aspects of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka and they also indicate some signs of high quality.

A contrasting view, however, comes from Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007) of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council of University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka who point out in the article 'Students taken for a ride: Sri Lankan example', how some foreign degree awarding institutes provide poor quality education to students and thereby ruin the lives of students. "Even in the case of actual foreign university affiliations, the poor quality education provided results in many students failing examinations and finally abandoning the courses after paying a large sum of money" (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007, p. 2). This view also suggests how outcomes can be poor when quality has been neglected or not managed properly. The students become victims of these issues as these institutes do not meet the purposes of quality such as 'To be accountable to the stakeholders with regard to the funds'.

A survey conducted by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of the University Grants Commission (UGC) found that more than fifty companies are employed in the 'business education' (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007). However, it is difficult to estimate the number of institutions which are actually registered with the registrar of companies as providing educational services since most of these companies are registered under different

categories (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007). These companies exist as 'business education' (p. 2) by taking the advantage of the loopholes of the prevalent law in Sri Lanka, and they are able to adopt this procedure because it is still the case that no private universities are allowed in Sri Lanka. This is ironical in a way because in order to provide a service like education these institutes have to exist as business companies and thereby have indirectly taken education to be a business.

2.10 Key Issues and Possible Solutions

The difficulties arising from the different viewpoints of stakeholder groups in relation to their understandings about quality and its implementation and maintenance may create pressure on the institutes. Tang & Hussin (2011) point out that the values of various stakeholders of higher education with regard to quality may vary as they can have quite dissimilar interests in tertiary education. It is necessary to understand these differences and overcome such challenges in order to sustain quality at a level that satisfies all the main stakeholder groups.

Several studies have identified some of the differences arising from the differing perceptions of several key stakeholder groups in relation to quality of higher education. Vann (2012) points out how the perceptions of the students and the lecturers can be different in relation to the quality of Cambodian higher education. The findings of Vann's study revealed the students considered that the quality in the higher education of Cambodia was not high quality when compared with the other countries in the region. Many students also perceived that many higher education institutes operate like businesses where they compete with each other for profit. By contrast, the lecturers perceived that the quality of higher education in Cambodia was not low and viewed quality of these institutes positively. As Vann (2012) argues the lecturers accepted the quality of these institutes by highlighting that it is much improved when compared with the quality of two decades ago. They talked in support of the Cambodian higher education while also showing a proud attitude about their higher education. According to Vann's analysis, the difference in perception arose from the fact of many lecturers' perceiving the quality dimensions as those directed towards input and process, while the students' views mostly linked to the process and output. Also of interest here, is Zachariah (2007) whose study identified different perceptions between students and lecturers in relation to the quality of private higher education institutions in Muscat, Oman. As the findings suggest many students put less value on the importance of other students in providing a positive impact for their teaching and learning while the lecturers considered this aspect as

significant. These studies imply how these various stakeholder groups understand the dimensions of quality in higher education differently, thus requiring a higher education sector which can see and be more sensitive to the variety of perceptions held by these stakeholders in relation to quality.

It is maintained that the key issues that result in negative consequences to key stakeholder groups such as students, senior managers and foreign providers are significant when implementing and maintaining the quality of these institutes. Other literature discusses various key issues related to the quality of private higher education. Yahia (2013) writing about Egypt asserts that rising tuition fees make student life more difficult especially if they are not supported with any kind of financial aid. High tuition fees may also impact on the quality of student input as this can limit admission based on students' financial ability rather than merit and this may reduce the quality of student output. As a student of the American University in Cairo in Egypt explains:

> I guess I can accept that good education should be costly, that's the same everywhere. The problem is that when the fees are so expensive it becomes selective, only available to richer people who can afford this, rather than those who are really good (Yahia, 2013, para. 7).

Punchi (2001) situates this scenario within the new global economy where it detaches from any kind of state intervention and argues "since the idea is to make profits, social welfare is seen as a "loss" and poverty is viewed as an individual responsibility" (p. 364). He further argues that as an impact of globalization the education is not seen as a social commodity anymore and it is "not treated as a mix of social, cultural and economic policy, rather it is viewed as a branch of economic policy alone" (p. 365). However, this approach can cause many problems as the above mentioned quote implies and this circumstance may allow students with a vast variety of knowledge levels to study in one classroom setting. This makes learning more difficult for all groups of students. Perera (2010) reports that student heterogeneity also brings more challenges to the teachers as they should be careful not to provide either an inadequate "quantity of input or inappropriate quality of input" (p. 8). When the institutes recruit students based on affordability rather than merit, they will also lose high quality graduates and this can have an impact on the institution. These issues may also impact the overall objectives and values of higher education in countries.

Singh (2012) points out some basic problems that the higher education institutes in India face as insufficient infrastructure and facilities, inadequate rate of student enrolment, poor faculty and inadequate faculty staff, outdated methods of teaching, decreased standards in research, students who lacks motivation and overcrowded classrooms. Lim (2010) argues that the main cause for the perception that private higher education providers are not interested in quality, is "their profit-driven operations, given that it can be costly to invest in facilities or undertake activities to uplift quality and the benefits of such are normally non-obvious" (Lim, 2010, p. 212).

Corruption in higher education is a major problem that enfeebles a country's sense of social cohesion (Heyneman, 2004). Some of these corrupt practices include bribing for grades and for university admission, buying diplomas, cheating on examinations, plagiarism on student assessment work and malpractice in quality assurance and accreditation processes (Hallak and Poisson, 2007; Rumyantseva, 2005). It is ironical how sometimes the people in charge of quality assurance themselves manipulate data and adopt bias accrediting procedures on fraudulent grounds (Hallak and Poisson, 2007). In support of this Raouf, Ahmad, & Qureshi (2009) highlight that the employees of accreditation agencies take bribes to certify quality and there are some complaints that the accreditors are biased against private institutes. Some students, parents and the institutes also pressurize the academics to adjust grading standards in order to pass all of the students (Hallak and Poisson, 2007). Thus, corruption may produce unqualified professionals who possess distorted values (Rumyantseva, 2005).

Individuals of some countries may also perceive the idea that corruption is acceptable and they get it embedded in their culture when they see that their success depends on bribery and favouritism and not on their personal performance (Rumyantseva, 2005). Corrupt practices can be detrimental to public safety and health as it provides incompetent doctors, teachers and other professionals to the work environment by granting them license in an improper manner (Rumyantseva, 2005). The individuals, the employers and the nations as a whole will be affected economically when higher education is less capable as a source of increasing income due to corruption (Heyneman, 2004).

Sri Lanka also faces major challenges due to corruption. A key issue that bothered the country recently is the leaking of the papers of a few subjects in national level examinations prior to the exam. Nineteen questions of the science paper of GCE O/L examination, 2012, were leaked by a tuition teacher distributing a mock test paper which included these questions (De-Alwis, 2012 b). A similar incident was reported with regard to the Law College Entrance

Examination, 2012. The secretary of the National Intellectual Council (NIC), Bandula Chandrasekara, expressed their suspicion on leaking of question papers by stating how the number of Muslim students who passed the law entrance exam increased alarmingly in 2011 and 2012 after one Muslim minister became the Minister of Justice. He asserted that it is not fair to the other students who sat for this exam (De-Alwis, 2012 c). Later, the Criminal Investigation Department of the Sri Lanka Police Service (CID) confirmed that this exam paper had been leaked (Srilankamirror, 2013). The above mentioned incidents point out that corruption appears to be a major barrier for assuring the quality of education as it is in other areas of public life. For example, the Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013 identified corruption as one of the most problematic factors in doing business in Sri Lanka (The World Economic Forum, 2012).

Another difficulty that the institutes face is the difficulty in finding local resources, such as teaching staff and library support with the appropriate quality as it is very costly and also not practical to supply all these resources from the provider country (UNESCO/APQN, 2006). According to UNESCO/APQN (2006) another difficulty that the institutes face when implementing and maintaining quality is the insufficient inter-institutional cooperation or agreement. Cultural traditions also become a barrier when implementing and maintaining quality. World Bank (2000) point out that especially women in developing countries learn subjects that fit into their conventional roles, rather than programmes which will provide more opportunities in the job market. This is also relevant to a country like Sri Lanka where there are different ethnic groups such as Muslims and Sinhalese. Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2008) support the gender bias nature in some professions by stating that 92 percent of the teachers in Sri Lanka are female as teaching gives them more free time in the evenings for child rearing. Some students are also not allowed to engage in training programmes outside the institutes or work in companies to obtain the necessary skills or training because of the nature of their culture. Therefore, cultural traditions, religions and parental influence can be a barrier when institutes attempt to improve students' learning and skills which are crucial for quality of programmes.

Identified Solutions

Singh (2012) provides a list of suggestions to improve quality of higher education in relation to the Indian context, some of which may also be useful when improving quality in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. Some of the significant suggestions included in the list are:

1. Industry and academia link is required to provide curriculum which is relevant to industry requirements.
2. Fee structure should relate to the financial capacity of the students (Reasonable tuition fees).
3. The teachers should adopt new skills and attitudes to cater for a student centered education and to employ dynamic teaching methods.
4. International cooperation is key to solve problems in higher education.
5. Self financing colleges should make arrangements to obtain accreditation.
6. The quality assurance system must be independent of political and institutional interaction and it must have a basis in the legislation. There should be operational, financial and academic autonomy coupled with accountability to ensure that the stakeholders particularly the students are not taken for a ride.

(Singh, 2012, pp. 10-15).

Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007) make two suggestions for improving the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka which are somewhat similar to the last suggestion mentioned above. Their very crucial solutions to key quality issues are: the establishment of legislation for private higher education of Sri Lanka which involves registration, licensing and accreditation; an amendment to the present Universities Act in order to allow the QAA Council to conduct external quality assessments and accreditation of private Higher education institutes.

2.11 Basis for the Pressure Cooker Model

This study identifies a pressure cooker model to monitor and report quality of the private institutes of Sri Lanka using 'the pressure cooker' that has been theorized by Freud by comparing the mind to a pressure cooker. He argued that when a person encounters an upsetting circumstance in life then the feelings that the person could not express get bottled up and this energy comes out as a physical symptom (Erwin, 2002). In the same manner as discussed in the literature above, the pressure is created within a higher education system when their implementation of activities related to quality does not match with their purposes or the definitions of quality. If these mismatches are not attended to and rectified the outcome will be an outburst of low quality or lack of quality. It is because 'quality' does not stand as a single thing and it needs to be understood as a collection of dimensions such as definitions, purposes and practices of quality. The key stakeholders also have an impact on the institutes

based on their power, legitimacy and urgency (refer section 2.3.2) when the institutes make decisions and their salience may create pressure and tensions as happens within a pressure cooker.

Being a key stakeholder group of higher education institutes, quality agencies face many tensions and challenges when they assure quality because different stakeholders groups may set different expectations of quality assurance and the quality agencies have to respond to the changing demands of these stakeholders (Beerkens, 2015). These agencies face more challenges when the quality assurance crosses national borders as they have to work with social, economic, political, educational and cultural environment of different countries. Quality agencies which assure quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka have to undergo a greater risk as Sri Lanka does not have a quality regulatory body for these private institutes. Agencies which operate from overseas may not be able to capture the true picture of these institutes due to these borders or the distance of countries. Thus, it creates more pressure and tensions for these quality agencies when they engage in quality assurance . As it is necessary to identify the right whistles to make food properly in a pressure cooker, it is necessary to identify these issues of quality and respond to them with proper solutions in order to improve quality.

The pressure cooker model can be considered in comparison with New Public Management (NPM) model to some extent since both the models focus on improving quality of systems by fixing problems and thereby managing the pressure that arises. NPM is a model of organisational behaviour which attempts to fix problems such as performance deficiencies, poor program design and bureaucratic bungling of the public sector by utilizing private sector techniques and thereby managing the pressure arising from the limitations of public sector techniques (Eagle, 2005). Some of these private sector techniques which are said to have an effective outcome include competition that drives towards efficiency and effectiveness, performance measurement and increased focus on output, preference for more autonomous organizational forms, customer orientation and accountability for customers (Eagle, 2005). Some of these private sector techniques can have a negative impact on the long rooted traditional values and culture of government universities, especially in a country like Sri Lanka where education is mainly considered as a public good (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors, 2002). Even though NPM is designed to minimize tensions within the public sector, these techniques may not be very effective in the public higher education system of Sri Lanka as there will be strong resistance to this change by the academics and student unions and they may create pressure to the government not to treat education as a private entity. On

the other hand, the pressure cooker model tends to be more effective in the Sri Lankan context since it attempts to understand the mismatches arising from the dimensions of quality such as purposes and practices of quality and thereby find solutions to manage quality. This quality monitoring and reporting framework can be supported with the PDCA cycle (refer section 2.5) as it is necessary to plan methods to improve quality when the mismatches arise and then implement them to check if the pressure can be managed by these chosen methods. If the pressure is managed with the chosen techniques then the new process can be continued and if the new methods fail to manage the pressure then new strategies have to be identified by repeating the PDCA cycle until the desired solutions are found. This iterative process can be continued in attempts to approach the perfection level of quality.

2.12 Public and Private Provision of Higher Education

Even though many countries perceive higher education as 'public' (Marginson, 2007), private higher education has emerged to be the fastest growing sector of higher education with its worldwide rapid expansion during the past several decades (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009). According to David Willetts who was responsible for universities and science in the UK as a Conservative Member of Parliament, "the value of higher education is both public and private" (Guardian Professional, 2014, para. 2). Ruffini (2015) strengthens the above view arguing that the funding and organisation of higher education in general are characterized by a mix of market mechanisms and state involvement.

As stated earlier in the thesis, the arena of public versus private higher education has given rise to much debate within Sri Lanka. When the government indicated interest in introducing private universities in Sri Lanka, some argued that the existence of private higher education in Sri Lanka would increase access and equity for students. This, however, was strongly opposed by some political parties and students of government funded universities. The Inter University Students' Federation (IUSF), the main students union in Sri Lanka, organized protests against 'the private universities bill' (De-Alwis, 2013) and The Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA) in Sri Lanka went on a token strike against this bill (De-Alwis, 2012 a). Both IUSF and FUTA see private universities as a threat to the free education policy of the country, thereby upholding the notion that higher education should be treated as a public good.

On the other hand, Premarathna (2011) argues that because these institutes increase much needed access to higher education for those students who have both the buying power and the

merit -, private provision is significant. Others, for example the convener of the IUSF, contend that marketised structure through which such profit oriented institutes operate means that they treat students merely as commodities by making education available only to people who have the financial strength, regardless of merit, stating that, "…the students hailing from wealthy families who didn't even managed to get through their Advanced Levels, can simply walk in and come out as doctors while the children of the less privileged classes will be blocked from entering into a university even after excelling A-levels, simply because they have fallen short of a few marks" (Wijesinghe, 2012, "Excerpts of the interview," para. 5). Thus, it cannot be maintained that equity is accomplished. A student who can afford tuition fees and has average marks can enter a private institute while a student who has obtained high marks but cannot afford tuition fees may not attain entry into a private higher education institution unless this student is supported with a scholarship. Unlike in many western countries, the public universities in Sri Lanka cannot cater to all the students who are qualified to enter, and the government is also unable to financially support the students who are not selected for public higher education. As this scenario conveys, private higher education in Sri Lanka increases access to higher education, but only to a particular group.

Unlike in other goods or services, the quality of students who access higher education has a significant impact on the outcome of the higher education service. Therefore, it is maintained, that the students' qualifications or their real eligibility for the programmes should be considered. Limiting the delivery of higher education to a normal market process where the buyer who can afford to buy the product or service he or she needs may lead to lower outcomes if the institutes ignore the students' eligibility for their programmes. When the main focus is on profit, the quality of education can become weakened (Wijesinghe, 2012). Therefore, in a country such as Sri Lanka, where the government is constrained in how much higher education it can fund thus needing private providers to increase access, it is necessary to have proper policies and quality assurance frameworks to safeguard higher education. These issues are explored further in subsequent chapters.

2.13 Financing higher education

Higher education financing may include public financing, private financing or a combination of both. A national view about whether to treat higher education as a public good or private good, or a combination of them, also determines who finances higher education in a particular country. Europaeum (n.d.) suggests students, government, civil society and employers should

share the financing of higher education based on the proportion of interest they each have in higher education. As the Neo-liberal policies of many countries allowed the private sector institutes to grow significantly, many countries such as Australia, China and the United Kingdom adopted a cost sharing concept when financing higher education and this approach assisted in reducing the financial burdens of higher education of these governments (Goksu & Goksub, 2015; Woodhall, 2007).

When public financing is considered, it focuses on providing degree programmes free of tuition fees in public tertiary institutions by financing higher education through tax revenues. This public financing model is followed in many countries in continental Western Europe and also in Sri Lanka for undergraduate education of government universities (Aturupane, 2012). Private financing on the other hand, mainly depends on student tuition fees and some institutions charge tuition fees upfront while other institutes allow deferred tuition fees. Countries like Australia and New Zealand allow deferred tuition fees where the students are allowed to pay the cost of their undergraduate education when they enter employment after completing their programme. This model seems to be inappropriate to developing countries like Sri Lanka since they are not used to the culture of repayment and it will also be difficult to track the graduates specially if they live abroad (Aturupane, 2012). Thus, the private higher education institutes in Sri Lanka mainly adopt the upfront payment of tuition fees semester wise or yearly wise and if the institutes deliver programmes of foreign providers the fees will be decided based on an agreed amount between the provider and the receiving parties.

As Sri Lanka's economy changed from highly controlled and regulated system to a highly liberalized system, private and foreign investment began to play a major part of the economic activities of higher education of Sri Lanka and this change made a significant growth in the tuition fee based financing system in higher education where students are expected to bear the cost of their programmes. The foreign investors and local economic giants also had a major influence on the social structure by putting the weaker sections of society at a disadvantage (National Education Commission, 1993). It is suggested that they should maintain some sensitivity towards this social fabric and cultivate social responsibility along with their profit motive and provide economic sensitivity towards these disadvantaged groups in order to maintain justice and equity in the provision of higher education to the students.

2.14 Nature of Cross Border Higher Education

Globalization and internationalization are two key factors which shape and challenge the higher education sector worldwide (Knight, 2008) with many countries adopting cross border activities in higher education. A problematic issue here is that while the demand for higher education is growing significantly in many countries (Knight, 2008) there is a rapid decline in public funding for tertiary education (Martin & Peim, 2011). Therefore, many nations are paying an unprecedented interest in cross border educational activities (Knight, 2008 ; Martin & Peim, 2011). Advancement in the technology of information and communication also backs up the development of cross border higher education (OECD, 2009). Martin & Peim (2011) identify USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand as the largest exporters of higher education with USA being the largest from this group. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, cross border education includes three diverse forms: mobility of people, mobility of institutions and mobility of programmes (OECD, 2004). People mobility is when students or academics go overseas to study or to teach (OECD, 2004). The institutional mobility occurs when an institution manages a branch campus in another country, when they work in partnership with a foreign institute or university or when they buy an educational institute in another country (OECD, 2004). Programme mobility is when a programme moves to another country and the programme delivery usually occurs via a partnership agreement between the home and the host country providers or it may be an autonomous initiative by the overseas provider (Knight, 2006). The delivery of programmes can be face to face, distance learning or blended mode (Knight, 2006). The most common programme delivery modes are "Franchising, twinning, and new forms of articulation and validation arrangements" (Knight, 2006 p. 358). According to some arrangements, the foreign provider provides the programme and the qualification awarded to the students while the local provider provides teaching and support, partly or totally. In other cases the foreign provider will take the sole responsibility for the academic programme delivery while the domestic business partner invests in the operation (Knight, 2006). The research reported in this thesis is mainly woven around the cross border movement of programmes asmost of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka offer foreign degrees through franchise arrangements for programme delivery.

Some countries export education in order to generate income whereas others take interest in importing education courses and institutes for the purpose of building their nations (Knight, 2006). According to a study conducted by IDP the prime reasons for providing off shore programmes are as follows.

- 41 percent - Generate additional sources of income
- 31 percent - Increased profile and reputation
- 13 percent - Internationalization of the curriculum
- 9 percent - Recruit international students to Australian campuses
- 6 percent - Build capacity of offshore partner

(Davis, Olsen, & Bohm, 2000, pp. 25-26)

Of interest here is the final bullet point listed above, highlighting that only 6 percent of those providing cross border programmes consider building capacity of the off shore partner as their primary rationale for providing off shore programmes. This implies that there can be a mismatch between the expectations of the foreign and domestic providers, or in a broader sense, the expectations between the home country and the host country. As at least two governments are involved in cross-border higher education: a home government (exporting country) and a host government (importing country) (Lane & Kinser, 2008) it is necessary to understand the relationship between the education institution and both the host government and the home government (Lane & Kinser, 2011). Furthermore, Lane & Kinser (2011) argue that "adjusting the analysis from the relationship between the institution and the home government to the relationship between the institution and the host government can demonstrate the sometimes public nature of private activity" (Lane & Kinser, 2011, p. 256). They point out the home and host governments' views toward cross border activities can be different as some activities can be more public to the host government than the home government. A thorough understanding of the expectations of home government and the host government and each others' views is necessary when countries engage in cross border higher education in order to realize the expectations of both the host and the home governments. The research reported in this thesis shows the importance of such an understanding for cross border higher education in Sri Lanka.

2.14.1 The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Education

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), is a legal and multilateral agreement that covers service sectors in international trade (García-Guadilla, 2002). The GATS aims to promote trade (Knight, 2002). The education sector is one of the twelve broad segments covered under the GATS agreement and higher education is covered under the education sector in GATS (García-Guadilla, 2002). Since GATS is managed by the World Trade

Organization (WTO) all 144 countries which are members of the WTO are covered by this agreement (Knight, 2002). Sri Lanka is also a member of the WTO. The GATS describes four modes to supply services, and that is: "Cross Border Supply, Consumption Abroad, Commercial Presence and Presence of Natural Persons" (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2004, p. 9). In mode one which is 'Cross Border Supply' the service is crossing the border and the consumer does not need to move physically. Mode two, 'Consumption Abroad', is where the consumer moves to the country of the supplier and mode three, 'Commercial Presence', involves establishing business facilities in another country to provide services. Examples for this mode in relation to higher education are a twinning partnership, local branch and/or arrangement of franchising with local institutes. The last mode, 'Presence of Natural Persons', is when people move to another country temporally to render a service (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2004). Mode one is more relevant to this study since programme mobility is the key cross border aspect of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. Mode four will also be relevant when the lecturers or any other staff from the provider countries move to the receiver country to provide service on a temporary basis. The mode 'Consumption Abroad' occurs when students come from other countries to study in these institutes in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, Mode three, 'Commercial Presence' will be relevant when an institute in Sri Lanka and a foreign provider have a joint venture or when a foreign provider makes an investment in Sri Lanka.

The GATS consists of three parts (Knight, 2002). The first is the framework of regulations which describe general obligations (Knight, 2002). The second contains the national schedules which point out specific commitments of a country when foreign providers enter their domestic market (Knight, 2002). The third contains several annexes including the schedule of commitments (Knight, 2002). The obligations of the GATS are in two types, general or unconditional and conditional obligations (Tilak, 2011; World Trade Organization, 2014). All member countries of the WTO have to follow the unconditional obligation which also includes The Most Favoured Nation Treatment of Article II in GATS, highlighting that all member countries must receive equal treatment and they must not subject to discrimination (World Trade Organization, 2014). The obligation to 'transparency' under Article III of the GATS demonstrates that all the terms and conditions and policies of countries, including their restrictions, must be clear.

GATS: A Threat or an Opportunity?

The trade in education and its benefit to the developed as well as developing countries have become a highly debatable issue with diverse point of views. Tilak (2011) argues that even when foreign institutions or programmes move to developing countries, the education they provide is more relevant to careers in foreign countries than the job market in developing countries and therefore graduates will remain unemployable in their mother countries and be forced to find work and settle down in foreign countries; this phenomenon is referred to as 'neo-colonialism of the mind' (Gürüz, 2011, p. 239). Tilak argues that this brain drain of the developing countries is of great benefit, economically and politically to the developed countries, and that the internationalization of higher education can both deepen developing countries' dependence on developed countries and assist developed countries to control the developing countries' higher education, by exporting their cultural capital and marginalizing indigenous knowledge and cultures of the developing countries. Thus, according to Tilak, the trade of exporting higher education to developing countries is seen as a new form of imperialism.

Others maintain that the exportation of foreign education to developing countries is beneficial to developing countries in increasing access to and equity in higher education while allowing the transfer of knowledge and technology. Moreover, it is usually accepted that the education of developed countries is of superior quality and the trade in education would assist in providing that same superior quality education to the students of the developing countries at economic prices (Tilak, 2011). Foreign institutes and programmes will add diversity, enhance personal choices in education, increase competition (Stella & Woodhouse, 2011) and stop monopolies and thereby improve overall quality and effectiveness in education in developing countries (Tilak, 2011). Tilak refutes this view, arguing that because GATS treats education as a tradable commodity (Knight, 2008) it does not identify fundamental aspects of education such as including public good and the benefits of education to society beyond those to individuals (Tilak, 2011). Furthermore, he argues that the trade in higher education will make higher education homogeneous across the world by providing a foreign curriculum in a foreign language. Also highlighted by Tilak is that the GATS will drastically change the association between government and higher education, with GATS having control over most aspects of higher education including examination and assessment processes and quality assurance (Tilak, 2011).

Of particular interest to this study is the contention that foreign private education can have a negative impact on the public institutions of developing countries (García-Guadilla, 2002)

because the public universities in many developing countries must cater to broader national expectations (Tilak, 2011) rather than be fully oriented towards market requirements or external trade competition (García-Guadilla, 2002). Thus it is unfair to allow competition between foreign private institutions and public institutions of developing countries (Tilak, 2011). Furthermore, he states that branch campuses, off shore programmes, twinning arrangements and other partnerships may entail risk in relation to the reputation of foreign universities. Also highlighted is the need for the GATS to focus on quality to a great extent as cross border higher education may involve issues with regards to quality assurance (Knight, 2002). It is appropriate that UNESCO and the OECD have collaboratively prepared the international framework 'Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education' (UNESCO/OECD, 2005) to promote international cooperation and to provide a guidance to improve quality of cross border higher education. UNESCO and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN) have jointly developed a Toolkit on 'Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education' (UNESCO/APQN, 2006) to complement UNESCO/ OECD (2005) guidelines. These two initiatives are discussed in the next section in relation to quality of cross border higher education.

2.14.2 UNESCO/OECD (2005) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education

Cross border higher education is a significantly growing area and therefore there is a need to safeguard students and the other stakeholders of higher education from low quality provision (OECD, n.d.) and bogus higher education providers (UNESCO/OECD, 2005) . The guidelines for 'Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education' is developed to achieve these needs (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). These guidelines also support international cooperation while emphasizing the significance of quality provision in cross border activities of higher education (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). Furthermore, these guidelines convey the significance of the social, cultural, human and economic aspects of countries and promote the development of cross border higher education which responds to them (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). One significant recommendation for member countries listed in the UNESCO/ OECD (2005) guidelines is that of transparency. It emphasizes that the students should be provided with sufficient information to help them and to protect them from misleading information and guidance (UNESCO/OECD, 2005). Thus, these guidelines are prepared to assist students to get access easily to reliable and accurate information about higher education available to them inside the country or outside the country by the foreign providers (OECD, n.d.). The above mentioned aspect is particularly important to cross border higher education in Sri Lanka as Peiris &

Ratnasekera (2007) point out that some private institutes "take ill-informed students for a ride" (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007, p.3). These guidelines propose actions for six types of stakeholders: governments; higher education institutions/providers including academic staff; student bodies; quality assurance and accreditation bodies; academic recognition bodies and professional bodies (UNESCO/OECD, 2005) and thereby bring a holistic view to the guidelines. Some of the significant recommendations that these guidelines provide to the stakeholders are as follows.

- The governments are invited to set up or motivate to establish fair, transparent and comprehensive quality assurance and accreditation systems for cross border higher education identifying that this process involves both the providing country and the receiving country.

- Higher education institutes and foreign providers are invited to guarantee that degrees which are offered in receiving country and in their home country are comparable in quality while considering the cultural and linguistic needs of the host country.

Given that United Kingdom, Australia, United States and New Zealand are both the leading exporters of higher education to Sri Lanka and members of the OECD, these guidelines should be making a significant contribution to cross border higher education in Sri Lanka.

2.14.3 UNESCO-APQN Toolkit: 'Regulating the Quality of Cross-Border Education'

The UNESCO and APQN Toolkit provides guidelines and issues to consider when designing regulatory frameworks to assure quality in cross border education (UNESCO/APQN, 2006). The Toolkit identifies these guidelines and requirements from both the receiver country's perspective and the provider country's perspective (UNESCO/APQN, 2006). It also describes the regulatory frameworks of a few countries in order to provide a better understanding of different types of quality assurance frameworks. The Toolkit identifies criteria for regulations as vital when a county sets up a regulatory framework. This Toolkit identifies four types of broad criteria: "status/recognition of the programmes /qualifications in the home country, academic quality, consumer protection, the needs or national policies of the country" (UNESCO/APQN, 2006, p. 25). This Toolkit could be very useful to Sri Lanka's stated intention to design a quality assurance framework for private higher education institutes in Sri Lanka.

2.14.4 International Organization for Standardization (ISO) as a Tool for Improving Quality

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is "the world's largest developer of voluntary International Standards" (ISO, n.d.). These standards provide a pathway to overcome difficulties to international trade (ISO, n.d.). ISO quality management standards are based on seven quality management principles namely, Customer focus, Leadership, Engagement of people, Process approach, Improvement, Evidence-based decision making, Relationship management (ISO, 2015).

ISO 9000 family includes some of the well-known standards of ISO which are key to education sector and various features of quality management are addressed by this ISO family (ISO, n.d.). The process approach of ISO 9000 is shown in Figure 2.2.

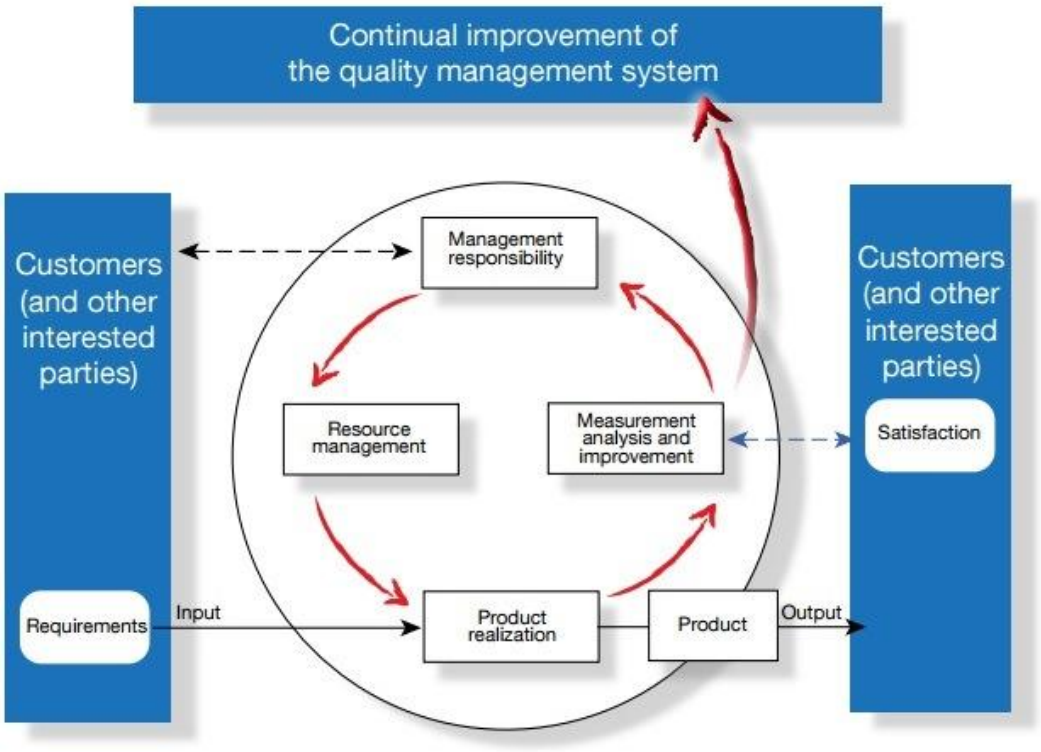

Figure 2.2: The ISO 9000 process approach
(ISO, 2009)

Considering the benefits of the ISO 9000 family standards in establishing effective and efficient quality management systems, many organizations adopt the ISO standards (ISO, 2009).

Many foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka (APIIT Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, 2014; Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College, 2014; ICBT Campus, 2011) also adopt ISO certification and publish this feature on their websites as a means of highlighting the quality of their institutes. Remarkably, these different institutes adopt different standards of the ISO family; to cite some examples: Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College (CINEC) adopts ISO 9001: 2008 Quality Management System Standard and ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management System Standard (Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College, 2014) while International College of Business and Technology (ICBT) Campus uses ISO 9001:2000 certified by Det Norske Veritas (Netherlands) (ICBT Campus, 2011) and Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) institute adopts ISO 9001:2008 Certification for Quality Management Systems (APIIT Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, 2014). Stimson (1998) indicates the key reason for ISO certification as to obtain a comprehensive, steady and consistent quality system. Some organizations look for ISO certified suppliers, thus an internationally recognized quality certification like ISO enables them to face competition (Stimson, 1998) and to survive in a global village.

2.15 Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed revealed varied definitions of quality and stakeholders of higher education as well as criteria of quality and problems and solutions in cross-border higher education with international agreements. The nature of quality is obscure and 'quality' can be identified as a highly debatable term. Quality is also constantly shaped by external factors such as social and cultural factors and therefore, quality criteria may differ from country to country, making the cross border provision of higher education a more challenging task. Quality is essential for higher education and according to Harvey and Green (1993) it can be seen as exceptional, fitness for purpose, transformative, value for money and perfection (Harvey and Green, 1993). A holistic view of quality for higher education is suggested for service processes provided to students and teaching-learning activities, including education and research (Srikanthan and Dalvymple, 2007).

Criteria for quality in higher education include indicators which are specifications against which the judgment is made. Thus, different forms are suggested to indicate quality including QAAC Sri Lanka which focuses on institutional aspects and program review aspects of quality. Stakeholders of higher education in Sri Lanka express different perspectives on quality of higher education in Sri Lanka and its foreign affiliates. The nature of the quality of

the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka is complex. Some of the problems faced in higher education include rising cost, recruitment criterion whether by affordability or merit, corruption in the system and bribery and favouritism. Several solutions to such problems are suggested, illustrated via a Pressure Cooker Model. In cross-border higher education, the general agreement of Trade and Services (GATS) applied to higher education as well as UNESCO / OECD guidelines for Quality Provisions for cross border higher education are essential aspects. The next chapter discusses the background of the country and the education of Sri Lanka as these factors also shape this study.

Chapter 3 Background and Context of the Study

3.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter explores the country context and the nature of the Sri Lankan education system as they are related to the higher education system. Contextual aspects such as the historical, socio-economic, political and cultural features of the country are upheld as important influences in higher education policies, legislation and the other decisions that the stakeholders make. And, conversely, higher education makes an impact on the social, economic, cultural and political factors of a country (Aturupane, 2012). The second part of this chapter describes the background of higher education in Sri Lanka. The nature of private higher education of Sri Lanka is also explained with a detailed description of the foreign degree awarding institutes. The recent initiatives that have sought to rectify quality issues in higher education of Sri Lanka are then explained in this chapter.

3.2 Background of the Country

Sri Lanka, which is officially identified as "The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka", is an island situated in South Asia and Colombo is the commercial capital of Sri Lanka (Government of Sri Lanka, 2015). According to the 14th National Census conducted in Sri Lanka in 2012, the population of Sri Lanka is 20,359,439 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2012). The government of Sri Lanka declared victory over The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, also known as LTTE, after enduring a civil war with them for 26 years (BBC, 2014). The World Bank took a positive view towards the post-war economic recovery of Sri Lanka as the growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2010 was recorded as 8 percent. The World Bank also highlighted that private investment and consumption led this recovery (Gamage, 2011). However, Gunatilaka, Mayer and Vodopivec (2010) argue that the economic growth is linked to the transformation of the structure of the composition of gross domestic product (GDP) of Sri Lanka, the move away from the agricultural sector to service oriented activities, over the past decade. The agricultural sector which contributed 15 percent to the GDP in 1999 had dropped to 10.8 percent by 2013. By contrast, the service segment has grown and contributes the largest share to the GDP, 58.1 percent in 2013. The contribution of the industrial sector to the GDP remained constant during the last decade and its share is about 28 percent (Gunatilaka et al., 2010). The GDP of Sri Lanka is 67.2 billion US dollars (2013)

and this provides a per capita income of 3,280 US dollars (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014) (refer Appendix E).

Even though the growth of GDP remained around 8.2 percent in 2011 it declined to 6.4 percent in 2012 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014) due to the decline of external demand and more rigid credit conditions (World Bank, 2014). The growth of GDP in 2013 was 7.3 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014) and this was a slight increase though it did not reach the GDP growth of 2011. It was also reported that the there is an inequality among the provinces of the country in terms of their growth of GDP. "The Western Province contributed close to half of national GDP in 2009, as well as nearly half of the sectoral GDPs of both services (51.1 percent) and industrial output (48.6 percent) domestically" (Sri Lanka Human Development Report, 2012, p. 5). When we consider the share of income in the country, it is noteworthy that the richest 20 percent out of the total population holds about 54.3 percent of the total income, and the lower income 70 percent gets only 35 percent of the total income (Department of Census and Statistics, 2011). However, according to the World Bank (2014) Sri Lanka has now joined the ranks of 'middle-income' countries and it should continue to encourage open economic policies and retain a positive attitude towards foreign investment (UNESCO, n.d.).

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic society and the principal ethnic groups of the country include Sinhalese 74.9 percent , Sri Lankan Tamils 11.2 percent, Indian Tamils 4.2 percent, Moors 9.2 percent and Others 0.5 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014). Sinhala and Tamil are the official languages of Sri Lanka and English is treated as the link language (Department of Official Languages, 2015). The Sri Lanka Human Development Report (2012) produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sri Lanka shows that Sri Lanka ranked 97 out of 187 countries with a score of 0.691 on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2011 and thus "Sri Lanka has the highest level of human development among the eight (SAARC[7]) countries" (Sri Lanka Human Development Report, 2012, p. 13). However, the report also indicates that women's participation in the labour force and their representation in parliament should be improved considerably. Sri Lanka has only 34.4 percent female participation in the labour force compared to Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives and Bhutan which range from 64.3 percent to 53.4 percent (Sri Lanka Human Development Report, 2012). The report attributes

[7]SAARC is the acronym for 'The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation'

this under representation to cultural factors, lower salaries for women, shortage of good jobs with reasonable or flexible work hours (Sri Lanka Human Development Report, 2012). However, the Global Gender Gap Report 2012 which is prepared by the World Economic Forum ranked Sri Lanka very highly; 39th out of the 135 countries (Hausmann, Tyson, Bekhouche, & Zahidi, 2012). The above report evaluates political, education, economic and health related criteria (Hausmann et al., 2012).

The 2013 unemployment rate in Sri Lanka was 4.4 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014) with the major concerns being a high female unemployment rate and an even higher educated youth unemployment rate (Gunatilaka et al., 2010). Unemployment among youth is more than half of total unemployment and one major reason for this is the lack of fluency in English language which is difficult to acquire via the publicly funded general education structure (Gunatilaka et al., 2010). As they argued in 2010, although there is a decline in the unemployment rate compared to previous years, much of the employment opportunities created are informal, and educated people are not rewarded well in this informal employment setting (Gunatilaka, 2008). Gunatilaka also points out that Sri Lanka is unable to obtain the full advantages of the high levels of education provision as the economic system fails to provide jobs with appropriate salaries for educated people. The next section provides an overview of the education of Sri Lanka since the nature of the education system has a very significant impact on the quality of higher education of Sri Lanka.

3.3 Overview of the Education System of Sri Lanka

Education has been treated as a priority in Sri Lanka throughout the country's history (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2005) and the education system of Sri Lanka has been well acknowledged in development policy circles and literature. The literacy rate of Sri Lanka is 95.6 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014) (refer Appendix E) which is recorded as the highest literacy rate in South Asia (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012 a). Furthermore, the male and female literacy rates are much more equitable than many other countries as the male literacy rate is 96.8 percent while the female population has a literacy rate of 94.6 percent (Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014). Sri Lanka's achievements in basic indicators such as enrolment rates in primary and junior secondary education and adult literacy rates are very impressive (World Bank, 2004, 2011). Sri Lanka was an early achiever of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for universal primary school enrolment and gender parity in school enrolment (Gunatilaka, Wan, & Chatterjee, 2009). It is remarkable that only 18.8

percent of the population who are at tertiary age pursue higher education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014).

School education in Sri Lanka consists of three levels: primary education, junior secondary education and senior secondary education. During their senior secondary school period students sit for two main national public examinations, the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level (GCE O/L) and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A/L). As explained in the first chapter the students will be entered into a government university in Sri Lanka only if they score very high marks in the GCE A/L exam.

The total number of schools in Sri Lanka is approximately 10,400, comprised of 9,410 (91 percent) public schools, 700 pirivena (temple) schools, 70 private schools and about 200-250 international schools (World Bank, 2011). There are about 4.1 million student enrolments in total and approximately 3.9 million students (92 percent) pursue their studies in public schools (World Bank, 2011). The other children attend either private, pirivena or international schools. Many international schools prepare children for foreign examinations such as London Ordinary Level and London Advanced Level examinations as they teach London Cambridge or Edexcel curriculum. A small number of international schools prepare their students for International Baccalaureate (IB). Even though most of these students obtain very good results while some of them obtain world rankings, they are not able to apply for a government university (The Sunday Times, 2011). Most of these students pursue their higher education overseas or in a private institute in Sri Lanka.

The national policy for providing free education from the primary school level to the tertiary level, and the regulations for compulsory education till year nine which were introduced in 1998 to increase access and equity to education (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2005), brought some positive outcomes to the education of Sri Lanka. These major changes increased literacy rates, gender parity in school enrolment and enrolment in primary school (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, n.d.). The provision of free school text books, midday meals and school uniforms are some of the recent programmes which have assisted in improving the quality of education in Sri Lanka by tackling the school related problems caused by poverty (World Bank, 2011). However, although the education system of Sri Lanka has promoted a development policy that emphasizes the significance of public financing and the provision of primary and secondary school education, only 1.7 percent (in 2012) of the GDP of the country is spent on Education with government expenditure on education being only 8.8 percent (in 2012) of the total government expenditure (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). The

government investment in education is relatively low compared to other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, India, Thailand, Bangladesh and South Korea (World Bank, 2011). Usually about 4.6 percent of national income is spent on education by middle income countries which is more than double Sri Lanka's investment in education from its national income (World Bank, 2011).

The free education of the country is also under criticism for its lowering quality. Teacher absence from schools for the purpose of conducting paid tuition classes is one major cause for this lowering of quality in education (Amarasinghe & Ratnayake, 2008). Another problem is that some areas are educationally underprivileged and the resources and facilities in remote areas are very poor as the capital investment is low (Amarasinghe & Ratnayake, 2008; Tilakaratna, Galapattige, Jayathilaka, & Perera, 2008). Furthermore, a lack of facilities and resources were reported in war affected areas such as in the north and the east (Tilakaratna, Galapattige, Jayathilaka, & Perera, 2008) indicating how extraordinarily difficult it was for the students to pursue their studies during the civil war.

Many parents except the poorest pay for quality education either at a private school or international school, or as private tuition (Amarasinghe & Ratnayake, 2008). This situation demonstrates how the public nature is invaded by the private activities as the parents attempt to provide more quality in education for their children, which comes with a price tag. It is necessary to lift the quality for public universal provision rather than making it available based on people's economic levels as Amarasinghe and Ratnayake (2008) state that the richest people of the country hold the major share of household education and "the share of private educational investment progressively declines as the consumption quintile becomes less affluent" (p. 26). Since many parents except the poorest are willing to invest money in private education for better quality, Amarasinghe and Ratnayake raise the question of whether a universally free education policy is required for the country. Even though they raise this question based on better utilization of finance, resources and facilities, it is necessary to be mindful of the fact that providing free education only to one segment of the country may create class segregation and discrimination. The children who study for free may be marginalized based on their class if the education policy divides children according to public and private based on their parents' economic status. Another debatable issue in relation to the education of Sri Lanka is the English language proficiency of the children of Sri Lanka. Perera (2006) argues that the English language curriculum fails to meet the requirements of the children who come from the underprivileged backgrounds. This indicates that the country requires more effective education policies.

‘Mahinda Chinthana’ which includes a ‘Vision for the Future’ is the development policy framework of the government of Sri Lanka that was initiated in 2005 and renewed in 2010 by the then president of Sri Lanka. The Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) 2006–2010 is a vital policy included in the development policy framework to support the education system of Sri Lanka. This policy aims ‘to increase access and equity in primary and secondary education, to improve education quality, to allocate resources equally and to improve delivery of services, monitoring and evaluation’ (The Department of National Planning, 2010). ‘Transforming School Education as the Foundation of a Knowledge Hub’ (TSEP) 2011–2015 is the second phase of ESDFP which focuses on fair access and quality of primary and secondary education. A significant part of ‘Mahinda Chinthana’ also focuses on improving quality and access to higher education (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

3.4 Overview of Higher Education of Sri Lanka

The university education system of Sri Lanka commenced in 1921 when the University College was established in affiliation with the University of London which was subsequently elevated to a fully-fledged university named ‘The University of Ceylon’ (Warnapala, 2010) by the Ceylon University Ordinance No.20 of 1942 (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012 a). This university, which was based on the Oxbridge model, catered only to the privileged elite class who were English educated (Warnapala, 2010). The higher education system deviated from the Oxbridge model once free education, based on the social demand model of education, was introduced in 1945 providing increased access to higher education (Warnapala, 2010). Students who are socially disadvantaged also got the opportunity to enter a university under this new scheme (Warnapala, 2009). The free education scheme made a major impact on the economic, social and the political culture of the country (Warnapala, 2010). However, the education system of Sri Lanka still retains its legacy of adopting the British education system to a great extent. Pagoda-Arachchi (2007) argues that even the educational reforms of the 1990s identify educational objectives and needs from the perspective of the west and adopt Eurocentric models rather than an educational philosophy appropriate to the country. It is worth considering that differences of opinion between stakeholder groups such as students and employers can be seen, when discussing the purpose of higher education as being appropriate to the country. As it is shown from regular protests of the students, there is a tendency that the students see appropriateness as appropriate to the culture and wellbeing of the country. By

contrast, as it can be seen from the World Bank report (2009) some employers and the World Bank are looking at a completely different set of criteria related to skills for employment. Thus, employers make regular complaints about the lack of required competence and skills of graduates for some occupations.

The higher education sector of Sri Lanka consists of a wide and varied range of institutions, and they are: Public Universities, Open University, Postgraduate and Other Institutes, External Degree programmes, Sri Lanka Institute for Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) and Private Higher Education Institutions (refer Table 3.1). The fifteen Public Universities maintain their dominance over higher education in Sri Lanka through the University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body of the university system under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, which oversees public universities[8] (University Grants Commission - Sri Lanka, 2014 b). Even though many of these universities have high quality faculties in medicine and engineering many of these graduates depart overseas for employment indicating a significant part of brain drain in Sri Lanka (Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka, 2004). The Open University of Sri Lanka which was established in 1980 under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and OUSL Ordinance No. 1 of 1990, also come under the purview of the UGC of the Ministry of Higher Education and holds the same legal and academic status as the other public university in Sri Lanka (The Open University of Sri Lanka, 2014). The postgraduate institutes are mainly affiliated to government universities and to cite one example, the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM) which is a semi-autonomous body is affiliated to the University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Some institutes also provide vocational programmes as per the regulations of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) of the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training. The chain of institutes of the 'Sri Lanka Institute for Advanced Technological Education' (SLIATE) work under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education.

That the external degree programmes[9] make up 58 percent of the higher education of Sri Lanka implies the plight of the higher education of Sri Lanka. The students who follow

[8] Three universities, namely the University of Buddhist and Pali Studies, the Kotelawala Defence University, and the University of Vocational Technology (UNIVOTEC) do not come under the UGC (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2009) and these universities come under Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training respectively (University Grants Commission - Sri Lanka, 2014 a)

[9] In external degree programs the students are enrolled in a public university, but the university does not provide any classes or lessons. They have to obtain knowledge from outside sources and then sit for the exams of the government university. In contrast to this, in foreign degree awarding institutes the students pursue a foreign degree in Sri Lanka and the students

external degree programmes enrol in the university and sit university examinations, but they do not follow any classes or lectures. The university does not provide them with any academic support. The government is seen to be sacrificing quality by expanding the access and coverage of tertiary education using these low cost external degree programmes. Also, the external degree programmes create the greatest share of unemployed graduates (World Bank, 2009).

The Private Higher Education Institutions may provide local diplomas and degrees (if they are granted the local degree awarding status) or foreign Diplomas and Degrees in Sri Lanka or a combination of both local and foreign programmes. Thus, the 12 percent enrolment share of the Private Higher Education Institutions percentage also includes enrolments in the foreign degree awarding institutes which are a major part of the Private Higher Education Institutions in Sri Lanka. These institutes are mainly monitored by their respective foreign providers and the Quality Assurance organisations such as the ISO.

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receive lessons or classes in these institutes. They are included in the share of the private higher education institutes in the table.

Table 3.1 Higher Education Enrolments by Type of Institution and Mode of Delivery[10], 2006/2007

Type of Institution / Mode of Delivery	Enrolment Number	Share of Enrolments percentage
Public Universities	73,491	19
Open University	28,569	7
Postgraduate and Other Institutes	9,015	2
External Degrees	225,208	58
SLIATE	8,135	2
Private Higher Education Institutions	**45,700**	**12**
Total	390,118	100

(World Bank, 2009, p. 5)

According to Warnapala (2010), the overall university enrolment rate in Sri Lanka is extremely low compared to other countries. The enrolment rate in the United States is more than 50 percent while in developing countries the average rate remains 5 percent. In Sri Lanka where there is a literacy rate of about 95 percent, the enrolment rate in universities remains around 2 to 2.5 percent (Warnapala, 2010). Even though the targeted enrolment rate has been increased to 6 percent, the government fails to reach this rate due to lack of public resources. The Global Competitiveness Report 2012–2013 ranks Sri Lanka 100 out of 144 countries in the world in the criterion 'tertiary education enrolment percentage (gross)' (The World Economic Forum, 2012). The government which spent 0.52 percent of the GDP on higher education in 2005 limited its expenditure on higher education to 0.27 percent of the GDP in 2012 (Federation of University Teachers' Association, 2012). The Federation of University Teachers' Association (FUTA) expressed their displeasure at this decision of the government emphasizing that education is a low priority for the government (Federation of University Teachers' Association, 2012).

[10] On the one hand, the statistics in the Table underestimate higher education Enrolment in two ways. First, the number of students studying overseas is not included, since such information is not available. Second, the number of students enrolled in private higher education institutions is not complete. In particular, students enrolled in professional diploma and certificate level programs are not included. On the other hand, however, the statistics in the Table may also overestimate Enrolment as not all students who are registered as external degree candidates may actually be following a degree program. Also, some students registered as external degree candidates may have multiple registrations in public and private higher education institutions (World Bank, 2009, p. 5).

The development policy framework of the government of Sri Lanka, 'Mahinda Chintana' sharply highlights two key ideas which reinforce the higher education policy framework: providing a variety of courses, modes of learning and alternate institutes which work under a regulatory framework in order to increase access to higher education; and, improving quality and standards in order to increase employability, to tackle global competitiveness and to fulfill development needs of the country (The Department of National Planning, 2010). A 'knowledge city' is also proposed to encourage private investors in this field and to increase job opportunities. The government plans to transform Sri Lanka to a knowledge hub by providing an attractive environment and the necessary infrastructure. This idea implies that the providers may influence the government to a certain extent as the government has to make changes to policies and practices to accommodate private investors, but it is written in the development policy framework that this policy framework will encourage the establishment of private universities while also preserving the state universities as the key provider of university education. The government intends to attract about 10,000 international students to public universities and about 50,000 foreign students to the proposed private universities (The Department of National Planning, 2010). These universities are also intended to absorb the Sri Lankan students who go abroad to pursue their higher education and thereby preserve the savings and earning of the country. The number of students who travelled overseas for tertiary education in 2009 was about 13,000 (UK Trade & Investment, 2010) and these students tend to settle in those countries after completion of their studies. If Sri Lanka can increase quality and access to higher education with programmes relevant to the job market and also to the overall development of the country, then Sri Lanka can preserve not only money, but also talented and educated people who can contribute to the country's development. However, Hettige (2004) discusses a dual complexity involved with private education provision. He states that on one hand, the opponents to the establishment of private universities argue that the private universities cater only to the rich "leading to a polarization of poorly endowed state universities and well equipped private universities" (p. 18). On the other hand, as he indicates the supporters argue that the rich people will send their children overseas if they are not provided with these facilities locally.

According to the development policy framework of the government the foreign degree awarding institutes and the non-state universities will be given the opportunity to collaborate with the public universities without violating the state law (The Department of National Planning, 2010). The public universities could link with prominent universities in the world to expand their programmes and to train their academic staff (The Department of National

Planning, 2010). It appears that the government is attempting to deviate gradually from the ideology that encourages only the state funded university education. The proposed framework implies a paradigm shift as it will make a vast change in the deep rooted academic tradition.

3.5 Background to Private Higher Education of Sri Lanka

Many students seek private higher education opportunities since only about 20 percent of the students who qualify for university admission are enrolled in public universities in Sri Lanka (The Sunday Times Sri Lanka, 2012). This has resulted in a proliferation of private higher education institutes in Sri Lanka (The Sunday Times Sri Lanka, 2012). The globalization and advancement in technology has also contributed to the rise of the self-financing degree sector as they reinforce the survival of the foreign degrees in the country. A survey conducted by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council of the UGC illustrates that more than fifty companies are in the "business of education" (Quality Assurance & Accreditation Council, 2005). According to Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007) of the QAA Council of the UGC in Sri Lanka it is difficult to calculate the exact number of private higher education institutes since many of them are registered with the Registrar of Companies as business organizations under various categories. Many of them have taken the loopholes of the current legislation for granted as the prevailing law does not obstruct such business activities. The QAA Council points out that twenty eight private higher education institutes award degrees with the approval of either the UGC or the Board of Investment (BOI) while the remaining majority have not obtained approval from either of these organizations (Peiris & Ratnasekera, 2007). A study carried out by LIRNEAsia in 2011 on Undergraduate Degree Programmes identified forty-six private higher education institutes (Gamage, 2012). No research highlighting the total number of foreign postgraduate degrees offered in Sri Lanka or any data on the total number of institutes that offer foreign postgraduate courses in Sri Lanka could be found demonstrating how very limited research on the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka is. Since this study is woven around the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, the next section provides an overview of these institutes.

3.5.1 Overview of the Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka

The foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka comprise a higher education sub sector that requires further investigation in relation to quality; this study focuses on five foreign degree awarding institutes as a sample to represent this institutional level and to help to

classify their various characteristics. Some of the key factors that help to understand the nature of these institutes are the country of their foreign provider and their recognition, the status of the local institute, and the programmes they offer to the students. As previously stated, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand provide the majority of undergraduate programmes to Sri Lanka. However, the British Board of Studies (BOS) holds the lion's share which is 60 percent of the total programmes (Gamage & Wijesooriya, 2012). British programmes also hold a Graduate output share of 62 percent (Gamage & Wijesooriya, 2012).

According to Gamage and Wijesooriya (2012) in total there are forty-nine Boards of Studies (foreign institutions) of these institutes and 44 of them are "members of the International Association of Universities (IAU) or the Commonwealth Association of Universities (CAU)" (p. 18). They point out that another four foreign institutions have not obtained the membership of either of these university associations but are recognized in their country of origin. The remaining foreign institution is governed by an intergovernmental board. The foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka can be grouped into two different types, those institutes which have obtained local degree awarding status and, therefore, deliver both local and foreign degrees and those which provide only foreign degrees in Sri Lanka. The quality of the local degrees of the former type of institute is monitored by the UGC of Sri Lanka. A survey conducted by LIRNEasia on the undergraduate degree programmes of Sri Lanka provides some significant data on the foreign undergraduate degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka by highlighting the names of these institutes, the fields of study of their students and their board of studies (refer Appendix F). As the survey highlights, although the foreign degree awarding institutes offer a variety of subjects, many of their undergraduate programmes are in the fields of Commerce and Computer Science/IT and 75 percent of the programmes have a duration of three years (Gamage & Wijesooriya, 2012).

According to the findings of Gamage & Wijesooriya (2012) which are the most recent available records on the graduate output of private institutes, there was a gradual increase in the graduate output of private institutes from 2008 to 2010 (refer Table 3.2). The graduate output number which was 1,331 in 2008 increased to 2,574 in 2010 as the Table 3.2 illustrates.

Table 3.2 Graduate Output (2008 - 2010)

Year considered	Public UGC	Public Non-UGC	Private	All
2008	12,296	2,296	1,331	15,923
2009	12,963	2,935	1,608	17,506
2010	12,257	4,158	2,574	18,989

Source: (Gamage & Wijesooriya, 2012)

The above mentioned study conducted by LIRNEasia does not cover postgraduate degree awarding private institutes. However, most of the foreign degree awarding institutes which offer post graduate degrees are included in the list of institutes provided by the study of LIRNEasia (refer Appendix F) as many institutes offer postgraduate degrees only after introducing undergraduate courses. After searching on Google search engine, after reading paper advertisements for a period of five months from August to December 2013 and after considering other available literature, only one institute, the Graduate school of Management (GSM), could be found as an institute which has only foreign post graduate programmes. Saegis campus is a new institute which was started after the above mentioned study of LIRNEasia and therefore this institute was not included in their total number of institutes. The National School of Business Management (NSBM) was also not included in the list of 46 private institutes. Since the exact number of the foreign degree awarding institutes which offer foreign undergraduate and postgraduate courses is not explicitly stated in any of the information sources researched, this study identifies the total number of these institutes as forty nine including the three institutes 'the Graduate school of Management (GSM)', NSBM and newly started 'Saegis campus' which were not included in the LIRNEasia study.

TNS[11] Lanka conducted a survey for LMD Magazine, Sri Lanka to assess education institutes in Sri Lanka which consist of university, vocational and professional education providers (Ratnaweera, 2013). Many of the foreign degree awarding institutes were also included in the above institutional category. A questionnaire survey was carried out using six hundred and fifty prospective students and two hundred parents covering the city of Colombo and its suburbs. The participants were asked to rate the significance of eighteen attributes[12] which are

[11] TNS is the acronym for 'Taylor Nelson Sofres' which is a leading market research company.

[12] Locally and globally recognised degrees, Reputation, Affiliations to reputed foreign universities, Content and course material, Duration of programmes, Qualifications and recognition of lecturers, Subjects on offer, Available facilities, Sports

generally considered for the selection of an educational institute. An index for each institute was calculated considering the percentage of awareness of each institute among the participants, their preferences and the performance of each institution. Student competency, financial capacity and the availability of institutes which maintain quality are considered significant when choosing an institute for education. Since the sample taken for this survey does not include any current students or any other stakeholder group which is directly involved with the learning or working environment of these institutes, this institutional ranking may not provide a proper testimony to their academic excellence and their trustworthiness within higher education in Sri Lanka. Thus, it may not serve as an adequate guidance for students when they make decisions in relation to quality of these institutes.

Major characteristics of the Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka

Advertisements and pamphlets and materials for students from the institutes were found to be informative, as were newspaper advertisements and they revealed some of the major characteristics of these institutes which are listed below.

- Private in its nature and therefore the institutes depend on the students' fees.
- Buying power plays a major role as the students have to pay for their courses.
- Some lecturers of the government universities also deliver part time lectures in most of these institutes.
- In many of these institutes the students can pursue the final year of a Bachelor's degree of a foreign university in Sri Lanka after completing the Edexcel Higher National Diploma (HND). They get the final year direct entry upon completion of an Edexcel HND programme. The students also have the opportunity to follow a foreign university degree in Sri Lanka by studying the foreign university curriculum from their first year to completion of the degree.
- Provide different entry qualifications. For example a student can enter the first year of a Bachelor's degree programme with their Advanced Level exam results or by completing a foundation programme. The students can also enrol for some business degree programmes if they have professional qualifications and work experience in a

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and extracurricular activities, Fees and fee structures, Availability of scholarships, Institutional culture, Campus-like atmosphere, Pass rates and awards, Prospect of international opportunities, Qualifications required for admission, Entrance exams, Availability of internship programmes (Ratnaweera, 2013).

relevant field. For example they can enrol for a business degree if they are 'The Chartered Institute of Marketing' (CIM) or 'The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants' (CIMA) partly or fully qualified and have work experience as Business executives for two years or more.

- Medium of instruction is English.
- Most of these foreign degree awarding institutes are located in Colombo District although some of them have established branches in a few other main cities in Sri Lanka.

The foreign degree awarding institutes face many issues with regard to quality and key recent initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education of Sri Lanka appear to be important when discussing the quality of these institutes. The next section discusses these key initiatives.

3.6 Key Quality Initiatives

Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century Project (HETC)

The Higher Education for the Twenty First Century Project commenced in 2011 and is funded by the World Bank with a budget of 40 million US dollars for a period of five years (HETC, n.d. -a). The Ministry of Higher Education of Sri Lanka manages the project. The project aims to increase the capacity of the higher education system and to improve the quality of higher education while focusing on economic and social development requirements of the country (HETC, n.d. -a). The HETC comprises four components as follows.

1. To develop a "Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) and a Quality Assurance and Accreditation System for Higher Education in Sri Lanka". HETC project which started in 2011 already completed developing SLQF.
2. To enhance "relevance and quality of teaching and learning in all fifteen universities" by providing them with grants.
3. To develop Advanced Technological Institutes and thereby increase alternative tertiary education opportunities.
4. To fortify "human resources of the higher education" sector (HETC, n.d. -a, para. 3).

The HETC project should assist the private higher education institutes to improve their quality considerably, since a part of this project aims to develop a Quality Assurance and

Accreditation System which covers the entire higher education system. The findings of this study can also be utilized for this HETC project as this part of the project is still under development.

A key outcome of this project, the SLQF, should also assist in improving the quality of the entire higher education sector as this new framework is an integrated national level framework which recognizes and accredits qualifications awarded by different institutions of higher education and vocational training (HETC, n.d.-b). The SLQF joins descriptors of awards or qualifications of every level with credit measures which show the levels and volume of learning that a student should attain for each type of qualification. As this approach provides the proper validation for students' qualifications, the foreign degree awarding institutes can enrol students with valid qualifications and thereby they can increase the transparency of the student admission procedures of their institutes. Thus, SLQF seems to be significant to the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAA Council), Sri Lanka

The Quality Assurance Council of Sri Lanka began its mission as a World Bank funded project (Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education [IRQUE] Project) in 2001 and later in 2004 a department named QAAC was established under the purview of the UGC (Asia-Pacific Quality Network, 2012). This department was renamed in 2005 as the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAA Council) (Asia-Pacific Quality Network, 2012). According to "the Sri Lankan Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council for Higher Education Act of 2007, the QAAC is managed by a Governing Board comprising of seven members appointed by Minister in-charge of the subject of higher education" (Asia-Pacific Quality Network, 2012, p. 2). The "Board has representatives from the Ministry, UGC, professional bodies and private higher education institutions" (Asia-Pacific Quality Network, 2012, p. 2).

The QAA council contributes enormously to the improvement of quality in higher education of Sri Lanka. It evaluates the quality of the higher education institutions and programmes which are bound by UGC regulations and thereby assures their quality. Even though the council intends to implement quality assurance activities for the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka in the future, its current contribution to these institutes in this context is very limited.

The council adopts internationally recognized evaluation methods to ensure the quality of the graduates and focuses on continuous development of tertiary institutions (Endagama, Pathmanathan, & Jayaratne, 2009). The QAA Council also decides the eligibility of the private higher educational institutes for local degree awarding status and provides training and conducts workshops for the staff of the tertiary institutions. The council conducts institutional reviews, subject/department reviews and library reviews to ensure quality and accredits institutions and programmes (QAA Council of the UGC-Sri Lanka, 2013).

The QAA Council adopts eight distinctive aspects for the above reviews (Refer section 2.6) and as the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Directors (2002) implies, the quality model of QAA council which consists of these eight aspects is focused mainly on quality as 'fitness for purpose' and 'Transformative'. It considers quality as fitness for purpose by identifying the purpose as meeting corporate plans and goals of universities while also focusing on transformative aspect in terms of developing students' skills and learning to make a qualitative change in them. This QAA model assists in understanding some significant aspects of quality in the higher education of Sri Lanka.

As the mission of the council is "to ensure quality, continuous development and efficient performance of Sri Lankan higher education institutions, and to gain the confidence of the community in their graduates in accordance with internationally recognized evaluation mechanism" (QAA Council of the UGC-Sri Lanka, n.d.), the QAA Council will function as the hallmark of quality of higher education of Sri Lanka.

3.7. Chapter Summary

The chapter set the context of the study by providing an overview to the background of the country and the education system of the country. Even though the national policy for providing free education from primary to undergraduate level and compulsory education till year nine increased access and equity in education and literacy rates to a greater level, there are concerns regarding the quality of education due to teacher absence, lack of resources and facilities in remote and war-affected areas. Factors such as culture, gender and economy have an impact on quality of education of Sri Lanka. Government expenditure on education is low compared to other Asian countries and many parents with financial affordability seek quality private sector education and private tuition for their children. Even though public universities maintain dominance over higher education in Sri Lanka, only 2 percent of students who

qualify for public university admission are enrolled and hence, the rest seek private higher education opportunities. Globalization and advancement in technology has also contributed to the rise of the self-financing foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. They are mostly located in Colombo and provide instruction in English medium limiting its access to a certain class.

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council (QAA Council) Sri Lanka contributes to the improvement of quality in higher education Sri Lanka under the purview of UGC and decides the eligibility of private higher education institutes for local degree awarding status. However, its contribution to quality assurance and improvement of foreign degree offered in Sri Lanka is limited.

Chapter 4 Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

When planning and implementing a study, researchers must choose a methodology wisely out of the many methodological research choices available to them. An inappropriate methodology may provide misleading findings and thereby can harm the overall objectives of the study. This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study to answer the research questions thoroughly and also provides a rationale for the methodological decisions taken in the study. The chapter begins by presenting the research questions in relation to their design and then identifies the vertical case study and mixed methods as appropriate research approaches to the study. The study's adherence to pragmatic philosophy is explained briefly. The chapter then describes the data collection methods adopted in the study and provides a clear picture of the study's sample selection. Also presented are the data analysis techniques used in the study. Ethical considerations in relation to the study are described and aspects related to reliability and validity are then explained. The final section of the chapter also provides an introduction to the analysis of the findings by describing the demographic data of the participants which were analysed.

4.2 Design of the Research Questions

The overarching research question "How is 'quality' understood, by whom, with what consequences for whom, in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?" was answered by using two key research questions, each of which is supported by two sub questions. The first key research question "What definitions, purposes and practices are associated with the term 'quality' by foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?" was supported by the following two sub questions.

Sub question one: What are the main definitions and purposes of 'quality' in the perspectives of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

Sub question two: What are the main practices associated with the term 'quality' of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

A mix of both quantitative and qualitative data were employed to collect data to answer the above mentioned first key research question as ranking order of quality definitions and criteria were considered along with the participants own ideas for meaning of quality and priorities for quality. The second key research question "What are students' and professionals' perceptions of the ways the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality in their institutes?" was also supported by two sub questions as follows.

Sub question one: What are the students' perceptions of the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

Sub question two: What are the lecturers', senior managers' and the government officials' perceptions of the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

The priority was given to the qualitative data in order to investigate this second key research question. Because it was decided that the qualitative data can provide greater depth when answering this research question, some quantitative data were also employed to add value to qualitative data.

A Roadmap for investigating the overarching research question is shown in Appendix G.

4.3 Research Approaches

Johnson & Christensen (2008) identify four qualitative research approaches and they highlight the purpose of each approach as follows. The first, 'phenomenology', focuses on how one individual or more experiences a phenomenon. The main aspect of this kind of research is that the attempt is made to comprehend how the individuals experience a situation from the individual's own viewpoints (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This aims to go in to "the inner world of each participant to understand his or her perspectives and experiences" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 46). The second 'ethnography' attempts to describe the culture of a set of individuals and thereby to learn "what it is to like to be a member of the group from the perspective of the members of the group" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 46). As Johnson and Christensen argue, ethnographers attempt to explain how people in this group work together and how they associate with others in the group to frame the group as a whole. Johnson and Christensen convey that the third, 'case study' aims to illustrate one case or more

comprehensively and attend to the research questions and problems. "Unlike phenomenology, which focuses on individual experiences of some phenomenon, or ethnography, which focuses on some aspects of culture, or grounded theory, which focuses on developing an explanatory theory, case study research is more varied" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 47). One factor common to all case studies is that each case is considered "as a whole unit as it exists in its real life context" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 47). The fourth, 'grounded theory' as implied earlier aims to "inductively generate a grounded theory describing and explaining a phenomenon" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 363).

Since this study addresses the issue of how, and with what consequences, the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka identify, perceive and implement quality it was decided that an intensive case study is the most appropriate methodology; that it is necessary to focus on the case rather than focusing on the cultural aspects or the generation of theory. Thus, this study identified case study methodology, using a mixed methods approach, as the most appropriate methodology to explore the dimensions of quality in relation to these institutes in depth. The next two sections elaborate case study methodology and mixed methods approach.

4.3.1 Why Case Study Methodology?

This study is a case study of how, and with what consequences for whom, foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, define, perceive and implement 'quality'[13]. This study's adoption of case study methodology took into account the following strengths. Case study research is used extensively in the field of education because of its promising characteristics and nature; to cite an example it is often used for evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and initiatives related to education (Zainal, 2007). A case study looks at a phenomenon in its real life context (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) and catches 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of a particular situation. Case study research explores complex issues and allows for investigation of "contemporary real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships" (Zainal, 2007, p. 2). Case study also places importance on the valuing of the local context.

Some of the hallmarks of a case study are that:

[13] A clear picture of this case is presented in the introduction chapter.

1. It provides a rich and vivid description of events which are related to the case.
2. It provides a clear understanding of the specific events that are related to the case.
3. It blends an explanation of events with the analysis of them (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995).

The value of case study in looking at people's "own meanings and perspectives" has been highlighted by McDonough and McDonough (1997, p. 205) and thus places importance on the participant's voice. The case study approach has allowed this study to explore in-depth people's meanings and perspectives about the complex and real life issues of a number of foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. The selected institutes have been studied in their real life context which allowed me to identify specific events which are relevant to the case, thus enriching the descriptive narratives and enabling me to bring out strong inferences (Zainal, 2007). This study employs 'the vertical case study' as the type of case study to explore the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka.

The Vertical Case Study

Vavrus & Bartlett (2006, p. 96) describe the vertical case study as "a means of comparing knowledge claims among actors with different social locations in a vertically-bounded analysis". They argue that it is necessary to understand the micro level with regard to larger structures, policies and forces in the vertical case study approach. Furthermore, they highlight that the vertical case needs to be grounded in a principal site (such as foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka) and then the researcher should explore in full how historical trends, social structures, and national and international forces inform the local processes at this site. The vertical case study allows comparisons of both similarities and differences across multiple levels, thus avoiding an overemphasis on either similarity or difference across cases (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). This leads to an understanding of how actors at multiple levels interpret their world and the role of education in it. Vavrus & Bartlett (2006) identify the goal of a vertical case study as "to develop a thorough understanding of the particular at each level and to analyze how these understandings produce similar and different interpretations of the policy, problem, or phenomenon under study" (p. 99).

The vertical case study is important to this research as a methodology since it broadens the epistemological bases of comparative and international education. The framework below (refer Figure 4.1) indicates how to explore the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes within a vertical case study approach.

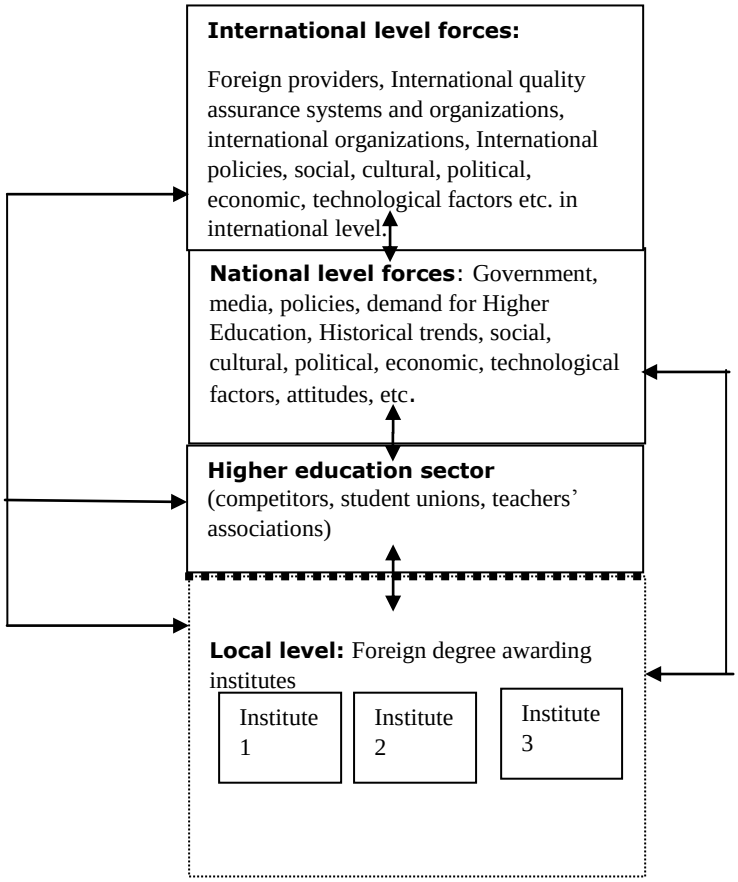

Figure 4.1: Framework of the study for a vertical case study approach

Diagram Explanation:

As the diagram illustrates the vertical case study approach of this study required the local context to be understood in relation to the multiple layers; namely, the higher education sector as a whole, national level forces and international level forces. The principal focus in this study was the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka and care was taken to understand how the higher education sector as a whole shape this local level. Then an understanding of the impact of national level forces on these institutes was developed. As each foreign degree awarding institutes has a direct link with their foreign provider, the international level forces and impacts were also considered. The diagram also shows how these forces can flow from both sides among these multiple layers. The diagram further illustrates how any level can have an impact on any other layer in a vertical manner. It is maintained here that this vertical case study approach provided a holistic view of the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes. It has also enabled understanding of the quality phenomenon with regard to cultural, social, political and economic forces at institutional, national and global levels.

4.3.2 Generalisability: a Recurring Stated Limitation of Case Studies

Despite many advantages of case study research, it also has some recurring limitations. One main criticism of case study is that it has limited generalisability (Cohen et al., 2011; Yin, 2014; Zainal, 2007), that it is difficult to generalise from case studies because of their "inherent subjectivity and because they are based on qualitative subjective data, generalisable only to a particular context" (Writing@CSU Writing Guide, 2014 p. 12). However, others contend that even though extrapolation based on representativeness is difficult through case studies (Cohen et al., 2011), case studies allow analytic generalisations through expansion and generalisation of theories (Yin, 2014).

This study also considered the possibility of generalising from the findings by adopting several generalisable elements to the study. Since the foreign degree awarding institutes included in the case study represented a wide range of attributes as explained in the section 4.5, the findings can be transferable to the other institutes which may have similar attributes. The four stakeholder groups chosen for the sample also represented a wide range of attributes as discussed in the section 4.5.1 and thereby provided several generalisable elements to the study. Quality as a concept is widely used and the findings of this study improve the understanding of quality as a concept, so this understanding may also be used in other similar contexts. Thus, the findings of this study may have several generalizable elements.

4.3.3 Why a Mixed Methods Approach?

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods research as the class of research in which the researcher mixes or links qualitative as well as quantitative methods, approaches or concepts. Thus the mixed methods approach to research challenges the polarization of research as either quantitative or qualitative. As Cohen et al. (2011) argue, there is a compatibility between quantitative and qualitative methods. Many researchers (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Creswell, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) support this idea and detail many benefits of using mixed methods that cannot be achieved using a single method. To highlight the advantages that mixed methods offers, most of them (Clark & Creswell, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) adopt the five major purposes for conducting mixed methods research as identified by Greene, Caracelli, & Graham (1989). These five major rationales for conducting mixed methods are:

1. Triangulation: seeking convergence and corroboration of results from different methods.
2. Complementarity: seeking elaboration, enrichment, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method.
3. Initiation: discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a re-framing of the research question.
4. Development: using the findings from one method to help develop the other method.
5. Expansion: seeking to extend the breadth and range of research by using different methods for different inquiry components.

This study adopts triangulation as the rationale for employing mixed methods approach in this study. It helped the study to increase the validity by triangulating the results of the quantitative questions of the questionnaire with the interview results.

This study also adopted mixed methods because, as Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003) highlight, mixed methods research can offer stronger inferences. Mixed methods research provides answers to both the what and how or why types of research questions (Cohen et al., 2011); in other words since it provides both quantitative and qualitative answers it gives a more complete picture of the study than a single method can (Denscombe, 2008). A recent contributor to the field, Chan (2011), who employed the mixed methods approach to investigate 'the quality assurance experiences of Hong Kong students those who follow the non-local tertiary qualifications', presented persuasive arguments around the strengths of the approach for a study such as this. The next section situates pragmatism as the philosophical foundation of the research methodology.

4.4 Pragmatism as a Philosophical Underpinning of the Study

Many researchers (Chan, 2011; Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) emphasize that mixed methods research works within a pragmatic paradigm. Pragmatism, which is mainly influenced by the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), views that both qualitative and quantitative methods are required to meet the research needs and places a primary emphasis on the needs of research rather than the researcher's preferences (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). According to pragmatism, "methodological Puritanism should give way to methodological pragmatism in answering

research questions" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 21; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Pragmatism offers a pluralist and eclectic approach to research in terms of methodology. It adopts fitness for purpose and applicability as research priorities, while regarding reality as both objective and socially constructed (Cohen et al., 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatists consider knowledge as tentative and believe that it is necessary to test knowledge against experience (Bazeley, 2013). According to pragmatism "'what works' to answer the research questions is the most useful approach to the investigation" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 23). Pragmatism focuses on the solutions to practical problems in the practical world and thereby provides real answers to real questions. The next section describes the data collection methods of the study which were driven by a 'pragmatic paradigm'.

4.5 Data Sources

The research was conducted in Colombo district of Sri Lanka and five foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka were employed as sources of data at the local level. The number of institutes was limited to five to 'enable each to be studied more intensively' (Gerring, 2007), taking account of the limited time period available for data collection. A pragmatic approach was adopted when deciding on the number of institutes as it was necessary to strike balance between the scope of this study, time framework available for field work and the necessity to study each institute in depth. The five institutes were chosen purposively to represent a range of provider countries, courses and institutional types. A full description of these institutes, which are limited in number, cannot be given in the thesis since it is necessary to protect their confidentiality. Criteria informing the judgements made when selecting these institutes were as follows:

1. Since these institutes offer degrees from different countries (e.g. US, UK and Australia) it was necessary that the sample represents a variety of degree awarding countries in Sri Lanka.
2. It was decided that the sample should also include both new and the older institutes which offer foreign degrees in Sri Lanka.
3. Because some foreign degree awarding institutes have also obtained the local degree awarding status from the UGC, and therefore must abide by the UGC regulations and guidelines for local degrees, it was deemed necessary that the sample includes both types of institutes, the institutes which offer only the foreign degrees and the institutes which offer both local and foreign degrees.

4. Since these institutes offer a variety of courses (e.g. Business and Information Technology) and types of degrees (e.g. Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree) it was necessary to select institutes which offer these different types of courses and types of degrees.

Thus, the five institutes were selected considering their specific institutional features which were seen as potentially impacting the dimensions of 'quality' associated with each.

The University Grants Commission, The Ministry of Higher Education and The National Education Commission (NEC)[14] of Sri Lanka were also utilised purposively as sources of data at national level since these government organizations play a major role in the field of higher education. The UGC as the apex body of the University System of Sri Lanka is responsible for planning and coordinating university education, maintaining academic standards, regulating the administration of higher education institutes which come under them and also the admissions of the students to these institutes (University Grants Commission - Sri Lanka, 2014 a). The Ministry of Higher Education is important since it organizes and directs the system of higher education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012 b). NEC is significant because of its role in making recommendations to the Sri Lanka president on policy issues while engaging in the policy making process for higher education of Sri Lanka (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2009). Considering the limited number of participants available for each group and the fact that UGC and NEC are both directly linked with the Ministry of Higher Education, these government organizations were considered as one group: 'The officials of government higher education organizations' in the data collection and analysis process. The methods adopted to collect data from the five selected institutes and the government organizations are discussed in the next section, along with an overview of the pilot study which shaped the main study.

[14] Main function of NEC: "Make recommendations to the President, on educational policy in all its aspects, with a view to, ensuring continuity in educational policy and enabling the education system to respond to changing needs in society, including an immediate review of educational policy and plan or plans and the making of recommendations to the President, on a comprehensive National Education Policy" (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2014, para. 1).

4.5.1 Data Collection Methods

Pilot Study as a Validation Strategy

Jacobson & Wood (2006), Kezar (2000), and Sampson (2004), by conducting pilot studies in their research, reveal the potential of pilot studies in refining and enhancing the research design, analysis, conceptualization and reflection of the researchers. Kezar (2000) argues that it is important to obtain experience or engage in the process in order to develop understanding, and highlights that pilot studies can ground the researchers' theoretically obtained understanding. Considering the above strengths and drawing on Deming's 'Plan, Do, Check, Action cycle' (PDCA) (see Figure 2.1, chapter 2) this research employed a pilot study.

Although the main purpose of this pilot study was to test the veracity of the questionnaires prior to the main investigation, there were a number of other factors that motivated its undertaking. First, since exploring the quality of higher education in Sri Lanka involves some sensitive issues such as employees making comments about their institutes which employers might think as a threat to their institutes, it was necessary to see the feasibility of this study in terms of obtaining permission from the foreign degree awarding institutes to undertake the data collection at their sites. Secondly, because the quality of foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka is a novice area in research, it was decided that it is appropriate to conduct a pilot study to ground the theoretical understanding in relation to this subject. Thirdly, given there are different meanings attached to quality it was useful to recognize what some of these meanings might be. Thus, this pilot study not only enhanced the research design but also provided a reflection and an understanding of the different meanings attached to quality. Four types of anonymous questionnaires were designed to investigate the research questions through the pilot study. A total of twenty one lecturers, forty five students and eighteen senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka - six policy makers from the National Education Commission, six officials from the University Grants Commission and six officials from the Ministry of Higher Education - were invited to participate in this pilot study. Since there are so many dimensions to quality and because of the looseness of the definitions of quality and the differences between the institutes as implied by the existing literature, it was decided that it was necessary to carry out a larger scale pilot than the usual. The prospective participants were selected according to their availability at the time the questionnaires were distributed up to the number of respondents required. The pilot study was conducted over a period of four months.

Outcomes and the Lessons Learned

It was possible to obtain permission from the intended three foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka to conduct the data collection at their institutes, and therefore the main doubt in relation to the feasibility of data collection was cleared. Also, very encouragingly, the response rate of the four groups lay between 55 and 60 percent. This primary data provided a general idea about the dimensions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes from the perspective of different stakeholders of these institutes and, even though the number of participants in each group was relatively small, thereby provided useful guidance for the main study. This pilot group was also given a chance to be included in the sample who completed the final questionnaire.

The pilot study enabled enhanced reflection and this reflection on the research process assisted in planning the main study. The pilot study also demonstrated that it is necessary to conduct interviews to obtain different and in depth ideas about the dimensions of quality related to these institutes. During the field work of the pilot study it was decided that observation should be rejected as a data collection method because of participants' discomfort in being observed and awareness that there is a high possibility that they may change the way they behave during the observation. The pilot study also suggested that some open ended questions need to be reworded in order to avoid misunderstanding of the questions. Several questions did not provide productive answers and therefore appeared to be unhelpful to the questionnaires. Thus, the reliability and the validity of the questionnaires were tested and the questionnaires were changed to some extent by removing these superfluous questions. The final questionnaires were also reviewed by two lecturers, one director, one government official and several students prior to delivery and their ideas also assisted in improving the questionnaire. Thus, the validity and the reliability of the four types of questionnaires were tested.

Since two students asked the meaning and the functions of the University Grants Commission at the time of questionnaire distribution of the pilot study, it was decided to explain the meaning of significant terms verbally to the participants. Even the statements about the quality which were ranked by the participants were also explained to them at the time of questionnaire distribution in order to make the statements interpreted consistently by the participants and this increased the reliability and the validity of the data. Since some professionals requested an electronic copy of the questionnaire it was decided that both an electronic and a hard copy should be given to the professionals.

Data Collection Methods of the Main Study

This study employed a questionnaire survey, semi structured interviews and a small scale documentary analysis as methods of data collection. As the pilot study suggested, observations were rejected because of the perception they might provide less reliable data and also since it was decided that the other data sources and methods were sufficient to answer the research questions. The contact details of the five foreign degree awarding institutes, the University Grants Commission, the Ministry of Higher Education and the National Education Commission were obtained from their web sites and they were visited to make an appointment with the head of the organization. Permission was obtained from the relevant persons to access their institutes or the organization. The data collection started in Sri Lanka in August 2012 and was completed within a period of five months, beginning with the questionnaire survey and then followed by the interviews. The documentary data were collected throughout this five months' period. The above mentioned data collection methods are discussed in the next sections in relation to their importance to this study, selection of the sample and the design of the method.

Questionnaire Survey

A survey is economical, efficient and "represents a wide target population" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 256). This study adopted a questionnaire survey as a means of reaching a large sample of professionals and students of the selected foreign degree awarding institutes in order to explore their perceptions of quality in relation to foreign degree awarding institutes. Thakur (2005) supports this idea by arguing that questionnaires can reach a large sample within a short period of time. It is difficult to reach a large sample within a short period of time by using only interviews.

Four different types of questionnaires were designed to distribute to the four different types of participants which are, lecturers, students and senior managers[15] of the foreign degree awarding institutes and the officials of government higher education organizations. These four types of stakeholder groups were chosen for the survey considering the significance of obtaining the views of stakeholders who may have a different stake in higher education as explained in section 2.3.2. Lecturers were selected since they are directly involved in academic activities and their functions have a direct link with the quality of students' learning. The

[15] The senior managers included directors, principals, deans, and heads of various departments such as marketing and finance.

students were included since they are the end users of higher education programmes and the quality of these institutes has a direct impact on the quality of their students' education. The senior managers were selected as they make important and high level decisions related to the institutes and thus their perceptions of the quality of these institutes are significant. The officials of the government organizations related to higher education were chosen as they directly influence various higher education activities at the national level which can have an impact on these institutes. These selected four stakeholder groups represent a variety of aspects and thereby provided a holistic view to quality as is argued in chapter two.

The sample targeted for the questionnaire survey included 50 full time lecturers of the foreign degree awarding institutes, 50 lecturers who deliver lectures at the foreign degree awarding institutes and also at the government universities, 300 students (including 100 first year bachelor's degree students, 50 second year bachelor's degree students and another 150 students who were a combination of final year bachelor's degree students and postgraduate students), 40 senior managers of the selected five foreign degree awarding institutes and 60 officials of the three government higher education organizations (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Questionnaire survey sample

Type of participants	Participant description and number invited	Total number invited	Total number who responded[16]
Lecturers	Full time lecturers of the foreign degree awarding institutes (work only for the institute) - 50 Lecturers who deliver lectures at the foreign degree awarding institutes as well as the government universities -50 Total number included 40 males and 60 females.	100	60
Students	First year students-100, Second year students – 50 Final year and Post graduate students- 150 (120 final year bachelor's degree students and 30 postgraduate students. Since two institutes did not have any postgraduate courses instead of the postgraduate students additional 10 students were invited from the final year of each of these two institutes. This allowed to invite equal number of students from each institute) Total number included 177 males and 123 females ; 202 full time students and 98 part time students; 129 Business students, 90 IT students; 48 Health Science related students, 24 Engineering students, 5 Tourism related students and 4 other (confidentiality maintained) students.	300	160

[16] Refer appendices T and U for the demographic data of students and professionals who responded to the questionnaire.

Senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes	Senior managers included job designations such as Managing directors, Principals, Marketing managers, and Academic heads Total number included 21 males and 19 females.	40	21
Officials of the government higher education organizations	The participant numbers invited were 30, 20 and 10 and this was based on the staff number in each of these organizations. Total number included 42 males and 18 females.	60	25

The number of participants was limited to the above totals considering the scale of the study and also since there was a limited period of time for data collection. The above sample was chosen from a population of 7400 students who follow foreign degrees in Sri Lanka in the selected five institutes, 280 lecturers, and 76 senior managers in the five selected institutes and 100 government officials of the three selected government organizations. The total population of the institutes can be different to these numbers as this study covers only the students who follow foreign degrees in these institutes and there are students who follow other degrees and/or diplomas in these institutes. This population also covers only the chosen centres in the institutes and the population of the branch campuses or other centres are not included. Although the institutes were selected purposively, the participants were selected randomly. A random sample is a probability sample so that every person in the population has a nonzero probability to be selected for the sample (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Senior managers of foreign degree awarding institutes and the officials of three government higher education organizations were selected through simple random sampling. A list of all the names belonging to each category was taken separately from their organizations and then their names were drawn out of a hat until the required number was reached. A volunteer person was employed to make the first contact with the participants. The volunteer contacted the participants via telephone, through the reception desk of their organizations. Their consent was sought to meet them in person to handover the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (refer Appendix I) and the hard copy and the electronic copy of the questionnaire. The participants were also informed that if they do not wish to be met, these could be left at a place convenient for them. Since all the participants agreed to meet, the PIS and the hard copy and the electronic copy (given only to professionals) of the questionnaire were handed over to them

by visiting them in person. They were given two days to complete their questionnaire. They were advised that the questionnaires are to be placed in the relevant questionnaire Drop Boxes available at the reception area of their organization. Considering the similarity between the government officials' groups, a common questionnaire was given to the officials of the three government organizations.

The lecturers and the students were selected through random stratified sampling. Random stratified sampling divides the population into homogenous groups by considering the similar characteristics that each group has (Cohen et al., 2011). The lecturers needed to be divided into two groups as full time lectures and lecturers who deliver lectures at the foreign degree awarding institutes and also at the government universities. Lists of the lecturers who deliver lectures at the foreign degree awarding institutes as well as the government universities, and of the full time lecturers at the foreign degree awarding institutes were obtained separately from the selected institutes in order to employ random stratified sampling for them. The students needed to be divided into groups as first year of bachelor's degree, second year of bachelor's degree, final year of bachelor's degree and postgraduate students. After taking a list of the names of students for each category from the institutes, the same simple random sampling method mentioned above was used to select the prospective participants. In the case of the questionnaire of lecturers also, the volunteer called the participants first and asked if they can be met, and most of them agreed. Therefore, the questionnaires were delivered to most of them by hand and left the questionnaire and the Participant Information Sheet at a place convenient to the participants for those who did not agree to be met. The lecturers and the students were also given two days to return their questionnaires. In the case of the students, the volunteer contacted the students by visiting their classrooms during their class break time and delivered the questionnaire and the Participant Information Sheet to them. The same method mentioned above for other participant groups was used for returning the questionnaires.

The participants were requested to complete the questionnaires anonymously since it was believed that this would increase the response rate and the reliability of the data. Because the participants are asked for some of their biographical data (e.g. age and gender; refer Appendices N-Q) the Participant Information Sheet informed them that only the researcher and the supervisor would have access to their personal data (refer Appendices H and I). The questionnaires were self-administered questionnaires without the presence of the researcher and they were contacted using a volunteer. Cohen et al. (2011) argue that 'the self-administered questionnaires without the presence of the researcher' allow the participants to participate without having any threats or pressure that can be caused by the researcher's

presence. They also highlight that it is easier to reveal sensitive issues without the presence of the researcher. Therefore, provision of the self-administered questionnaires without the presence of the researcher was considered as more appropriate to this study.

All the questionnaires included both closed questions and open-ended questions. The questionnaires included closed questions because the respondents can answer these more easily and quickly (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002). This was also seen as helping to increase the response rate. Open-ended questions were included in the questionnaires to allow the participants to write freely in their own words, to describe and qualify their answers (Cohen *et al.* 2007). These questionnaires, therefore, provided both qualitative and quantitative data. All four types of questionnaires included two rank order questions. This rank ordering was used to identify the most appropriate meaning for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes, and also to determine the priorities for quality in relation to these institutes from a list of criteria for quality. The first rank order question which requires the participants to rank five different 'meanings of quality' was explained verbally to the prospective participants at the time of questionnaire distribution in order to bring more clarity to the explanations of these terms given in the questionnaire. Several examples were also provided in the questionnaire under these terms so that the students could understand the terms easily. Other significant terms which required more clarifications for the students were also explained to them verbally at the time of questionnaire distribution.

The questionnaires for senior managers and lecturers included several questions of 5-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree in order to measure the degree to which the participants agree or disagree with each statement designed to measure the quality aspects of the foreign degree awarding institutes (refer Appendices O and P). The questionnaires commenced with the closed questions in order to motivate them to start the questionnaire.

All the questions were designed in English language on the assumption that participants had enough fluency to understand and answer them in English; English is the second language of Sri Lanka and also the medium of instruction for the degrees of the foreign degree awarding institutes. The fact that Stephen (2007) conducted a questionnaire survey and interviews with students in the English language to investigate the relevance of foreign degrees offered in Sri Lanka, was considered to support the idea of conducting a questionnaire survey and interviews in English with all participant groups including students.

Interviews

The word ‘inter-view’ means an interchange of ideas between two or more people on a topic in which they have a mutual interest. This social situatedness of interviews allows the participants to discuss their understanding of the world in which they live and to explain how they regard situations from their own viewpoints (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, interviews allow multi-sensory channels which are verbal and non-verbal to be used in the research (Cohen et al., 2011). Interviews also allow greater depth than the other methods (Cohen et al., 2011) and the interviewer can build a rapport with the interviewees. This rapport will help to get into the depth of ideas and also can clarify any doubts regarding the answers or questions if open ended questions are used. Therefore interviews are useful in exploring complex issues. For this study, the quality issues which involve complexity such as different definitions and meanings of quality needed to be explored in depth. Establishing a good rapport with the interviewees helped to obtain more information in relation to quality issues, and to clarify the issues arising from the responses to the questionnaires which were administered before conducting interviews. For example it was necessary to see the reasons for identifying certain criteria as quality priorities. Because the interview questions were similar to the main topics of the questionnaires it was possible to compare the responses of questionnaires with the responses of the interviews (refer Appendices R and S).

This study employed semi structured interviews since they provide the freewheeling quality of unstructured interviewing while allowing the researchers to be in full control of an interview with the use of an interview guide determining the topics to be explored through open-ended questions (Bernard, 2002). These open-ended questions “can catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour” (Cohen *et al.* 2007, P.330). Semi structured interviews also allow prompts and probes (Cohen et al., 2011). The use of probes allowed me to ask the respondents to elaborate or clarify their response and thereby provided the comprehensiveness, depth of response and honesty that are some of the characteristics of successful interviewing.

This study conducted face to face interviews with the selected students, lecturers and senior managers as shown in Table 4.2. Face to face interviews are more appropriate than telephone interviews when a study involves complex issues, sensitive issues and seeks for deeper and self-generated answers (Shuy, 2003) as in this study. Each interviewee was interviewed only once and the interviews were conducted in a one-to-one manner. Focus group interviews were rejected because ‘quality’ involves many sensitive issues and it was thought that the participants might not feel comfortable in expressing their true feeling and views in a focus

group environment, which could reduce the reliability of the research. For example, students might not wish to discuss their unpleasant experiences of lecturers in the presence of other students. One-to- one interviews were seen as increasing the reliability of the data.

Purposive sampling was employed when selecting the student interview sample so it could represent different ethnic groups such as Tamils, Malay, Sinhalese, Burghers and Maldivians. Maldivians were included in the sample since Maldivians comprise a share of foreign students who study at foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. The sample also represented first year, second year and the final year undergraduate students and postgraduate students. The interview sampling for the lecturers and the senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes were also purposive since the participants were selected based on the special criteria mentioned in Table 4.2. below. Lecturers who work only for the foreign degree awarding institutes and also the lecturers who work for the foreign degree awarding institutes and also the government universities were selected purposively to see whether there are any contradictory ideas between their viewpoints. Furthermore approximately an equal number of males and females were invited to participate in the interviews in order to avoid gender bias. The administrators of the institutes were informed of the characteristics that were looked for in each type of participant in the institutes and asked to send the PIS and the consent form (refer Appendices J - M) to the students or to the employees who qualified according to the sampling criteria, but only up to the number required. They were also provided with my contact details. The government officials interviewed were also selected purposively from the three government higher education organizations mentioned before considering their gender, job designation and their involvement with foreign degree awarding institutes. Their email addresses were taken from the web sites of their organizations. They were emailed a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form (refer Appendices K and M) by the volunteer person, and they were requested to contact me if they are interested in participating in an interview. Their informed consent was obtained in writing. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Table 4.2 Interview Sample Description

Type of participants	Participant description and the number invited	Total number invited from five institutes	Total number who responded	Special criteria considered for purposive sampling
Lecturers	2 (This includes one fulltime lecturers in the institute (works only for the institute) and one part time lecturer who also delivers lectures at a government university)	10	7	Educational level, gender, age, department that the lecturers were belonged to
Students	3 (2 Sri Lankans, 1 Maldivian)	15	9	Year of study (under graduate, post graduate level), gender, ethnicity, type of programme, age, School attended (government schools, private schools or international schools)
Senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes	2 from each institute	10	9	Gender, education level, experience in the field, age
Officials of three government organizations	3 from each organization	9	6	Job designation, involvement with these institutes and gender, age, Educational level

The above table shows the actual number of participants along with the number of people who were invited to take part in the research via interviews. Even though the initial plan was to invite 80 people in total taking 20 people from each group, it was difficult to find the government officials who qualify the required criteria up to this number and only nine officials satisfied the required criteria. Therefore, the senior managers and the lecturers were limited to 10 from each group while the student number was limited to 15 considering the large number of students available in these five institutes and this maintained the balance of the number of participants from each group. Thus, 44 people in total were invited to participate in the interviews. However, only 31 participated in the interviews representing 7 lecturers, 9 students, 9 senior managers and 6 government officials. Even though the duration of each interview was planned for thirty minutes, the interviews of some senior managers and some government officials took about forty minutes as they desired to talk longer than the allocated time. The next section describes the documentary data which enhanced the value of the research.

Documentary Data

Punch (2009) identifies documentary data as a rich source of data for educational research. It was necessary to employ documentary data at local level and global level to discuss the practices of these institutes with regard to the first research question. Included therefore at local level were: media documents such as prospectus, press releases, web sites of the institutes, and paper advertisements published by institutes, and student hand books, vision and mission statements of the institutes and some of their policies and guidelines. Although it was planned to collect institutes' records of students' achievements and minutes of meetings of these institutes it was not possible to obtain those data from these institutes. However, since it was possible to gather the required data from students, lecturers and the senior managers of these institutes who had direct links with the above mentioned documents, this did not have a major impact on this research. The 'guidelines and policies' of the foreign providers available to the off shore providers were very important sources of data at the global level. As it is necessary to consider the ethical aspects when conducting research, the next section focuses on the ethical considerations of the study.

4.6 Ethical Considerations of the Study

This research adhered to the guidelines of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) in order to ensure the maintenance of an ethical approach throughout this study. The ethics approval for this research was granted by the UAHPEC as transparency of the data collection, handling and management was clearly explained and justified. Maintaining justice when selecting participants is one of the important foundational ethical principles and the procedure which was adopted for the selection of participants is justified in the research methodology section above. The heads of all the selected institutes and the government organizations for the study were given an information sheet explaining the research procedures such as the data collection process and the data management. All the prospective participants were also given a Participants Information Sheet clearly explaining the research procedures of the study such as the data collection process and the data management. Informed consent was obtained in writing from the heads of the selected institutes and the government organizations and from the participants of the interviews by asking them to sign a consent form. The interviewees were informed that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed (refer Appendices J and K). The interviewees were also informed that a transcriber would be hired to transcribe the audio recorded data and the transcriber would sign a confidentiality agreement. The participants of the questionnaires were informed in the participant information sheet that the completed and returned questionnaires would be taken as their implied consent since the questionnaires were anonymous. All the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. Privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research by not revealing the identity of the participants of the questionnaires or the interviews. The questionnaires were used anonymously and the names or any other identifiable details of the participants of the interviews were not revealed; thus their identity was protected in this research. The confidentiality of the selected foreign degree awarding institutes was also maintained by not revealing their identifying information. The real names of the three government organizations were not used when presenting the findings and they were also given pseudo names as organization one, two and three. The participants of interviews were also informed that they could withdraw from involvement in this research at any stage without explanation and also they could withdraw their data within a two week period after submission of data. Thus, accepted ethical standards were maintained in this research. The following section describes the aspects of validity and reliability of the thesis.

4.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Validity and reliability are essential elements which need to be considered when conducting research. Validity is a synonym for truth (Silverman, 2005) and, as Hartas (2010) points out, validity is a significant criterion when considering the meaningfulness of the findings and the overall worth of the study; it poses the question 'whether we measure what we set out to measure (p.74). Reliability denotes how consistent and stable a measurement is and the replicability of the findings of a study. The next section describes various strategies adopted to increase the internal and external validity and the reliability of the study.

4.7.1 Internal Validity

Internal validity is related to the suitability of the research results to the truth, how they match reality and how the results show what is actually there (Merriam, 1998). Since this study utilized a pilot study the veracity of the questionnaires were tested and then the questionnaires were modified in response to the participants' comments. Through the self-administered questionnaires it was possible to check whether the participants misinterpreted the data or whether they had any doubts in relation to the questions; thus the pilot study enhanced the internal validity of the data of the main study. Triangulation is one significant strategy which enhances internal validity (Merriam, 1998) and this study employed 'data triangulation and methodological triangulation as types of triangulation' (Denzin, 1970). A number of data sources were adopted in this study by including students, lecturers and senior managers of foreign degree awarding institutes and the officials of government higher education organizations. This allowed triangulation of data obtained from different stakeholder groups and this increased the internal validity of the study. This study also employed a number of methods and that is, questionnaire survey, interviews and documentary analysis to investigate the research questions through a process of methodological triangulation.

4.7.2 External Validity

External validity is identified as our "ability to generalize the results beyond the context of a specific study" (Hartas, 2010, p. 76). As discussed in section 4.3.2 in this chapter it is difficult to generalize from a case study. However, the findings of qualitative research can enhance external validity through rich and thick description, through multi-site designs and by providing details on the typicality of data (Merriam, 1998). This study purposively selected five foreign degree awarding institutes which represent multiple characteristics of foreign

degree awarding institutes in order to investigate the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka, so that the quality aspects of these institutes can be transferable to the other institutes. The study's employment of interviews providing thick and rich description also thereby increased the external validity of the study.

By adopting a mixed methods approach, this study extended the breadth and the range of the research. This was achieved by using questionnaires which also included closed questions. The closed questions assisted in increasing the response rate thereby achieving expansion. Different stakeholders of higher education can use the findings of this study to compare with their situations as 'comparing results of a study to readers' own situations' (De-Silva, 2011) helps in providing external validity.

4.7.3 Reliability

Reliability aims to minimize faults and biases in research (Yin, 2014). The pilot study increased the reliability of this main study as the lessons learned from the pilot study minimized the errors in the main study. Also as the questionnaire survey was conducted first, it was possible to clear doubts arrived from the survey data through the interviews and this enhanced the reliability of the study. Triangulation was used as explained in the previous section and this data triangulation and the methodological triangulation increased the reliability of the study. This study adopted a multi- sited research which also increased the reliability of the research. Sufficient details on the data collection and analysis procedure of this study can also assist in achieving replicability. Since a major component of the research results are qualitative data it is necessary to consider reliability in qualitative data. During the qualitative data analysis process care was taken to check the trustworthiness of data analysis by searching for themes and concepts that did not fit the emerging themes. A meeting was arranged with a group of peers in the education service in Sri Lanka to discuss the findings of my research. They assisted in improving the reliability of the data by helping me to avoid any misinterpretation of the data. The following section discusses the data analysis process and presentation of information of the study.

4.8 Analysis and Presentation of Information

This study gave priority to qualitative analysis when analysing data, though a number of quantitative techniques were also used to enhance the value of the study. The analysis is

presented under the research questions as Cohen et al. (2011) argue that this helps the researcher to obtain all the relevant data to the exact issues and also to maintain the coherence of the material. An overview of the structure of the data analysis is presented in Figure 4.2. (refer Figure 4.2)

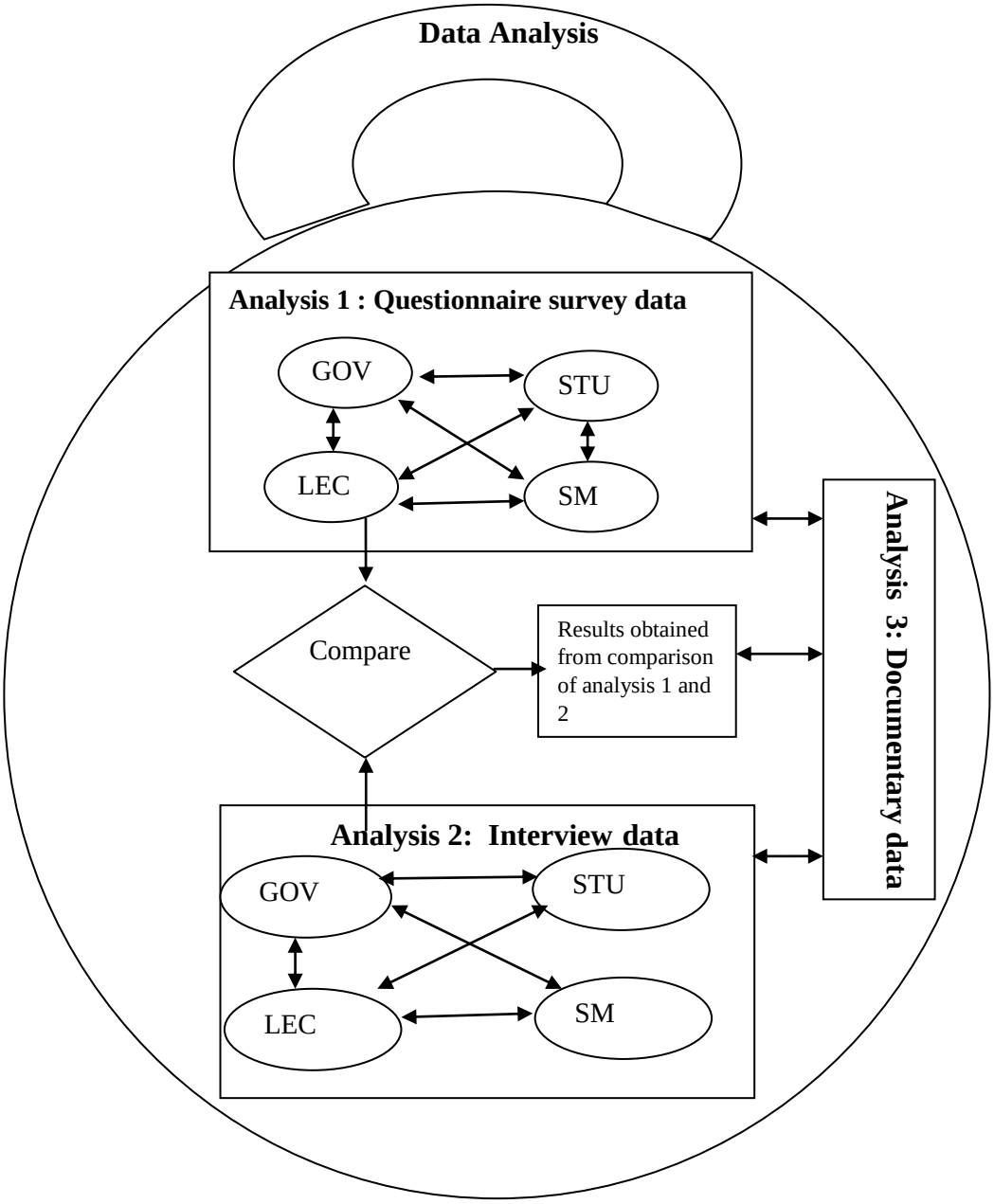

Figure 4.2: An overview of the structure of the data analysis of the study

*GOV: Government higher education officials, STU: Students, LEC: Lecturers and SM: Senior managers

Diagram Description

The diagram illustrates how the data analysis began with the questionnaire data and then subsequently moved to the analysis of the interview data. Though the questionnaire and the interview data were analysed separately, they were discussed and presented together in the

thesis and comparisons were made as it is shown in Figure 4.2. The comparisons within the stakeholder groups were made with regard to the findings of the questionnaires and the interviews where it was necessary. The findings obtained from the questionnaire survey in relation to the four stakeholder groups were also compared with the findings of the interviews as necessary. The documentary data were analysed to answer a part of the first research question, 'the practices' associated with the quality of these institutes. These findings were also discussed in relation to questionnaire and interview data when it was necessary.

4.8.1 Analysis of Research Question One (RQ1)

The data related to the first part of RQ1 which was about 'the definitions of quality' required analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS data analysis computer software package. All the collected data were entered in to an Excel spreadsheet and then imported to SPSS in order to analyse them via SPSS data analysis tools. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to summarise and also to give an overview of the data. Of the two rank order questions which were designed to answer the first part of the first research question, the first question was designed to identify in which order the participants rank five quality definitions when deciding the suitability of these quality definitions to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka (refer Appendices N-Q, section 2). Five variable columns were designed, and the actual number that each participant has given to each statement was entered in to each respective variable column in order to provide a weight. After all scores were entered, the total of each variable column was calculated. The lowest total was identified as the most suitable definition and the highest total was identified as the least suitable definition. Thus according to the total score of each variable the ranking order was identified.

The data obtained from the second ranking question which was designed to identify the priorities for quality of these institutes were calculated in a slightly different manner - in this question it was not compulsory to rank all the statements and they could stop ranking when they felt that they had identified the main priorities for quality. Thus, the lowest total could not provide the highest priority for this analysis. The participants were asked to identify priorities for quality out of twenty two quality criteria statements and they were given instructions that, when they rank these twenty two statements, number one equals the highest priority and number two equals the second highest, and so on (refer Appendices N-Q, section 3). Twenty two variable columns were designed and then the total of each variable column was taken and then the mean was calculated out of this weighted score. The highest mean was considered as

the highest priority and the second highest mean was taken as the second highest priority and so on. Since there are four stakeholder groups the data from each stakeholder group for both ranking questions was analysed separately and then the results from each group were compared with one another.

The responses to the open ended questions of the questionnaire were analysed using the 'thematic analysis' approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe 'Thematic analysis' is a method that enables researchers to identify, analyse and report themes or the patterns within data. This approach also allows the researchers to use many types of details in a systematic way and thereby increases the precision and sensitivity in "understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organizations" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5). Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) provide six phases of thematic analysis as follows.

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

This study followed these six phases when analysing the responses to the open ended questions of the questionnaire. The data collated were coded using NVivo which helped to highlight the data that could shape research results and inform findings. Memoing was also employed in line with Punch (2009), who argues that memos may indicate new patterns or may explain a concept in detail or imply ways of doing things. Reflections and other remarks were noted in the margins as memos. After analysing the questionnaire data, all the tape recorded data of the interviews were transcribed and grouped according to the types of participants. The data were coded using the NVivo computer software package in the same manner mentioned above for the coding of open ended questions of the questionnaire. Memos were also used to note down the reflections, reflexive insights and other remarks. Various meanings of quality were identified during the coding process. It was possible to obtain the help of three professionals who have a sound knowledge in coding and quality of higher education during the coding process and their ideas and guidance assisted in avoiding coder bias during the data analysis process. After consulting the professionals, more meaningful codes were generated and this improved the reliability of the coding process.

After discussing the analysed data of closed questions and the open ended questions of the questionnaire and the interviews, key themes were identified to discuss the definitions of quality. When presenting responses to the open ended questions of the questionnaire and the interviews, verbatim responses were quoted and also summarised what the respondents had said by identifying important and meaningful responses. The second part of the first research question focused on 'the purposes' and 'the practices' associated with the term quality of these institutes. The themes which described the purposes were identified by analysing responses to open ended questions of the questionnaire and the responses of the interviews through the thematic analysis process mentioned above. The priorities for quality identified before through the rank order question also assisted in identifying the purposes of quality with regard to these institutes. Thus, the purposes were discussed in the thesis under the key themes identified from the analysis of the questionnaire and the interview data. By analysing the documentary data, key themes were identified to discuss the practices associated with the term quality of these institutes. Since this was only a small part of data collection the data were analysed by hand without using any computer software.

4.8.2 Analysis of Research Question Two (RQ2)

The responses related to RQ2 which focuses on the implementation and the maintenance of the priorities for quality of these institutes required more weight for a qualitative analysis approach. However, the lecturers' and the senior managers' questionnaires included 5 point Likert Scales to strengthen the qualitative data. As in RQ1 the questionnaire data were analysed first and then the 5 point Likert Scales were analysed using percentages; as Cohen et al. (2011) point out Likert scales lend themselves to being analysed using percentages. The bar charts were used to present some of these findings. The Likert Scales and the dichotomous questions which included 'Yes/No/Don't know' answers were analysed using SPSS data analysis software and the answers of the dichotomous questions were presented using percentages. The responses to the open ended questions and the interviews were analysed using the thematic analysis approach discussed above and the NVivo computer software package. The transcribed data were read carefully and the recorded interviews were listened to many times. Listening to the interviews was important since their tone helped in understanding the participants' manner of reacting to questions. The verbatim data made the analysis more authentic and they also supported the identified themes with thick description. The verbatim responses were quoted frequently since they are more direct and often more enlightening than the researcher using her own words (Cohen et al., 2011). 'What the respondents have said' was also summarised when seen as necessary. Since both the questionnaires and interviews

included data from four types of participants, after analysing the data of each group separately the findings of each group were compared with the findings of each other group. These findings have been discussed in the thesis under the key themes identified from the data.

4.9 Overview of Methodological Decisions

An overview of the key methodological aspects and their respective research lenses which were utilized in this study are presented in the following Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Overview of the research lenses of the study

Key methodological aspects	Research lenses of this study
Research philosophy	Pragmatism
Framing of the study (The who or what of study)/phenomena of the study	How, and with what consequences for whom, Foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, define, perceive and implement 'quality'
Research approaches	Vertical Case Study and mixed methods
Data sources	Questionnaires, Semi structured interviews, Documentary data
Sample invited to take part in the research	*Five foreign degree awarding institutes :* *Questionnaire sample:* Total of 100 Lecturers, 300 students, 40 Senior managers and 60 officials from three selected government organizations. *Interview Sample:* Total of 15 students, 10 Lecturers, 10 Senior managers and 9 officials from three selected government organizations. Four different perspectives
Data analysis techniques	Quantitative data: Descriptive/ Some inferential. Qualitative data : Thematic analysis
Ethical considerations	The guidelines of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC)
Reliability and Validity	Triangulation of methods/data; comparison between stakeholder types; pilot study as a strategy to validate.

4.10 Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

The total number of valid questionnaires was 266 which included 160 (60 percent) students, 60 (23 percent) lecturers, 21 (8 percent) Senior Managers and 25 (9 percent) officials of the government organizations. As the data illustrate the largest proportion comprised of the students. Of the total sample 165 (62 percent) participants were male and 101 (38 percent) were female. The gender representation was maintained proportionately even in the case of the number of participants of government organizations, 28 percent female participants compared to the 72 percent of male participation (refer Appendix U), as the female share of employment in these government organizations is relatively low.

The total 31 interview participants were comprised of 9 (29 percent) students, 7 (23 percent) lecturers, 9 (29 percent) senior managers and 6 (19 percent) officials of the three government organizations. The sample included 20 (65 percent) male participants and 11 (35 percent) female participants. The Table 4.4 below presents the proportions of participants responding against those invited and the participants' percentage as a percentage of the participants invited for this study.

Table 4.4 Profile of participants

Name of the group	**Description**	**Questionnaire**			**Interviews**		
		Number invited	Number participated	Participants' percentage	Number invited	Number participated	Participants' percentage
Stakeholder	Students	300	160	53.3 %	15	9	60 %
	Lecturers	100	60	60 %	10	7	70 %
	Senior managers	40	21	52.5 %	10	9	90 %
	Government officials	60	25	41.7 %	9	6	66.7 %
	Total	500	266	53.2 %	44	31	70.4 %
Gender	Male	280	165	58.9 %	26	20	76.9 %
	Female	220	101	46.0 %	18	11	61.1%

A detailed picture of the demographics of the participants of questionnaires and the interviews are provided in Appendices T and U. As the appendix demonstrates the majority of the students in the sample group of questionnaire studied Business and Information Technology

related subjects. Since these students were selected by random sampling it appears that students in these institutes mainly follow the above mentioned subject areas. Thus, these findings also supported the view of Stephen (2007) that the foreign degree awarding institutes focus on subjects related to Business and Information Technology and science related subjects are underrepresented in this sector. Another interesting finding of the questionnaire is that the majority of the lecturers hold a master's degree but only 7 percent of the lecturers were educated up to the PhD level or above. An unexpected finding was that the percentage of the senior managers who reported having a PhD or above (19 percent) was higher than the lecturers who had a PhD or above. However, it is worth noting that the designation of 42.9 percent of the senior managers from the sample group was related to academic areas such as 'principals' and the 'deans of faculties'. Thus, the demographic data of the participants of this study helped in understanding the nature of these institutes.

4.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed how the vertical case study and mixed methods approach formed the research methodology within a pragmatic philosophy. The data collection methods and the selection of the sample were well suited to the context of the study and increased the validity and the reliability of the study as they enabled triangulation. The chapter demonstrated that the methodology was academically and statistically well justified. The chapter also discussed how the study was well grounded ethically to enhance the value of the study and also to pay due respect to the selected participants and the organizations. An overview of the demographic data of the participants was presented in the last section in order to set the participant background for the analysis of the data which are described in the following two chapters.

Chapter 5 Findings and Analysis - Part 1
Definitions, Purposes and Practices Associated with Quality

5.1 Introduction

The findings and analysis section includes two chapters. The results related to each main research question are presented and discussed separately in the next two chapters. The overarching research question, *How is 'quality' understood, by whom, with what consequences for whom?*, is then discussed in the first part of the conclusion chapter by drawing out an overall analysis of the two main research questions.

This chapter presents and discusses the findings related to the first main research question (RQ1) which is *What definitions, purposes and practices are associated with the term 'quality' by foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?*. The purpose of the first research question is to identify different meanings and purposes of quality, the priorities for quality which situate the meanings of quality and the main practices that are documented in relation to quality. The first part of this section discusses the findings of the first sub question (SQ1.1), *What are the main definitions and purposes of 'quality' in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?*. The second sub question (SQ1.2), *What are the main practices associated with the term 'quality' of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?* is then discussed. The definitions and purposes are discussed by drawing on the questionnaire results and the interview data of the selected stakeholder groups while the practices are discussed with reference to data from several documents.

5.2 Definitions of Quality

As explained in chapter four of the thesis, the definitions of quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka were identified from the selected stakeholder groups. It was hoped that responses would draw out the fact that 'quality is a highly debated term' (Stensaker & Harvey, 2011) and very complex in nature. Participants from the four selected stakeholder groups ranked the most commonly used five definitions of quality in higher education derived by Harvey & Green (1993) in relation to how they perceived their suitability to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. By analysing the questionnaire data related to the 'definitions and the priorities for quality' of all four stakeholder groups, a total of twenty key meanings of quality were identified. Two other meanings of quality, namely,

‘employability’ and ‘relevance to local needs’ were also identified as sub meanings of ‘fitness for purpose’ meaning of quality. Westerheijden, Stensaker and Rosa (2007) identify ‘employability’ as a new purpose of higher education allowing employability to be recognised as a sub meaning of ‘fitness for purpose’ meaning of quality. Three new meanings of quality which were not revealed from the findings of the questionnaires were identified from the findings of the interviews. Most of the findings of the interviews supported the findings of the questionnaires and thereby increased the reliability and validity of the data. These definitions of quality were categorised by considering their distinguishable features even though they may coexist as conveyed in chapter two. These questionnaire and interview findings are elaborated in the following sections by their corresponding stakeholder groups.

5.2.1 Students’ Definitions of Quality

Students ranked ‘quality as excellence’ as the most suitable definition, implying that their expectations were that the foreign institutes should perform beyond the average higher education standard available in Sri Lanka. ‘Transformative’, which indicates ‘changing students’ lives for better’ was their second choice of definition (refer Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Ranking of the Definitions of Quality by the stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Definitions of Quality	Valid	Missing	Sum	Rank
Students	Excellence	159	1	340	1
	Transformative	160	0	373	2
	Fitness for purpose	156	4	422	3
	Value for money	160	0	450	4
	Perfection (or consistency)	154	6	516	5
Lecturers	Transformative	60	0	110	1
	Fitness for purpose	60	0	133	2
	Quality as excellence	60	0	167	3
	Value for money	60	0	178	4
	Perfection (or consistency)	60	0	207	5
Senior Managers	Transformative	21	0	40	1
	Value for money	21	0	47	2
	Fitness for purpose	21	0	53	3
	Quality as excellence	21	0	63	4
	Perfection (or consistency)	21	0	91	5
Government Officials	Fitness for purpose	25	0	46	1
	Transformative	25	0	49	2
	Quality as excellence	25	0	78	3
	Perfection (or consistency)	25	0	83	4
	Value for money	25	0	100	5

Further probing into how the student participants defined quality in relation to these institutes revealed a total of fourteen definitions. The following table shows the nine most frequently used definitions with the percentage of each of these definitions (calculated by taking into account the total number of responses by the sample group) and several quotations which support these definitions.

Table 5.2 Definitions of quality derived from student responses

Definitions of quality and the code description	Percentage	Representative quotes
1. Having good facilities and resources * This code was used to describe aspects related to institutional facilities and resources such as lecturers and books.	23	"Having good resources and capacity to cater the need of the students". "If that particular institutes teaches well and provides good facilities there is no difference between state and foreign degree awarding institute". "Provide by the qualified experience lecturers with most modern equipments". "Institutes that offer well designed programmes that are non-faulty, fully equipped with the required taskforce (complete panel of lecturers) & facilities and specially a one that has proven to be successful, in terms of employability and empowerment".
2. High standards * Code was used to indicate any idea related to high standards in any aspect with regard to these institutes.	23	"Studies must to be in high standards". "Reaching high standards to get a good public image for private institute". "Having very high standards". "People believe that these colleges don't maintain enough quality as government universities. So they should improve their standards up to that level".
3. Transformation *Code was used to indicate anything related to transformation of anyone or anything through these institutes.	19	"Should transform students' lives for them to be independent and contribute to the development of the country than an ordinary person who does not hold a degree". "Quality is about increasing students' skills, personality, and creativity and make them productive people to the world". "Quality should be built in person also not only improving domain knowledge/ subject knowledge. University should improve personal skills like social/ cultural/ team work and many more".

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">4. Fitness for purpose
* Code was used to denote ideas which focus on matching a specific purpose.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>“Increasing knowledge to find a good job”.
“Should meet the requirements of the job market”.
“Should relevant to the needs of country”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Employability
*Code was used to describe ideas related to job potential given to students by the programmes of these institutes.
(5 percent)</td>
<td>II. Relevance to local needs
* Code was used to show the ideas related to the relevance of these courses and the institutes inside Sri Lanka.
(3 percent)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td colspan="2">5. Serving and helping the development of country more than an ordinary person

* Code was used to indicate ideas related to the contribution to the country’s development by these institutes or their students.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>“Quality achieves when the students can support the economic and social development of the country through the learning they get”.
“Students should be able to apply what they study in real life scenarios and serve the country efficiently with new knowledge”.
“Quality in terms of providing innovative skills, knowledge and making good citizens to the country”.
“Developing individual lives to become efficient and productive people to the country by utilizing their gained knowledge and soft skills”.</td>
</tr>
</table>

6. Value for money * Code was used to show ideas related to quality in terms of return on investment.	4	"Institutes in Sri Lanka should mainly focus on the value for money by providing high standards of education for an affordable price while also focusing on achieving international standards". "It has to be well recognized and it has to be worth for the money that we spend. Degree has to be specially recognized in private sector".
7. Local and International recognition and applicability * Code was used to indicate the ideas related to a combination of both local and international recognition of the courses and qualifications.	4	"The certificate we receive at the end should be recognized worldwide. No matter whether it is done in Sri Lanka or overseas". "These students should be able to utilize knowledge throughout the world. That also means the student's attitude must be matched with the required environment".
8. Local recognition * Code was used to show the ideas related to the recognition of the courses and qualifications inside Sri Lanka.	4	"These institutes should obtain more recognition than public universities for quality".
9. Providing solutions to students' real needs and interests/ meeting them * Code was used to show the ideas in relation to students' real needs and interests.	2	"Degree should provide solution to students' real needs and area of interests and thus should improve their overall learning so that they learn to live independently while serving the country".

The other five definitions of the quality[17] had only a percentage of 1 percent.

As shown in Table 5.2, 'having good facilities and resources' and 'having high standards' each scored the highest percentage (23 percent) of the total number of responses from the sample group, indicating that many students viewed quality from a 'learning perspective'. These responses also imply that the physical factors of these institutes relate to the quality of learning, thus assisting in achieving excellence. Another unexpected finding was the student preference for 'having good facilities and resources' and 'having high standards' higher ranked than 'employability' (5 percent) and 'value for money' (4 percent) as definitions of quality.

Nineteen percent of the total responses of the students also identified 'transformation' as a definition of quality, implying that many students' understanding of the definition of quality in relation to these institutes is much deeper than merely getting a degree which is worth their money and/or that can provide them with employment. This could also be seen from the findings of the rank order data discussed in the previous section. Even those students who identified 'value for money' as a definition of quality, connected 'high standards' or 'the recognition of the degree' when describing the 'value for money' as a definition of quality (refer Table 5.2, number 6), implying that they expect 'high standards' and 'recognition' for the money that they spend.

Some students who responded to the questionnaire described the definition of quality of these institutes in a comparative manner by defining quality as having standards at the level of the government universities. In support of this view a first year Master's degree student asserted:

> People believe that these colleges don't maintain [the same standard of] quality as government universities. They should improve their standards up to that level (STU Q3).

[17] The other five definitions of the quality are as follows.
Theory and practical knowledge (Code was used to show the ideas which focus on both theory and practical aspects of the courses.), Institutes that has proven to be successful (Code was used to show the ideas that describe the ability of institutes to be successful), Past student contribution (Code was used to show the ideas that specify the contribution of the graduates of these institutes.), Clear guidelines (code was used to show the ideas that talk about guidelines), and Quality as approval (Code was used to show the ideas related to the approval of these institutes.)

The quote also reflects popular public beliefs about quality, suggesting that student definitions can be molded by various established viewpoints within society towards quality of public and private institutes.

Other findings from the student interviews also supported 'having high standards' by highlighting how many interviewees identify quality in comparison with the standards of the government universities. In support of this view a student stated:

> So many foreign degrees are available in Sri Lanka today. I believe that the quality of government university degrees are higher than these degrees, because my sister attends a government university whereas I study in this institute. When I compare I can see that they study a broader spectrum than us (STU I5).

The above quote also suggests possible differences in the knowledge levels of the graduates who come from the government universities and the private institutes. To cite an example, if graduates who studied medicine or engineering do not have sufficient knowledge to engage in their profession effectively, this can a negative impact on the users of their service. As Dias (1998b) highlights, a principle objective of higher education is "the training of highly qualified personnel (the education function)" (p. 368) and this definition of quality appears to have wider significance in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. Another interviewee also defined quality in comparison with the government universities by stating that "Educational quality has to be compared with the government institutes' standards" (STU I1- MBA student). Thus, 'having standards comparable to the government university standards' became a recurring sub theme within the main theme of 'having high standards'. 'High standards in the teaching resources' was also identified as a definition of quality by a final year Bachelor of Business student as he asserted:

> Quality I would say is high standard. When it comes to our lecturers most of them finish their degree or the MBA in foreign countries. So they have the foreign exposure and they have good ways of communicating about the subjects and the material. So the standards are high (STU I7).

Thus, the student examples quoted above suggest that there can be many meanings of the term 'High standards'.

Another interviewee identified the 'local and international applicability of the degree' as a definition of quality. She stated, "What I believe is that the suitability of how the education that is given can be used within the country or outside the country, that means whether the course content is suitable" (STU I2), implying that a curriculum which crosses from the international level to the local level should be relevant not only to international requirements but also to local requirements. Thus, according to this student, 'quality' means balancing international and national in terms of curriculum, so that the benefit of their education can flow beyond the national level to the international level if that is desired or needed. Another student emphasized how the benefits of their education should be defined:

> The degree should ensure employability. Not just getting a job, but getting a good quality and recognized job (STU I7- a final year undergraduate student).

It is clear that defining quality involves complexity. A final year Maldivian student doing a business degree implied this complexity in defining quality by stating: "It's very difficult for me to express because quality may come in different forms" (STU Q90). The student also supported the view of many researchers (Abukari & Corner, 2010; Ehsan, 2004; Mishra, 2006) that quality is an elusive term. As the findings illustrate, different students uphold different definitions of quality based on their context and their perceptions of the quality of the private institutes.

In summary, the questionnaire and the interview findings discussed above indicated that the definition of quality should support 'having high standards', 'having good facilities and resources', excellence and transformation. Having high standards, and having good facilities and resources can also assist in achieving 'excellence' and 'transformation'. These findings support the view expressed by Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2003) which proposes 'quality as excellence' as a definition of quality that guides the students, but adds a new aspect to their definition by upholding a transformative view of quality.

5.2.2 Lecturers' Definitions of Quality

As can be seen in Table 5.1 the lecturers ranked 'transformative' as the most appropriate definition of quality, highlighting that transforming students' lives is a key to quality from the academic point of view. The definitions that the lecturers attached to quality were further investigated by requiring them to define quality in the questionnaire, and a total of twelve definitions of quality were identified from the lecturer responses (refer Table 5.3): 'proper admission criteria', 'transparency', 'international recognition' and 'meeting stakeholder needs' were four new definitions of quality identified by the lecturers. The definitions of quality identified by the lecturers and their percentages are presented in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3 Definitions of quality derived from lecturer responses

Definitions of quality and code description of new definitions	Percentage	Representative quotes
1. High standards	29	"Standard method should be present for the selection". "These are multiple degree awarding institutes. Some providing a high standard education while others not. So there should be strict rules of maintaining them". "It's a highly debatable matter as there is no standardization in the area of awarding foreign degrees in Sri Lanka". "All the institutes should be based on a basic common quality criteria and they should produce graduates with innovative ideas". "Quality of these institutes is not the same. Some have high quality, some average, some low and other no quality at all. This is due to the loop holes of legislation and policies".
2. Transformation	28	"Providing knowledge applicable to anywhere in the world and improving students' skills in the area of their interest". "Student's ability to work in any challenging environment through his/her knowledge, skills and upbringing. This should be the main task of institutes to make them productive & efficient people who can serve the social & economic development of the country". "They should strive to provide a quality education that produces an all rounded, multi-talented graduate. Cultivate skills , Knowledge ,values and personality in the students"

3. Fitness for purpose **I. Employability** (6 percent)	6	"Building productive persons who have the ability to work anywhere. Students' skills, character and personality are above average people". "Student's skills and values should be improved when studying for the degree, then he should be developed in to professional level through the degree. Then he should be able to capture the job market with his knowledge".
4. Local and International recognition and applicability	6	"Offering a degree recognized locally and internationally". "Quality of a degree is to make sure the students get a good education equivalent to their counterparts in & out of SL. So that they would be accepted by the international community as well as the locals".
5. Serving and helping the development of country more than an ordinary person	6	"Meeting students' interests. Output should be productive enough to serve the country through these degree. Student's ability to work in any challenging environment through his/her knowledge, skills and upbringing. This should be the main task of institutes to make them productive & efficient people who can serve the social & economic development of the country".
6. Local recognition	5	"Need to be equivalent to a government university degree in terms of local recognition".
7. Meeting stakeholder needs * Code was used to denote ideas relevant to various stakeholder needs.	5	"Meeting student and employer needs"

8. Quality as having good facilities and resources	2	"Enough facilities, qualified lecturers and providing knowledge necessary to the country"
9. International recognition * Code was used to denote recognition which focuses only on international recognition	2	"International recognition"
10. Proper Admission criteria * Code was used to denote ideas relevant to admission of students	2	"Students must be selected properly to a well-balanced learning environment".
11. Transparency * Code was used to denote ideas relevant to transparency of institutions and their activities.	2	"It feels that the criteria have to be more transparent".
12. Value for money	2	"It should address the purpose & be good value for money".

It appears from the representative quotes of the lecturers that the identified different definitions of quality can be interrelated since quality can include many aspects and qualities, thereby supporting 'the multifaceted nature of quality' (Harvey & Green, 1993; Peretomode, 2014). 'High standards' was the most frequently used definition of quality by the lecturers, at 29 percent out of the total responses. It was evident from the quotes in relation to 'high standards' that this definition of quality mainly originated from the perceived lack of legislation and policies related to the quality assurance of these institutes. This view implies how the definitions are constructed from the circumstances, or in other words how they are 'socially constructed'. Since these institutes offer foreign degrees, the definitions and notions of quality of these institutes are not only constantly driven by national level forces but also international level forces such as political and legal factors at the global level. Thus, as shown in the quotes in relation to 'high standards', a variance in standards can be seen among these foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. Several lecturers suggested various aspects of standards that they expect these institutes to improve as in the following examples:

> Keep on standards in teaching, assignments, use on new technologies and student standard (LECQ50- A part time lecturer).

> Commitment to meet the quality standards of the "origin country" as well as the appropriateness to the local context, to transform the student knowledge, skills & attitudes in a better way" (LECQ3- A part time lecturer).

As the above quotes highlight the standards included standards in teaching and assessment, of the students and of the home university.

Lecturers' answers elaborating what is meant by having high standards were also offered:

> We have to understand all these aspects and we have to provide all these quality aspects to achieve the UK standards. We have to improve the student quality; we have to provide better quality assignments. The expectation levels have to be set. We have to understand them first and then make our students achieve those quality standards (LECI1- part time lecturer in Information Technology).

> When you talk about quality in education, we have to maintain standards. Standards have to be there. We have to map our programmes according to the quality standards set by foreign university standards (LECI7- A full time lecturer in Science).

As the quotes demonstrate, these lecturers identified quality as meeting the standards of their foreign providers. Also indicated is the extent to which these institutes are made to follow the standards of their foreign providers, thereby implying how strongly the international level forces affect the level of standards of these institutes in relation to quality. It is necessary to meet the national standards along with these international standards as several lecturers also defined quality in relation to local recognition. Also in alignment with several students of these institutes who implied a comparative nature of quality was the part time lecturer who works for both the government universities and a foreign degree awarding institute. She described the definition of quality of these institutes as "Need to be equivalent to a government university degree in terms of local recognition" (LECQ21).

According to the findings related to Table 5.3 'transformation' was the lecturers' second most frequently used term; 28 percent of the total responses favoured this definition. Several lecturers who were interviewed also supported 'transformation' and as a full time lecturer put it:

> What I feel is, it is about providing quality graduates from the institution. It's about having a good graduate profile of our students, so not only the cognitive and not only the knowledge of the practical and, you know, the presentation skills side of it. When a student comes up with all these qualities, then the education center or institution is a quality place (LECI6).

It is evident from the perspective of these lecturers that the transformation of students is crucial to quality and, as one lecturer emphasized, it is necessary to provide knowledge that the students are interested in to transform their lives effectively. Thus, another variation of quality that could be identified from these findings was the definition of quality as 'the effective transformation' of student lives.

Two new definitions of quality were identified from the findings of the interview of lecturers, 'Student competence' and 'Students' financial strength'. In support of 'Student competence' a part time lecturer at one institute asserted that: "It is defined in terms of the student's ability to

study and to view the required knowledge" (LECI3) implying a 'caveat emptor' view, of the user's or the buyer's responsibility regarding the quality of these institutes. This view was further enhanced by the definition 'Students' financial strength':

> Their ability to finance their education. Without funding they will not be able to focus on their study and would not be able to maintain quality (LECI4).

This view of quality suggests that the definition of quality is mainly determined by the factors involved with the learners and thereby provides a 'learner focused' definition towards quality.

As per the questionnaire findings 'transformative', 'high standards' and 'fitness for purpose' which lead to excellence were the most frequently used definitions of quality of lecturers. Interview results also supported 'transformative' and 'high standards' as definitions of quality identified by many lecturers. However, the interviewees did not directly refer to 'fitness for purpose' as a definition of quality. Most lecturers also did not consider 'value for money' as a definition of quality thus concurring with the students. Overall, the findings revealed that even though both the students and lecturers agreed on 'having high standards' and 'transformation' as their key definitions of quality from both the interview and questionnaire findings, there can be variations to the meanings that they attach to these.

5.2.3 Senior Managers' Definitions of Quality

The senior managers agreed with the lecturers' definitions of quality by ranking 'transformative' as number one in the list (refer Table 5.1). However, unlike the students and the lecturers, the senior managers considered 'value for money' as a significant definition by ranking it as their second most suitable definition of quality. Also in contrast to the students and the lecturers, they did not identify 'quality as excellence' within their first three most suitable definitions of quality. The findings of the open ended questions of senior managers in relation to the definitions of quality brought out eleven key definitions of quality. (refer Table 5.4). Two of them, 'ethics and values of stakeholders' and 'balancing local and international policies and legislation' were new definitions of quality.

Table 5.4 Definitions of quality derived from senior manager responses

Definitions of quality and code description of new definitions	Percentage	Representative quotes
1. Transformation	32	"Transformation of students in terms of improving their knowledge, developing their soft skills and thinking and behaviour patterns". "Improving students' lives and their contribution to society". "Knowledge building and character building". "Sharpening students' knowledge and talents while fostering positive attitudes amongst them so that they can work successfully in any challenging environment".
2. Fitness for purpose **I. Employability** (9 percent)	16	"Should match with the purpose". "Should be fit with the purpose and goals which mention by universities". "Students' education should change their lives for the better and they should be able to work in their desired job field comfortably". "These degrees should provide knowledge and skills related to the job they desire and thereby allow them to contribute to the economy of Sri Lanka".
3. Serving and helping the development of country more than an ordinary person	12	"Providing an education that develops students' skills, knowledge and discipline. They should be able to work independently and contribute to the economic, social development of the country". "Quality includes development of positive attitudes, knowledge and talents of students since they involve mostly in the decision making process after their studies. Their ability to work better than a person who does not have a degree is key to quality. Since human capital develops to the top level by higher education these graduates must contribute to the sustainable development of the country".

4. Having good facilities and resources	7	"Qualified lecture panel with foreign exposure too, better to have industrial experience for lecturers. Modern teaching aids. Should be updated with the day today changes in the world. They should have the psychological ability to deliver the programme interactively by understanding the students learning styles. No gender bias". "Similar facilities, resources and delivery of subject knowledge".
5. Ethics and values of stakeholders * Code was used to denote ideas relevant to values and ethics of stakeholders.	7	"Faculty quality, management quality". "Quality is not only about improving students' skills, knowledge. It involves values that people give to quality or the way people see quality".
6. High standards	7	"Highest standard with an international recognition and should be affordable by local students".
7. Balancing local and international policies and legislation * Code was used to denote ideas relevant to the handling of Sri Lankan and overseas policies and law.	7	"Quality in terms of foreign degree awarding institutes had a high disparity amongst institutes. In Sri Lanka, foreign degrees are mainly conferred from institutes with affiliation from India, UK, Australia, USA, Malaysia and China. Hence the quality standards are monitored or surveyed in accordance to the standards set by the country of origin conferring the degree. Due to this reason there are huge disparities in terms of quality as Sri Lanka does not have a regulatory body". "Balancing local and international policies and legislation".
8. Theory and practical knowledge	3	"Education with practical knowledge".
9. International recognition	3	"Highest standard with an international recognition and should be affordable by local students".
10. Value for money	3	"Highest standard with an international recognition and should be affordable by local students".
11. Meeting students' needs	3	"Meeting students' needs".

As table 5.4 indicates the senior managers preferred ‘transformative’, ‘Fitness for purpose’ (includes the sub definition ‘employability’) and ‘serving and helping the development of country more than an ordinary person’ as definitions of quality. In contrast to the previously discussed stakeholder groups, ‘high standards’ as a definition of quality obtained only 7 percent out of the total responses by the senior managers. The low rating of ‘high standards’ as a definition of quality was confirmed in the questionnaire findings. Another unexpected finding was that only 3 percent out of the total responses to the open-ended questions by the senior managers who commented in the questionnaire referred to ‘value for money’ as a definition of quality (refer Table 5.4). By contrast, as explained before many senior managers ranked ‘value for money’ as their second most suitable definition of quality when they were asked to rank five definition of quality (see Table 5.1). However, in both sets of findings they identified ‘transformative’ as their most frequently used definition of quality.

The findings of the interviews of the senior managers mainly demonstrated the perception that quality needs to be viewed as a combination of many components. In support of this, a general manager of an institute expressed a very insightful understanding of quality:

> Quality depends on the various components, it is not one thing. As an example quality depend on the lecturers, the institute facilities. Those kind of things are involved with quality. Quality is a value and a standard (SMI2).

A senior marketing manager of another institute agreed with the above idea by stating that:

> What reflects in academic teaching, with regard to the academic programme, is overall quality. The processes of admissions, examinations, and teaching, assessments, and even general administration functions, will amount to quality (SMI7).

As these senior managers argued quality needs to be defined from within the overall aspects and functions of these institutes. This view supports the meaning of quality written in the Article 11 of the World Declaration on Higher Education which describes quality in higher education as “a multidimensional concept, which should embrace all its functions, and activities: teaching and academic programmes, research and scholarship, staffing, students, buildings, faculties, equipment, services the community and the academic environment”

(UNESCO, 2001, para. 1). A director of an institute strongly upheld this definition of quality by emphasizing that:

> ....actually we have to think about the curriculum and how they have defined this, the course structure and everything as well as the delivery, plus the people who deliver this particular programme and their qualifications and their skills. Plus the assistance they give to the students. Including all these things will finally affect the quality, starting from the peon to the top management. Everyone must integrate to deliver a good product (SMI3).

A director of an another institute who also considered quality as a combination of several factors, further elaborated the above view by providing a rationale for the need to view quality as a combination of several factors. This is necessary to "... deliver a foreign degree in a proper and a more resourceful way for the Sri Lankan students" (SMI1). As this director argued, when foreign degrees are offered in Sri Lanka they should be delivered in a way that the students in Sri Lanka can receive maximum benefit out of the degree. He focused on the cross border nature of these institutes, that when a degree itself crosses from the international level to the national level of Sri Lanka, the meaning of quality becomes more complex and it needs to be looked at from its relevance and usefulness to the students of Sri Lanka. The Toolkit UNESCO/APQN (2006) reflects this idea by admitting that some nations worry that cross border education does not fulfill their national, cultural, or fiscal requirements. This vertical case study suggests that the programmes themselves have a vertical flow where they are being delivered from the international level to the national level in Sri Lanka.

These interview results of the senior managers contrasted with the results of the questionnaire to some extent as the majority of interviews revealed considerably more in-depth understandings about the meaning of quality as a combination of several factors. The clearly perceived the complex nature of quality, as identified by interview data, and also highlighted many aspects that could lead to transformative quality and the associated benefits for students.

5.2.4 Government Officials' Definitions of Quality

The government officials, the stakeholder group who can be seen as representing national level expectations and ideologies, ranked 'fitness for purpose' as the most suitable definition of quality in relation to these institutes, with 'transformative' as their second most suitable definition of quality (see Table 5.1). It also appeared from the findings shown in Table 5.5 (refer 'High standards') that the government officials who mainly focus on the national level demands and requirements considered that these institutes should maintain local as well as international standards. They also brought out a comparative view towards quality by revealing that the quality should be up to the standards of the government universities in Sri Lanka and also to the standards of the home universities.

Table 5.5 Definitions of quality derived from Government official responses

Definitions of quality	Percentage	Representative quotes
1. High standards	29	"Compliance with international and local higher education Standards". "Providing an education comparable to university education of Sri Lanka". "Quality should be maintained up to the level of an international students who study in the home country". "Quality of these institutes varies from institute to institute and from subject to subject, therefore there should be a framework to resolve this problem". "Providing excellent education".
2. Transformation	26	"Transform students' lives to make them become valuable people to society. "Quality is all about ASK: Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge". "The output of these institutes need to have a sound knowledge to perform well in anywhere in the world. Their values also need to be cultivated through their education to achieve this". "Helping students to improve their professional life. Degree should improve positive attitudes and good behavior in them".

3. Fitness for purpose		21	"Fitness for purpose". "On completion of degree course the students should be able to find employment. Also the graduate should be able to adapt to work environment and Work flexible manner to meet employer requirements". "Academic excellence of the institutional output, high demand for the graduates in the local and international labour market". "Foreign degree awarding institutes' quality means producing students who can work locally as well as internationally. To do this they need in depth knowledge, talents, discipline and right mind-set". "These degrees should relevant to the requirements of the country rather than limiting to the requirements of the foreign provider's country. They should be able to work together with the graduates of the local universities in terms of their knowledge and way of thinking".
I. Employability (12 percent)	**II. Match with the needs of the country (Relevance to local needs)** (6 percent)		
4. Serving and helping the development of country more than an ordinary person		9	"These degree holders should be competent enough to contribute to the overall development in the country". "Making capable and socially responsible citizens to the country who finds innovative ways to develop the country".
5. Good facilities and resources		6	"The qualifications of the teachers, good infrastructure facilities, well equipped laboratories, workshops etc. and the facilities available to build up a knowledgeable and competent research personnel". "Quality of the degree, students, facilities, and the lecturers and the vision and mission of the management mainly decides the quality of these institutes".
6. Local and International recognition and applicability		6	"Academic excellence of the institutional output, high demand for the graduates in the local and international labour market".
7. Ethics and values of stakeholders		3	"Quality of the degree, students, facilities, and the lecturers and the vision and mission of the management mainly decides the quality of these institutes".

In support of 'transformation' which was their second most frequently used definition of quality, one government official stated: "Education should produce a good thinker, good debater and he [sic] should be able to get a suitable job from the job market. Development of professional life, material and spiritual or human life..need to balance all" (GOVQ2- Organization 1 official). The majority of interviewees also favoured 'transformation' as their definition of quality. One government official provided a rationale for this view stating that the target of higher education is not only to provide employment to people, and not only to improve students' academic knowledge, but also to produce social knowledge, leadership skills, creativity and other skills and personal qualities. As he argued, if a student acquires the qualities listed above then the quality of higher education has been created, further adding:

> University, when translated to Sinhala language (Wishwa Vidyalaya) means 'Universe + College' equals University. This means that a university education should have common features which can be applied universally. Students should have abilities to work anywhere in the universe (GOVI1- Organization 1 official).

This government official related his definition of quality to the objectives of higher education discussed by Dias (1998b) (refer section 2.2), and most importantly to the objective "The training of highly qualified personnel" (p. 368). The official argued that the "'Universe + College' equals university" implying the role of the institute in the students' learning. Thus, a transformative aspect of the institutes themselves could also be seen from this official's statement.

Several interviewees also supported 'high standards' as a definition of quality. One government official viewed high standard as matching "the standards of other institutes in the world" (GOVI6: Organization 3 official), indicating how the government officials also focus on the wider community in terms of meeting international recognition of the higher education of the country.

The comments made by the officials in the questionnaire revealed that 'employability' was a significant sub definition of quality (refer Table 5.5). The interview findings strengthen this finding by situating their other definitions and sub definitions of quality within the circle of standards, employability and development of the country. That the usefulness of the degree to the country and career progression of the students through their degrees concerned the government officials indicated that their definitions of quality are driven by national level

goals and aims. Thus, the officials also had some inclination towards 'fitness for purpose' as a definition of quality.

In contrast to the senior managers' number two ranking of 'value for money', (see Table 5.1) the government officials considered it to be the least suitable definition of quality, highlighting that the government officials, like the students and the lecturers (refer Table 5.1), consider a broader spectrum than simply adding a monetary value to education. The government officials' responses to the open ended question in relation the 'definitions of quality' also supported this view, as no official identified 'value for money' as a definition of quality' (refer Table 5.5). The interview findings on this confirmed the questionnaire findings. The government officials' view towards the definition of quality of these private institutes seems to be noteworthy as Hénard & Mitterle (n.d.) argue that when higher education systems are publicly funded, the display of 'value for money' or the 'pertinent activities that are carried out by using the tax payers' money' is prevalent in contemporary times. The fact that the institutes involved in this study are privately funded might have influenced this finding.

Overall, the government officials leaned more towards 'high standards', 'transformation' and 'fitness for purpose' as definitions of quality. Diverse perspectives on quality shown in their responses (Table 5.5) also show how quality too contributes to demonstration of accountability, raising the question 'who is responsible for resolving various issues of quality and improving quality of these institutes'?

5.2.5 Priorities for Quality

Even though the definitions of quality identified by the stakeholder groups mainly supported 'quality as transformation' and 'quality as having high standards', quality can take different forms and even one term can bring out many different meanings towards quality. Green (1994) suggests that the best way is to define the criterion that each stakeholder adopts when they judge quality as clearly as possible and to take into account those competing ideas when assessing quality. Thus, it was necessary to see which quality criteria these stakeholders identify as priorities for quality. The selected stakeholders were asked to rank 22 quality criteria based on their priorities for quality (refer Appendices N- Q section 3). By selecting priorities for quality, it was possible to identify what these stakeholder types mean by their chosen definitions of quality. This could also reveal when there were inconsistencies between stakeholders' chosen definitions of quality and the chosen main quality criteria.

Table 5.6 below presents the first five priorities for quality for each stakeholder group based on the mean of their weighted score (refer Appendices V-Y). Remarkably, there was no major difference in these priorities from the different institutes.

Table 5.6 Top five priorities for quality

Stakeholder Group	Description of Quality Criterion	Rank
Students	Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	1
	Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	2
	Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	3
	Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	4
	Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve students' learning	5
Lecturers	Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	1
	Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	2
	A clear student recruitment procedure	3
	Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve students' learning	4
	Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	5
Senior Managers	Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	1
	Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	2
	Employability of graduates and their career prospects	3
	Positive relationships between lecturers and students	4
	A clear student recruitment procedure	5
Government Officials	Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	1
	Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	2
	Employability of graduates and their career prospects	3
	Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	4
	A clear student recruitment procedure	5

The priorities identified by the students highlighted that their priorities were mainly related to 'teaching and learning' (refer Table 5.6). Improving students' deep learning, curriculum with theory and practice, student assessment and learning facilities were the focus of the students when deciding quality. These priorities supported the definition of quality 'transformation' while also implying that high standards need to be met in these identified criteria. However, by ranking 'financial support to students' as their second priority for quality, the students indicated the significance of the financial aspect when pursuing a degree. It was also interesting to see how they ranked 'teaching and learning' related criteria and 'financial support' over 'Employability of graduates and their career prospects' as the top five priorities for quality.

The lecturers supported the student viewpoint in ranking four of the top five priorities in relation to 'teaching and learning' (refer Table 5.6). The lecturers also indicated that it is somewhat important to create an encouraging learning environment in the institutes by ranking this criterion as their fifth priority. However, they did not rank 'financial support to students' within their top five priorities for quality. Instead the lecturers identified 'a clear student recruitment procedure' as a priority which falls under the first five priorities for quality, indicating the significance of student input when deciding quality. Proper 'student input' also conveys that 'students' prior knowledge' plays a significant role in the quality of 'teaching and learning' aspects of these institutes. These priorities mainly support the definition of quality as 'transformation'.

Even though the students mainly focused on 'the process' when ranking the priorities for quality the lecturers focused on 'the input' as well as 'the process'. The lecturers' top five priorities for quality which are directed towards 'input and process' supported the study of Vann (2012) which argued that quality dimensions of lecturers are related to 'input and the process'. However, Vann points out that the students' dimensions of quality are directed towards 'the process and the output' when considering quality of higher education from the context of Cambodia. The Sri Lankan study is slightly in contrast to the Cambodian study as the students related their top five priorities only towards the 'process'. It can be argued that if the process is done successfully and if the activities that are involved in the process are of high standard, then there is a reasonable possibility that the output also turns out to be good quality.

The senior managers' and the government officials' approach to priorities for quality was different from the students and the lecturers as both of these groups identified quality criteria

that ranged from ‘student admission’ to ‘student learning’ and to ‘employability of the graduates’ within their top five priorities (refer Table 5.6). The priorities for quality of the senior managers and the government officials were situated within a broader arena including ‘the input’, ‘the process’ and ‘the output’. Their view supported that of Gibbs (2010) who adopts the ‘3P’ model of Biggs (1993) - ‘Presage, Process and Product’ to discuss the dimensions of quality in relation to education (see section 2.6). The senior managers and the government officials, while confirming Gibbs’ view, also indicated that the institutes should work on all three aspects to achieve quality. However, neither the senior managers nor the government officials identified financial support within their first five priorities, indicating a gap between student expectations and the senior managers’ and the government officials’ viewpoints.

The stakeholder groups were also asked to identify any priorities for quality other than the 22 listed in the questionnaire (refer Appendices N-Q section 3 No.2). Their responses enhanced my understanding of the definitions of quality even further. Several students and lecturers identified ‘Values and attitudes’ as a priority for quality, implying the importance of the personal characteristics of the stakeholders of these institutes when defining quality. In support of ‘Values and attitudes’, a lecturer upheld as important the “Mission statement and how far institutes work according to their mission. Whether they really follow their mission or not”. The lecturer highlighted how the mission statement works as a guide to the quality of these institutes and therefore the institutes should maintain proper values and attitudes to sustain their mission. The lecturer’s view is consistent with that of Owlia and Aspinwall (1996) who highlighted the significance of ‘attitudes’ in quality of higher education.

Another lecturer highlighted the importance to quality of “Proper policies and law needed for private higher education”. Since it has been clearly stated at government level that ‘there is no adequate policies and legislation to assure quality of the private higher education in Sri Lanka’ (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2009) the lecturer’s assertion that policies and legislation should be a priority for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka was well founded.

Further commonalities from stakeholder groups came through identification of priorities for quality in their interviews. Many students identified ‘Maintaining high standards of teaching’ as a key priority for quality. The lecturers also supported ‘transformation of students by improving their knowledge and skills’ as a key priority for quality. The senior managers highlighted ‘Improving students’ learning and teaching’ as a top priority for quality and

government officials supported ‘High standards’ with one asserting that the main priority for quality is to have a “Tough system without giving a degree to all who can spend money”. Overall, the government officials’ responses indicated the national level expectations and the government’s main concern for the quality assurance of these institutes. Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007) support the view of these government officials by highlighting that registration, licensing, external quality assessments and accreditation procedures are necessary urgently to maintain quality of private institutes in Sri Lanka. Thus, ‘quality evaluation and verification’ appears to be a top priority for quality of these institutes.

Overall, the priorities obtained from all four stakeholder groups enriched the understandings of the values associated with the definitions of quality while also allowing some elaboration of definitions of quality to be derived from the priorities for quality. These priorities also support the aspects of quality adopted by the Quality Assurance Agency of Sri Lanka that were reported in Stella (2007) and the key areas for quality mentioned in IIEP-UNESCO (2011) (see section 2.6). It is maintained that the findings of this study add more insight to the above mentioned aspects and areas for quality as these priorities indicate the more exact features of quality. For example ‘clear student recruitment procedures’, which is a priority for quality according to this study, can come under the aspect of quality, the ‘quality of students’ reported by Stella. This priority can also come under the area for quality ‘student profile’ of IIEP-UNESCO. Thus, the priorities elaborated in this study add more value to the existing literature.

5.2.6 Definitions of Quality- Key Themes

In summary, the findings from the questionnaires and the interviews with regard to the definitions and the priorities for quality of all the four groups have mainly supported ‘Transformative’ and ‘Having high standards’ as definitions of quality. Since quality involves many dimensions and is obscure, it is not possible to provide concrete definitions of quality in relation to these institutes. In support of this view Kalayci, Watty, & Hayirsever (2012) argue that while everybody agrees on the significance of providing quality education there is much disagreement when they attempt to define quality. However, it was possible to identify the key themes which lead to various definitions of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from these findings. Three recurring themes, namely, ‘quality as transformative’, ‘quality as achieving high standards’, and ‘quality as an outcome of financial strength’ were derived from the findings of the four stakeholder groups. It was also seen that these themes can be inter dependent since quality involves a variety of meanings and notions. Each of these themes are discussed as follows.

Quality as Transformation

Quality as ‘transformation’ was a recurrent theme identified from the data. All the four stakeholder groups identified ‘transformation’ as a most frequently used definition of quality, and as Srikanthan & Dalrymple (2003) note, ‘transformative’ as a definition has the power to address the concerns of various stakeholder groups. As stated earlier in section 2.3.1 transformation has become a main agenda in the United Kingdom’s quality enhancement procedures and since the majority of the foreign degrees that are offered in Sri Lanka are British degrees this definition seems to be in congruence with the international understanding of the definition of quality. However, five key aspects of transformation were derived from the responses of all the four participant groups as shown below.

1. Developing individual lives by improving their knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, personality and creativity/ (Knowledge building and character building). This view also identified transformation as three sided as in a triangle and that is improving ‘knowledge, attitudes and the skills’.
2. Making students to be independent.
3. Making students to be efficient and productive people to the country (contribute to the development of the country).
4. Providing knowledge applicable to anywhere in the world (Student’s ability to work in any challenging environment through his/her knowledge, skills and upbringing)/ producing all rounded, multi-talented graduates.
5. Improving students’ skills in the area of their interest.

The above findings support the view of Cheng (2014) discussed in section 2.3.1 that transformative includes five types of development (Refer section 2.3.1). The findings of this study also elaborate the ‘transformative learning’ of Cheng (2014) (Refer section 2.3.1) to ‘transformative *active* learning’ as in this study ‘improving skills in the area of their interest’ was revealed as an aspect of transformation. Even though the students can be transformed to a certain level in an area wherein they do not have much interest, it is necessary to improve skills in their interested area to achieve the maximum level transformation of the students. The possibility that they engage in active learning is much higher when they have a real desire for learning.

Quality as Achieving High Standards

Even though all the four stakeholder groups identified ‘quality as having high standards’ as another common definition of quality, many variations in the understanding of ‘standards’ were also mentioned. Eight aspects of ‘high standards’ were identified from the participant responses as follows:

1. Being equivalent to the government university degrees in terms of local recognition.
2. Hiring lecturers who have had foreign exposure by studying and working in foreign countries.
3. High standards in teaching, learning and assessment.
4. Meeting the standards at both local and international level.
5. Standard methods in student admission.
6. Meeting the standards of their foreign providers.
7. Providing local students the same quality as available to an international student who studies in the home country.
8. High standards in facilities and resources.

Quality as an Outcome of Financial Strength

Quality was constantly associated with the financial strength of the students, the institutes and the country and therefore ‘quality as an outcome of financial strength’ was considered as a key theme in this study. As the findings revealed, some institutes do not provide adequate facilities and resources since they are eager to maximise their profit. Thus the students may lack the return on their investment as they do not receive a high quality education. The notion of ‘value for money’ also indicates the commercialized aspect of education, where education is considered as another product, through which you get an appropriate amount of quality for your investment.

5.3 Purposes of Quality

The various definitions of quality and the priorities for quality identified from the findings of the questionnaires and the interviews revealed that a variety of purposes are associated with the term quality. It was also seen from the findings that these purposes can be interdependent at some point as quality is a complex and an elusive term. To meet the objectives of this research study the purposes have been categorized under five themes and are discussed in the following section.

To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development

All four stakeholder groups who participated in the questionnaire survey and the interviews, identified 'providing knowledge and skills relevant to national development' as a key purpose associated with the term quality. They argued that quality is necessary to 'provide respectable jobs for the graduates of these institutes', to 'improve skills and knowledge of the students' and thereby to transform students' lives to make them become valuable people to society who also make a significant contribution to the country. The European Commission (2015) supports their argument by conveying how quality and pertinent higher education has the potential to provide students who possess sufficient knowledge, skills and transferable capabilities in order for them to flourish after their graduation. However, a student who responded to the questionnaire pointed out how the institutes can have an underpinning motive in their attempt to improve students' skills and knowledge. He argued that the institutes can develop their image and increase the number of student recruitment, "by showing the quality of the graduates of the institute who are employed and their contribution to the country". The student indicates that quality can therefore be used for promotional purposes since, as highlighted elsewhere in this thesis, 'quality' is always positive in its nature. Thus, quality assists in generating more profit for these institutes even if their main purpose is to provide knowledge and skills relevant to national development.

Although several lecturers and senior managers who responded to the questionnaire also agreed with this idea, the findings of the questionnaire of the government officials highlighted the view that the main purpose of quality of these institutes is 'To earn profit'. Thus they saw the purpose of 'Providing knowledge and skills to national development' as a purpose within a purpose, with the sub purpose being determined by the main purpose which is 'To earn a profit'. The Deming's 'Quality Chain Reaction' model supports the above idea by demonstrating that quality increases profit of an organization (Disraeli, 1872) and thereby

quality becomes an investment. When considering the study through the lens of a vertical case study it appears that national development is somewhat dependent on these institutes because of the need to utilize the knowledge and skills of their graduates, and it also makes these institutes somewhat dependent on national development to provide the employment to their graduates, thus allowing them to develop their image and thereby increasing the student recruitment number. This vertical flow between national level and institutional level and the interdependency which benefits both the institutional level and the national level can be seen as a consequence of the relationship described above between the main and the sub purposes of quality.

Several lecturers who responded to the interviews indicated the understanding that transforming students' lives as a key aspect of quality and it could be an outcome of 'Providing knowledge and skills relevant to national development'. The lecturer comment below implies this:

> According to my knowledge education is to provide the useful information and to train the students to accommodate the modern requirements. We have to cope with the world developments of science and technology. How to train our students for particular targets, to become qualified well educated graduates one day - if we are going to provide such a thing, quality is there (LECI2).

Members of other stakeholder groups also identified both a key purpose and collection of sub purposes of quality that together bring out direct benefits such as social, economic, political and educational benefits to the institutes, as well as to the country.

Consumer Protection

Consumer protection is another purpose of quality which was identified mainly from the findings of questionnaire data and the interviews of the students, lecturers and the government officials. According to the findings, consumer protection was a major concern of the students and the government officials, highlighting the students' need for their protection and the government's concern towards the safeguard of the quality of higher education in the country. An unexpected finding was that the senior managers did not directly identify consumer protection as a purpose of quality.

The overall findings of the student questionnaire and the interviews suggested that consumer protection should be a purpose of quality since there is lack of transparency in many activities

of these institutes in that they fail to provide accurate and clear information. Several students who responded to the questionnaire referred to lack of consumer protection with regard to course material by highlighting how their institutes promised to provide text books free of charge at the time of their enrolment for the particular programme and then later, how they were made to pay for their books. Another student (STU Q62) also pointed out how his institute suddenly changed the procedures related to the charges of text books without any prior notice. In order to maintain consumer protection the OECD/Norway Forum (2003) suggests that the policy objectives should address student protection in terms of preventing the provision of misinformation and provision of low quality degrees. Thus, student protection as a purpose of quality creates trust between the students and the other stakeholder groups.

A first year undergraduate student (STUI5) stated that the parents should also be given correct and clear information and in support of this view she asserted the need for "providing clear information about the course to parents because they don't know the importance of the course". Since the students are mostly funded by their parents they also become indirect consumers of these degrees and therefore they have a right to know the correct information about the programmes, so that they can make informed decisions about their children's future.

A lecturer who was interviewed expressed the view that these institutes should protect the students from their ignorance by guiding them properly:

> The institute should basically be able to guide students because I feel students are blind folded, because everyone is offering the degree they are just doing it and at the end they are lost in the industry because they don't know how to enter into the particular area of interest. I don't think they even know about what is their potential (LEC I3).

As the findings highlight, quality for these institutes should include the provision of protection to their consumers who are the students and their parents. An official of a government organization in responding to the questionnaire took consumer protection in education a step further in identifying the need for protecting students through proper student recruitment and assessment procedures. He stated that there should be a "strict system within private institutes. They should build their good image by not allowing everybody to take a degree for money (GOVQ3)".

Both students and government officials suggested that consumer protection is a main purpose of quality since students become victims of low quality activities of these institutes and if high quality is maintained there is less chance for the exploitation of the students. 'Student protection' as a main purpose of quality also encourages a 'consumer perspective' or a 'student satisfaction perspective' towards education of these institutes.

Assurance of Standards

The students and the professionals who participated in both the questionnaire survey and the interviews identified 'assurance of standards' as a main purpose of quality with a focus on both national and international standards. This view is in alignment with Mishra (2006) who identified 'to maintain standards of institutes' as a purpose of quality in the context of Indian higher education.

Several students conveyed accreditation of the degree as a main concern in this regard and they pointed out how assurance of standards enhances the value of these institutes. As a student perceived "Maintaining a good reputation will increase the value of business" (STUQ58). Since a good reputation is mainly determined by the maintenance of the standards it appears that the assurance of standards can increase the value of these institutes. The lecturers on the other hand, mainly focused on the assurance of the standards of student assessment while also highlighting that at the institutional level, academic activities need to be consistently assessed by external parties for better quality assurance. Thus, these standards affirm the quality of academic work while also making the 'assurance of standards' a purpose of quality. A lecturer elaborated this view stating that they conduct internal and external verification of student assessment and other academic related work to ensure that high standards in quality have been maintained. As he pointed out, if high standards of academic work are maintained then there is quality in academic work. The lecturer further argued since 'assurance of standards' makes quality, it becomes a purpose of quality. The 'activities of quality' are strongly linked to 'the purposes of quality' and this takes a circular form. The lecturer highlighted how the 'activities of quality' are determined by the purposes of quality, while also making the 'purposes of quality' depend on the activities of quality, thus creating a circle of quality.

The students and the professionals identified assurance of standards as a two sided mirror. That is, to 'assure the standards of the government universities' and also to 'assure international standards at local level'. These two aspects of standards become the sub purposes of the main purpose 'assurance of standards'. It is evident from these findings that the term

'standards' may also denote different meanings and, as the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2009) highlights, these words also have various meanings when it is considered "in the local context of national higher education systems" (p.12). Therefore, it is necessary to consider these different meanings when considering 'Assurance of standards' as a purpose of quality.

To Make a Profit

The professionals perceived that a main purpose of quality with regard to the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka is 'to make a profit'. As they argued, if the students are satisfied with the activities of the institutes they may recommend their institutes to others and thus the profit of these institutes will increase naturally. A lecturer pointed out how word of mouth becomes a powerful marketing tool of 'quality' as: "We have found out most have been referred through word of mouth. In that case, if a student is not happy, or if a student sees the quality is not there, they will not recommend us" (LECQ4). This was also the view of a government official who argued that quality has the power to attract students towards these institutes and thereby the number of student recruitment will increase:

> If they put effort into the quality students will be attracted to the institution. So then the profit will automatically increase. That's why if they maintain that quality they then don't need to worry about the profit, it will automatically come (GOVI1).

A senior manager of an institute also supported this official's argument in stating that if they introduce new techniques to the education they can enhance quality, thereby they can enroll more students while also providing a good service to the country. Mishra (2006) strengthens this view by asserting that higher education institutes require quality to improve image, esteem and credibility of the institutes and also to survive in a highly competitive environment, as quality can attract more students and funds. However, as it is argued elsewhere in this thesis the students' willingness to learn and their attitudes towards learning also play a crucial role when considering the role of 'quality' in higher education institutes in relation to student recruitment numbers. Thus, quality education may not necessarily increase the number of students in foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka if the students' wish only for a paper qualification. A senior manager of one institute agreed with the above view, elaborating that:

> Quality is always an investment. But then again cost and quality go hand in hand. There have been lots of prime examples in Sri Lanka where they have given a very

> good quality but at the same time they were not able to market themselves properly. Because of that they had to shut down. Quality along with the branding and marketing and cost, all of them go hand in hand. You have to have proper balancing in that (SMI2).

The above findings demonstrate that even though quality can contribute to increased profit, quality needs to be planned properly and quality may need to be accompanied with other factors to achieve this goal.

Organization and Evaluation of Academic Work

Several lecturers revealed the 'organization and evaluation of academic work' as another purpose of quality. A full time lecturer supported this idea by stating that they should understand and arrange the learning objectives properly in order to deliver the lectures in a fruitful manner to the students. She argued that it is necessary to upgrade the knowledge of the lecturers and that the institutes should have lecturer evaluations or a student feedback system as well as career development workshops because it is not easy to improve the quality of these institutes without reinforcing the lecturers. Even when there is adequate infrastructure it is difficult to maintain quality if the academics are not properly qualified and if they lack quality in their work. As this lecturer elaborated, the quality organization of all academic work including 'meeting learning objectives' is crucial to the maintenance of quality. The techniques adopted to establish and maintain the academic quality of these institutes demand a systematic approach to the organization and evaluation of academic work as a main purpose of quality.

Overview of the top purpose of quality of stakeholder groups

An overview of the top purpose of quality of the four selected stakeholder groups is presented in the following Table 5.7.

Table 5.7: Top purpose of quality of stakeholder groups

Stakeholder Group	Top Purposes of quality
Students	To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development Assurance of Standards Consumer Protection
Lecturers	To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development Assurance of Standards Consumer Protection To Make a Profit Organization and Evaluation of Academic Work
Senior Managers	To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development To Make a Profit Assurance of Standards
Government Officials	To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development Consumer Protection Assurance of Standards To Make a Profit

It was also evident from the findings that most of these purposes provide more weight on the local level in terms of their share of responsibility as the actual functions occur at the local level.

5.4 Practices of Quality

A variety of key practices associated with the term quality in these institutes was identified in a collection of documents including student hand books, web sites of the institutes, vision and mission statements of the institutes, paper advertisements of the institutes, the 'guidelines and policies' of the foreign provider available to the off shore providers (Foreign providers' guidelines available in these institutes) and the quality assurance guidelines of the Sri Lankan institutes. Four main themes which describe these various practices were identified and the main practices of quality in relation to each are discussed in this section.

Student Admission

The advertisements, websites and the local and the foreign providers' guidelines revealed that the admission requirement for various undergraduate degree programmes vary even for a degree from the same country and for the same study stream. It appeared from the findings that some institutes enroll students with two passes in GCE Advanced Level (A/L) examination for the undergraduate degree programmes, while other institutes, especially the institutes who have obtained the local degree awarding status, require three passes to enroll students to some of their undergraduate programmes. Thus this practice in relation to student admission implies the different knowledge levels of the students or the difference in the quality of student input in different institutes may have an impact on the quality of the output of these institutes.

Teaching

Some documents analysed highlighted that the institutes selected for the study maintain a practice of hiring part time lecturers from the government universities. This practice, which was shown in the documents of some of these institutes when detailing lecturer profiles, suggests that this practice can also be an attempt of these institutes to 'meet standards of the government universities'. As the questionnaire and the interview findings identified, 'meeting government university standards' as an aspect of the definition of quality, may be considered as an example of a practice that these institutes implement to match with the definition of quality 'having high standards'. The documents also revealed that many institutes hire full time qualified lecturers who are qualified from foreign universities and many of them hold postgraduate qualifications. The guidelines of some institutes also conveyed that several lecturers of their home universities also conduct lectures for some of their postgraduate programmes in order to provide their students with foreign exposure. As some documents suggest, many of these institutes conduct staff development programmes to improve and update their lecturers' knowledge and skills. According to the documents the lecturers adopt student centered learning techniques such as group assignments and student presentations. Thus, if the document statements are correct, practices that these institutes adopt in relation to teaching improve the quality of student learning and thereby the overall quality of these institutes.

Student Assessment

One of the main practices associated with the quality of student assessment was the 'use of plagiarism software to avoid plagiarism' by the students. As some of the student guidelines and handbooks within this study convey this practice of 'using the plagiarism software' is to

protect students from unethical work and cheating while also promoting their originality and deep learning. According to the documentary data they mainly focus on 'the learning objectives' with student assessment comprising a combination of presentations, individual and group assignments, projects, class tests, midterm exams and the final exams in order to prepare students to fulfill the learning objectives. As the guidelines of the local and the foreign providers assert, the fair assessment of assignments and the exams is assured with the help of the internal verifiers from the local institutes and the external verifiers from the foreign universities. On top of that, most of the final year exam papers are prepared by the foreign universities. Some foreign providers check the samples of assignments whereas other foreign providers mark all the final year exams papers themselves. These various quality aspects are implemented based on the agreements that the foreign providers have with their institutes. As the documents revealed, these institutes are made to adopt local practices as well as international practices since they offer foreign degrees in Sri Lanka. Overall, the documentation suggests that these practices of student assessment improve the quality of student assessment of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Quality Assurance

The documents analysed revealed the main practices related to 'Quality assurance' of these institutes in two different types. They are the quality assurance conducted internally by the institutes themselves and the external quality assurance which is undertaken by the external parties independently of these institutes. These various practices are listed below separately based on their nature of assurance.

A summary of activities that are conducted by these local institutes are as follows.

1. Workshops on quality assurance
2. Quality assurance units /groups which represent a variety of divisions of the institutes to monitor quality of the institutes regularly and discuss quality matters and internal verifiers to verify academic quality within the institutes
3. Student feedback/ lecturer evaluations from the students to make changes based on the feedback
4. Staff meetings and faculty board meetings to discuss quality matters

The above practices were shown as factors which could influence the effectiveness of these institutes in a positive manner.

A summary of activities that are conducted by these external parties are as follows.

1. Boards of studies and other external verifiers to verify standards of academic activities such as exams, assignments and teaching.
2. Quality audits to check quality of library facilities, infrastructure facilities, lab facilities and other facilities.
3. Meetings with various stakeholder types such as students, lecturers and parents
4. Conduct ISO audits mainly to monitor documentation

ISO audit was shown as a main quality assurance method by most of the selected institutes and as the documents showed they adopted different standards of the ISO family, supporting the idea discussed in the literature review chapter that ISO standards vary among these institutes (refer section 2.14.4). It was also understood from the documentary data that the foreign degree awarding institutes mainly rely on the activities undertaken by the foreign providers in relation to quality assurance.

The stakeholder perceptions of these main practices of quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka which were identified from the documentary data are elaborated in the next chapter.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed how quality is understood by the four selected stakeholder groups in relation to three dimensions of quality: definitions, purposes and the practices of quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. The perceptions of the participants revealed a variety of definitions of quality indicating the obscure nature of quality. The findings revealed ‘achieving high standards’ and ‘transformation’ as the most frequently used definition of quality by the stakeholder groups. The chapter also discussed how the terms given to express the definitions of quality also involved a variety of meanings. Three main themes, which are, ‘quality as transformative’, ‘quality as achieving high standards’ and ‘quality as an outcome of financial strength’ were drawn on to elaborate the definitions of quality in relation to these institutes. Five main purposes associated with the term ‘quality’ were also identified from the findings. The practices discussed in the chapter indicated how these institutes have documented several good practices to improve the quality of their institutes.

Chapter 6 Findings and Analysis - Part 2
Stakeholders' Perceptions of Implementation and Maintenance of Quality

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings obtained in relation to the second research question which focuses on 'students' and professionals' perceptions of the ways the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality. The priorities for quality, identified in the previous chapter, were categorized under four themes based on their main functions, and that is: 'quality evaluations and verifications', 'student admission', 'financial support' and 'teaching and learning'. In this chapter, each of the four priority themes is discussed in terms of its implementation and maintenance by drawing on questionnaire and interview data. The results of each stakeholder group are presented separately under each theme.

6.2 Quality Evaluations and Verifications

The theme 'quality evaluations and verifications' is woven around the quality assurance of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. Since 'quality evaluations and verifications' contributes to 'having high standards', the implementation and the maintenance of a priority for quality, that is 'having high standards' is also discussed under this theme.

Students' Perceptions

In both the questionnaire and the interviews a large number of students highlighted 'having high standards' in connection to activities related to the sub theme of 'internal and external verification'. They identified student feedback which evaluates quality of lecturers, the facilities and other resources as a main activity which is associated with the internal verification process. They also identified 'the verification of students marks' conducted by the internal verifiers as another way to assure quality internally. The ISO quality audits and the quality verification activities conducted by the foreign providers were highlighted by the students as the means of external verification of quality of these institutes. As the UNESCO/APQN (2006) describes assuring quality externally provides a significant protection

and indication to the consumers and other interested parties. Many students noted how the external verifiers who come from the provider countries maintain the quality of their academic work. As a bachelor's degree full time student who responded to the questionnaire said "From time to time the foreigners visit and examine how the processes are going on" (STU Q86). Another student commented, "All our final exam papers have been checked in UK. Every semester they have to send couple of our assignments to UK to check whether we have got proper marks" (STU I3).

As these students indicate, many quality assurance mechanisms that the foreign degree awarding institutes adopt depend on the foreign providers' requirements since they are bound by cross border arrangements. An undergraduate student who participated in the interview conveyed how the quality verification of the foreign provider assures high standards of his institute as follows:

> Our institute's quality standard is checked by the affiliated university on regular basis. For instance every two semesters lecturers and programme directors from UK visit the Sri Lankan institute to validate the quality standards and if there are any discrepancies in the quality delivered to the students then the affiliated university can discontinue the degree programmes awarded in Sri Lanka (STU I2).

Even though many students who participated in the questionnaire survey and the interviews considered that quality assurance activities conducted by the foreign providers have a positive impact on the quality of these institutes, some students also conveyed that some quality assurance activities do not fulfill the intended assurance. As these students indicated some of these institutes in Sri Lanka break the mutual trust between the foreign providers and the institutes which is the backbone for cross border engagements. Several students highlighted that some of these institutes do not maintain the real standards of the evaluations and verifications of their academic and administrative activities. In support of this view one undergraduate student revealed how her institute showed a fake picture of their services and how the students evaluate them to the foreign provider when they visit the Sri Lankan institute to assure their quality. The student elaborated this idea as follows:

> They just show them a fake one. Because the quality controller is not going to stay here forever. She just comes and stays for about a week ... checks everything and goes back. So everything is set up before she comes, ranging from the lecture room,

> library services - everything. If you take even the students they prepare us as to what kind of answers we should give when she comes and asks us questions. They know that that person is going to ask us whether the institute is providing us this and that. They have a checklist that they are supposed to question the students from. So the local institute here they tell us that they are going to ask us this and we should answer positively. We can't say no ...that the institute promised us this and they didn't give us this. If we say no they might actually cancel the license for them to offer the degree. If we say no it gives a discredit to the institute and slowly, slowly if their discredits keep multiplying then they might cancel the programme. We are the ones who will be at a loss. Because we already studied halfway, we don't want to stop halfway because we have paid for it. They are not going to give a refund. All these very complicated factors are mixed together. It is not just one thing. I was there personally where an executive manager told us that this lady is coming for inspection so please give positive responses so it's going to be good for our institute. If you don't you are going to put yourself at risk, she told us that. When she showed up - the quality assurance controller - we had to say ya, ya, ya .. we've got good this and good that, lecturers are awesome and everything is awesome. So it is like we had to present a fake picture to her. It is really a very bad experience to go through. When you have to pretend that everything is ok when it is certainly not. It happens not just in my institute, it happens in a lot of institutes that I know. Unless there is a certain foreign provider, for example institute X [original name omitted to preserve their confidentiality]. Their representatives are actually living here. That person is from the home country itself. They are monitoring here and being supervised constantly. Their quality assurance is very systematic and done nicely. That is the reason they charge a lot as well. It is expensive for that reason. I know everything there is done the way that it is supposed to be done (STU I5).

The above quote shows how some of these private institutes which offer foreign degrees exploit higher education resources and violate the ethics and values of education, while also undermining the trust of the foreign providers. Several students who participated in the questionnaire supported the above view. UNESCO/OECD (2005) 'Guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education' also emphasise the significance of mutual trust between the provider and the receiver country by admitting that even these guidelines depend on the shared trust and respect between countries. If the unethical activities reported do apply

to one or more institutes in Sri Lanka they could seriously harm the image that the other nations have of Sri Lanka.

Also indicated by the student's response and several findings of the questionnaire are that some students become victims of such institutes' efforts to create a positive picture of their services, since there are no proper consumer protection policies to protect these students from injustice. This can be clearly understood from the UNESCO/APQN (2006) toolkit which documents that many countries' quality assurance procedures at the national level are inadequate for cross border higher education, causing many quality problems. As the findings demonstrate, the students get trapped between their need for completion of the programme and their willingness to uphold an ethical quality assurance process. It is somewhat ironical that the quality assurance activities of the foreign providers which are supposed to protect the students themselves bring more uncertainty and pressure on the students due to the malpractices of some of these institutes. Also shown is that the foreign providers' quality checks are neither sufficient nor consistent, indicating that it is necessary to make some changes to their quality assurance practices. It appears from the findings that some of the 'high standards' are claimed but not practiced, thus the quality priority 'having high standards' is not fulfilled in practice by some of these institutes. Another factor of interest was how 'quality' is seen as coming at a cost as the students may have to pay higher tuition fees to obtain a high quality degree from an institute that provides high standards of teaching and facilities. Lim (2010) supports this idea by indicating that it is costly to increase quality in private high education institutes which provide foreign programmes. These ideas also denote how quality is seen in a commercialized manner in private higher education where it is available for people at a price.

It appeared from the findings that even though the standards are verified by the external verifiers it does not guarantee that the quality of the same degree in the provider country and the receiving country is at the same level. The responses to the following questionnaire item confirmed this assertion: *Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country?* (refer Appendix N section 6. Q. 9).

The majority of the students (72 percent) answered 'yes' to the above question explaining that the implementation and maintenance of quality in Sri Lankan institutes is less than the universities or the colleges in the provider country. Only 26 percent agreed that their degrees are equivalent in quality while 2 percent answered that they don't know the answer. In support

of the questionnaire responses, the majority (80 percent) of the students who were interviewed also perceived that the quality of the same degree offered in the home university is higher than their degree. One student drew from comments of one of the UK providers with regard to this idea:

> I have heard it from some of the British who think that getting a UK degree in Sri Lanka is not the same as getting a UK degree in UK itself. When they do it in the home country all the examination, monitoring, everything is assured for them because they have regulatory bodies. They have the assurance there. Here we don't have that. It just happens on and off (STU I6).

The perceptions of the large majority of student participants in this study highlight that the external verifications of these institutes conducted by their foreign providers sometimes fail to provide the 'high standards' in their verification activities, and this can lead to a difference in standards between the degrees of the provider countries and the institutes of Sri Lanka. It must be acknowledged, however, that the differences in social, economic, political, cultural, education and legal systems between the provider countries and Sri Lanka raise barriers for these quality assurance activities. When analysing this case vertically, it is evident that the institutional level gets molded by the national level factors mentioned above and thus, a gap can be created between the international level and the national institutional level. But despite this, major international agencies (see UNESCO/OECD, 2005) maintain that the programmes that these institutes provide should be comparable in quality to the programmes of the home country while also considering the cultural and linguistic aspects of the receiver country.

Many students who participated in the interviews and the questionnaire survey mentioned ISO certification as a means of national external verification of institutional standards. Since the UGC plays a major role in university education of Sri Lanka it was decided that it is important to gauge students' perceptions regarding the contribution of the UGC of Sri Lanka to the quality assurance of these institutes. The following question was asked in the questionnaire in order to understand students' perception of the UGC approval process: *Is your institute approved by the University Grants Commission?* (refer Appendix N, section 1. Q. 10).

The majority of the students (79 percent) agreed that their institute is approved by the UGC, although in reality none of their institutes are approved by the UGC. Two of the selected institutes had local degree awarding status, but as institutes, neither had received UGC approval. Only 8 percent of the students said that their institutes are not approved by the UGC

while 13 percent admitted that they don't know the answer. Given that the UGC standards are highly recognized in the country, the majority of students' mistaken perception of UGC approval of their institutes shows how students (and their parents) can be misguided when making decisions regarding quality of their selected study programme. The lack of transparency in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka and what is claimed of their misleading advertising campaigns could be key factors in the students believing that their institutes are approved by the UGC. As argued by Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007), "Parents and students have been taken for a ride" (p. 2) by some of these institutes by not revealing accurate and significant information. An undergraduate student further pointed out students' helplessness in the face of this:

> They certainly don't make quality visible to us, we actually have to join the programme and discover it ourselves. We can't really rely on word of mouth either on how good the institute is (STUQ7).

Several students also had doubts about the level of quality and the recognition of their institutes even though quality verification processes occur in their institutes. These views suggest that the quality verification processes of the institutes may not be effective or, even if they are effective, their outcomes are not properly communicated to the stakeholders of these institutes. Quality verification should also include verifying quality to the public and the other stakeholders by informing them about the outcomes of the verification of quality of these institutes, and also by making their verification processes more transparent.

Overall, however, the findings demonstrate that the majority of students put more emphasis on the external verification conducted by the foreign providers than the internal verification of these institutes, thus indicating the vital role that the foreign providers play in the quality assurance process. They also argued that the external verification cannot provide a complete assurance of quality in these institutes and the quality level of the same degree in Sri Lanka and overseas is different.

Lecturers' Perceptions

Lecturers also highlighted 'internal and external verification' as a mean of achieving 'high standards'. They mainly focused on the marking of student exams when considering internal verification of programmes; to cite an example of this internal verification of exams marks: "Student exam marks for each subject are approved by a second marker" (LECQ43). Another lecturer strengthened this lecturer's view of internal verification of student assessment by

stating that they have a Viva exam panel which assesses students' knowledge. Thus, it appears from these findings that some of the evaluation and verification methods these institutes adopt to evaluate the students' knowledge may improve the quality of their students' learning and thereby the overall quality of these institutes. This view aligns with Sharp (2012) who, as director of a foreign university, affirmed that student assessments in Sri Lanka are conducted in a proper way and the student achievements are their own.

Several lecturers also explained how their institutes maintain 'high standards' by considering many aspects which account for quality and that these included student evaluation reports on each subject, student feedback on each lecturer; and the records of all administrative staff. A full time lecturer who participated in the interview confirmed the above view stating:

> So it is a summary for the institution, taken overall... what are the weak points, what are the comments that are received, student point of view, departments point of view, what are the suggestions and other things, they are deciding after summarising these things (LECI4).

However, several lecturers considered that the student oriented nature of these private institutes is overdone and creates a difficulty in implementing and maintaining quality evaluations and verifications of these institutes. "The fact that private institutes are sometimes too much student oriented makes it difficult at sometimes to implement strict rules" stated a lecturer. As Mariampillai (2014) argues, higher education institutes tend to be more student focused when the students hold the financial power of these institutes. Mariampillai further described how this aspect creates more pressure on the institutes and their staff while also making education a commodity that can be bought. Thus, the values and the culture of higher education may detach from the activities of these institutes and this can have an impact on the higher education sector as a whole.

Of the several lecturers who supported ISO standards, a full time lecturer stated: "The institute is ISO certified therefore the administrative and operational systems are thoroughly scrutinized and standardized as per the ISO quality standard requirements" (LECQ30). Another lecturer who participated in the interview suggested that the students and the lecturers themselves can evaluate and verify the standards of the institutional activities for their own purposes and thereby they can obtain more authentic information about the quality of these institutes. As she argued, self-reviews can help the students to identify the applicability of their courses to

modern situations while the lecturers can rethink whether they teach the appropriate curriculum to their students.

Responses of lecturers to the questionnaire also revealed the perception that even though the foreign providers conduct external verifications to assure quality, the quality level is not up to the standards of the degrees of the home country. In response to the question: *Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country?* (refer Appendix O section 6. Q12), 82 percent lecturers agreed that there is a difference between the degrees offered in the two different countries, with only 15 percent of lecturers seeing no difference. In explaining the reason for their answer the majority of the lecturers pointed to the variance in quality of a programme as depending to an extent on contextual (economic, social, political, educational) factors in the receiving country. For example, one lecturer described how the "Original flavour of the mother university does not come to Sri Lanka" because the "HR and physical resources are limited" (LECQ5). The interview participants were also asked their opinion about the same degree offered in Sri Lanka and the home university. The majority of the lecturers (95 percent) stated that the quality of the same degree of the home university is higher than their degree (the remaining 5 percent answered that they don't know).

The findings obtained from the interviews of several lecturers also revealed how external verification processes can create confusion and disagreement between the local institutes and the foreign providers, making reference to the cross border arrangement of courses requiring compatibility in the policies, rules and the regulations of the two national systems concerned. This brings to mind what Lane & Kinser (2011) argue about the implications of the public-private intersection for cross border arrangements that need to be considered since a host and a home government are involved in this engagement. They argue that even in quality assurance their approaches may be different and their ideologies or the values may have an impact on the way that both governments view the cross border arrangement. As this view implies, the cross border arrangement should not have a negative impact on values and image of the higher education system of Sri Lanka. The graduates of these institutes should also meet the national development requirements of Sri Lanka and be able to contribute to national values and social justice. Thus, it is necessary for both these private institutes in Sri Lanka and the foreign providers to understand this public aspect of private higher education. A part time lecturer who participated in the interview explained how perspectives can be different even in the process of evaluation:

> There are different approaches. There are quality audits. Programme to programme it happens. The representatives… they come, they evaluate our lecturers, our students. His perspective is from UK or USA … those have to be matched with what we practice over here (LECI3).

This cross border arrangement which is mainly vertically integrated may cause many difficulties for both the local and international institutions as they attempt to align the values and ideologies of two differing nations, even during the process of quality evaluation and verification. But according to, Lim (2010) who investigated the transnational quality assurance of higher education in selected private institutes, the quality of the degrees of the receiver countries should be comparable to the quality of the same degree in the provider countries.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that even though internal and external quality verification occurs in numerous ways, the Sri Lankan institutes do not maintain quality up to the quality levels of their home universities.

Senior Managers' Perceptions

The results from the questionnaire and the interviews highlighted that, like the lecturers, a large number of senior managers viewed the quality assurance of their institutes in relation to both the internal and external quality assurance processes. They identified all the quality assurance activities that are conducted by and within the local institutes as internal quality assurance, and all the other quality assurance activities conducted by their foreign providers or any other external parties as external quality assurance. Even though their findings confirmed that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka adopt the quality assurance practices identified from the documentary data which were described in the previous chapter, the findings also implied that the extent to which these institutes follow these practices is somewhat problematic. A senior manager uttered how the cross border connection can be more challenging since local providers have to abide by the foreign providers' guidelines and regulations. She added, "It is very difficult now when you look at the foreign degrees. We have to abide by their standards" (SMQ15).

Another senior manager further elaborated this view in relation to external verification of student exam marking as:

> The final exam definitely 100 percent marked by them but the midterm and the assignments will be moderated with the samples ...you have to send to them for moderation. So in that also we see some times when the students get high marks for assignments they ask the question of how come they are having low marks in the final examination. So you see sometimes they vary.. if the local lecturer giving particular students more marks sometimes during the moderation process it will get a little bit of a question mark (SMI8).

The senior manager conveys how the conflicts can occur since the expected standards can vary from the local country to the provider country. These different expectations also lead to different interpretations of implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality. Lim (2010) further elaborates this view by adding that various foreign providers give different amounts of authority to the receiving countries in marking examination papers. Thus, this also creates different quality levels within the same institute or different institutes if they offer multiple degrees of multiple providers.

The senior managers were also asked the following question: *Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country?* (refer Appendix P section 8. Q. 10). According to the questionnaire findings, 81 percent of senior managers stated that there is a difference between these degrees offered in two different countries and they admitted that the quality of these degrees in Sri Lanka is lower than the quality of the same degrees in their home universities. This was further confirmed by the interview findings when the same question was asked of the interview participants. The vast majority of the interview participants (86 percent) asserted that the quality levels are different while only 14 percent thought that the quality of their degree was equivalent to the same degree in the home university. A director reasoned out this difference between the quality of the same qualification as, "Foreign university does not control these institutes 100 percent, but in the home country they have 100 percent control" (SMI1).

As the director conveyed, the body which conducts the quality evaluation and verification and the ways to implement and maintain this process have a major impact on the level of quality of these institutes. Another senior manager who has had about five years senior managerial experience in the field of higher education revealed how some institutes exploit higher education resources during the verification process. This person asserted that some institutes manipulate data, violate ethics and break mutual trust in order to demonstrate the quality of

their academic programmes and the students. The senior manager stated that this violation of ethics occurs even when the foreign providers and the institutes in Sri Lanka get to know each other at a better level than previously. He stated that an organization may compromise on its quality in assignments and might not adhere to the proper learning outcomes which are required for that programme. He further elaborated:

> But when that external verifier comes what these institutions do is that they would have an agreement with that person to give them only samples which they have handpicked. Not handpicked by the external verifier but handpicked by the institutions, so that they can easily be biased (SMI7).

He also revealed that some institutes get outside people to do the assignments and submit them to the foreign provider as if the students have done it. They might then have assignments which meet pass criteria, merit and the distinction criteria whereas in reality they might have not completed the syllabus or passed the students who obtained low marks. He pointed out this as a possible reason for the disparity between students with the same qualification when they are in employment or enrolled in further studies. As the above quote elaborates, some of the quality assurance activities of these institutes appear to be less useful and they were seen only as fulfilling bureaucratic purposes while also subject to misrepresentation. What this senior manager implied contrasts with the claims of a marketing manager in the Sunday Leader (n.d.) - which was explained in chapter two – when he stated that quality is not compromised. What the findings of this study reveal is that even though some managers claim that they assure high quality, the implementation of the quality verification may not resemble these claims. In support of this view another senior manager revealed how his institute tends to manipulate data:

> They actually took some qualification which was in Sri Lanka, a one year diploma. They manipulated the diploma to such an extent that the university thought the syllabus was equivalent to two years of a degree. They gave direct entry to the final year of the degree... because there is no quality authority in Sri Lanka. If you take UK you have the QAA, if you take Maldives, the Maldives Qualification Authority, even in Malaysia, but not in Sri Lanka (SMI9).

By quoting examples both from the developed as well as developing countries, senior managers indicate that Sri Lanka needs a proper quality assurance system which is inclusive of the private institutes in Sri Lanka in order to avoid exploitation of higher education resources.

The senior manager reported above made a vertical comparison by relating the local level to the international level. However, a large number of senior managers identified the maintenance of the standards of documentation through the ISO system as a good practice. As there is a hunt for international standards and appropriateness across national standards, players such as ISO which are new to quality assurance of higher education, have come in to play (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2004). A senior manager who described the ISO evaluations of her institute also referred to Edward Deming's PDCA cycle to elaborate the significance of proper documentation as follows:

> If the documents are correct then the people should follow what is being written and then you see the PDCA cycle - if you don't plan then you don't know where you are going. But that does not mean you should stick to the plan forever. You have to review the plan and see whether it's happening or not and then you have to review the plan, change the plan, improve the plan. That's a continuous thing that is why it's a cycle (SMI8).

The above interview comment conveys the importance of constant verifications and evaluations. The findings also revealed that the senior managers adopt student feedback systems to evaluate lecturers and other resources of the institutes. This common practice provides a positive impact on the effectiveness of the foreign degree awarding institutes as this allows not only quality verification but also rectification of the issues of quality. Several senior managers identified the use of plagiarism software and the employment of internal verifiers to verify student performance as academic activities associated with the verification of quality of these institutes.

One avenue seen as necessary to explore was to gauge the senior managers' awareness of international guidelines and agreements in relation to quality of cross border higher education, in line with the understanding that the UNESCO/ OECD (2005) guidelines can improve quality assurance in cross border higher education. The findings of the two Likert scale questions which were designed to explore this idea provided some remarkable information (refer Appendix P, section 4). According to the findings only 19 percent of the senior managers agreed that they are aware of 'the UNESCO and the OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education'. Because 81 percent of the senior managers indicated no awareness of these guidelines, it can be assumed that their lack of understanding could well create a barrier between the receiver country and the provider country, or in other words local level and the international level, in relation to understandings and expectation of

quality provision of cross border higher education. However, 62 percent of the senior managers were aware of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in relation to cross border higher education.

A further complicating factor in the Sri Lankan context was referred to by an interviewee who stated that it was difficult to assure quality of his institute to the people in the areas which were affected by war as they were already being cheated by bogus education providers. This director explained how these bogus institutes had created a bad image of private institutes by cheating some people after the war. He added: "They hate us, ...So that's why I am saying that in Jaffna itself it took some time to make them understand what we have in Colombo" (SMI1). The senior manager associated quality verification with a complex issue of the country in the post-civil war situation. His quote implies how bogus providers of higher education misuse or exploit 'higher education' to obtain financial gains and thereby destroy the value and trust people have on higher educational activities. "Quality higher education can contribute to recovery, peace-building, economic development and better governance" (Heleta, 2015). Unfortunately, these bogus providers obstruct this process even in areas where quality higher education is most crucial and they further exploit the people who have been already exploited by the war. Thus, quality assurance in these areas may be a tedious task for other institutes which have a genuine interest in providing higher education.

Overall, the findings of the senior managers revealed that some institutes attempted to satisfy the external verifiers by providing incorrect information regarding their institutional functions and the output. They also admitted that the quality of their programmes is of less quality than the same programmes of their home universities. On the other hand, some internal quality assurance procedures, such as student surveys, were in place.

Government Officials' Perceptions

Because their direct involvement in the internal verification of quality of these institutes is still limited, the government officials mainly focused on the quality verifications undertaken by the foreign providers of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. A senior official who responded to the questionnaire evaded responsibility for quality assurance of these institutes by stating that the "Foreign partner checks their quality" (GOVQ2). However, another official who participated in the interview stated that, "At the moment we do not take a major responsibility for these foreign degree awarding institutes, but are working on it, we are trying to form a regulatory body to monitor them" (GOVI4), pointing to the government's interest in becoming actively involved in assuring quality of these institutes, as indicated in the national

policy framework on higher education in Sri Lanka (National Education Commission Sri Lanka, 2009). Policies tend to reflect national priorities and therefore the importance of assuring quality of cross border high education in Sri Lanka can be seen through this policy framework. A large number of government officials who responded to the questionnaire and the interview believed that some of the foreign degree awarding institutes provide degrees only in response to the students' spending power, and therefore there should be a strict system to improve the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes. An interviewee highlighted how academic activities are reflected in the results of these institutes by arguing:

> But if everyone gets the first class results that's not quality. They have massified education in the UK. They encourage universities to admit more students. They give classes more liberally -first class, second class and all - whereas in our country it is restricted (GOVI3).

The official brings out how international level decisions can affect national level practices and accepted standards. It is necessary that quality evaluation and verification methods of the provider countries meet the requirements of the receiving countries as otherwise these differences can influence negatively the long established practices of quality of the receiving country. UNESCO/OECD (2005) guidelines and UNESCO/APQN (2006) toolkit both describe the importance of considering the requirements of the receiver country while also maintaining the quality of these institutes of Sri Lanka comparable to the home universities.

A government official also signaled concern about the possible exploitation of higher education resources by some of the foreign degree awarding institutes:

> Some students want just a degree, just a certificate on paper. But do you think that you will be able to continue a career with just the paper, without knowledge. You know some institutions used to give bogus certificates for money. Even when my friends requested me to help them to get those kinds of certificates from those universities I always refuse it. They knew that there are places where you can get the certificates for money without a single day of participation (GOVI5).

This finding implies that this practice of issuing qualifications to unqualified students by some low quality institutes can harm the image of high quality foreign degree awarding institutes. Thus, proper quality evaluation and verification play a crucial role in the quality of these institutes. In support of this view Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007) also argue that 'degree mills'

have been a serious issue in recent years. The government officials identified a main difficulty in relation to quality evaluation and verification of these institutes as that they maintain a wide range of quality levels. As a senior government official commented:

> There is no common standard. Sometimes they just come and start institutes just by putting up a board. We don't know what they are and their quality. That is not monitored" (GOVQ3).

Since there is no government regulatory body in Sri Lanka to monitor these private institutes (World Bank, 2009) the way they evaluate and verify quality varies, resulting in a wide range of quality levels among these institutes. A senior government official who responded to the interview described the issues created by this variance of quality as follows:

> One thing is there is no assurance for their quality, because they are coming here and they are delivering lectures [but] we don't have any measuring instrument and students don't know the quality there. Students registered and they follow some degrees and finally they got the certificates [but] we don't know the guarantee for that certificate. If they want to check whether this is a correct certificate and whether from a recognized university or institute, he will check it with the University Grants Commission. Then if that institute [foreign university] is not registered in that system, it is not easy to recommend whether that institute is quality one or not (GOVI1).

The above quote implies the plight of the students of these institutes because they are not asked to check the quality of their universities before they start the programme. University Grants Commission (2015) provides a guide to the public in its website mentioning that the UGC accepts only the universities which are listed in Commonwealth Universities Yearbook and International Handbook of Universities. It appears from the findings of the government officials that even though they have published a statement in the UGC website the students may be not aware of this message and that the problem still continues. The students who are ignorant about this procedure or who believe in what their institutes claim possibly risk their futures as a government official in the interview highlighted:

> Most of these institution are telling in the advertisement that they have accreditation in the foreign country but sometimes that was not [the case] There are so many incidents and complaints because of cheating of students. So that's why

> we are proposing that an independent quality assurance and accreditation council should be established (GOVI5).

The majority of the government officials agreed with the above idea. However, a senior government official stated that even though workshops to discuss the quality assurance activities have been conducted they are not as effective as expected. He expressed the view that:

> They think that a work shop can do everything but this is not the answer. So they come and talk with each other and have a good lunch at Janaki [Name of a hotel], and most of the rural areas people are willing to come to Colombo. They have a chat with their friends and do some presentations, it is not work as far as I am concerned (GOVI1).

Belawati and Zuhairi (2007) provide one rationale for this issue by arguing that the people in higher education institutions who undertake change will have talks on quality, but they may be unaware of what exactly quality means and in particular the ways to initiate, offer, and develop continual processes of quality, products, and services. Thus, a proper understanding of the meaning of quality and effective communication in this regard are crucial to quality assurance of these higher education institutes.

A respondent brought out the issue of lack of transparency of the quality processes and their outcomes:

> I see many places where the quality drops, but they are covered by this layer of icing of the cake. Can't see inside properly. Kind of blinded. You don't question the quality. Because sometimes jobs are assured and good salaries are down the road (GOVI5).

This government official also maintained that foreign degrees were associated with a certain class of people and that a lack of quality may be hidden due to this factor. As the official implied the quality evaluation and the verification processes they adopt may not show the innate nature of the quality of these institutes. This view aligns to the conception of quality as 'exceptional' in its form of exclusivity as pointed out in section 2.3.1. Jamjoom (2012) discusses a similar situation in the context of Saudi Arabia by highlighting how the fee paying nature of private higher education denotes a certain social class in their students. As the writer

argues, their education is perceived as prestigious due to their social class. The above quote also indicates this dimension of 'social class' associated with the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

The findings of the questionnaire and the interviews also suggested that the quality of the degrees from institutes in Sri Lanka do not meet the same quality level as in their home universities. This was strongly reinforced by the responses of the government officials of the three selected government organizations in relation to the same question: *Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country?* (refer Appendix Q section 4. Q. 15). 88 percent of government officials stated that there is a difference. The interview findings further supported this idea as the majority of the government officials (about 90 percent) answered 'yes' to the same interview question mentioned above. This view indicates that a quality evaluation and verification conducted in Sri Lanka may not ensure implementation to the same quality level even though the students who study in the Sri Lankan institutes obtain the same qualification as in the home universities. However, government officials identified subject reviews, the use of plagiarism software, conducting regular exams and student feedback systems as some of the beneficial practices which assist in having high standards of these institutes. As a high ranking government official indicated the students, being the users of these courses have some power to evaluate and verify quality of these institutes. He further added that the students' contribution in this regard through their first hand experiences can enhance the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Overall, the government officials pointed out that the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka are checked by their foreign providers and the government bodies in Sri Lanka do not play a major role in verifying the quality of these institutes. They also indicated that the quality of these institutes is not up to the standards of their home universities.

6.3 Student Admission

The theme 'Student admission' focuses on the ways that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality through 'Clear student recruitment procedure' and the 'Provision of accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider'. The students' and the professionals' perceptions in relation to this theme are discussed separately in the following sections.

Students' Perceptions

Several students pointed out how some student enrolment procedures can have a negative impact on the quality of learning and the output of these institutes. An MBA student brought out an example:

> Institutes themselves can do something to improve their own quality. They have to filter the right people for the right programme. I have seen in lot of places people 19 years old coming for MBAs. Age criteria. I have six years work experience, but I still find it difficult to interpret certain points because learning never ends. Here in Sri Lanka I think they should consider that fact. It is not always about reaching your targets (STU I1).

The student implied the enrolment of immature students to reach their recruitment targets as a negative practice adopted by some of these institutes. The market driven approach of these institutes indicates how they treat education as a commodity (Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). The above quote further implies that this activity can result in having students who have a vast disparity in their knowledge levels within one programme, and the importance of prior knowledge and the maturity of students to absorb broad concepts. In support of this view Perera (2010) reports that student heterogeneity cause more complexity when teaching students (see section 2.10). As it is seen from the student's view there should be a proper and clear standard in the recruitment criteria, policies and the students who follow these degrees. An undergraduate student supported the above student's view by stating that the institute's first priority is to recruit students as much as possible. She argued that meeting students' requirements or satisfying them is a secondary thing for the institute and they do not provide the students the best that they can. She further added: "Even if we have an issue individually or as a group it is not taken very seriously and they try to manage them without solving the problem" (STU Q46). As the student argues, some institutes attempt to increase profit by recruiting a large number of students and then tend to forget their responsibilities towards the students, thus making a negative impact on the quality of private higher education. Even though it is private and students pay their fees these students have to make compromises to complete their programmes and find it difficult to get their rights. A large number of students also revealed that some of these institutes provide false information to attract new students especially during their advertising campaigns. An undergraduate student shared his experience in relation to this negative practice as: "Promised a laptop but never received" (STU Q126). The findings of the students convey that even though the institutes might present themselves

as student oriented and aim for student satisfaction, in reality some of these institutes take advantage of the students. It would suggest that these institutes are tempted to provide incorrect information to potential students because they are aware that once students have enrolled and paid for their courses they are relatively powerless since there are no proper policies and legislation to protect these students from exploitation.

Another problem encountered from an interviewee was how a lack of students recruited can cause multiple batches to study in one class. The student commented:

> I think the number of students is less, because in our class there are three batches together. No lectures for one batch. I think they have some financial difficulties for providing one lecture for only two or three students. That is why they take lots of people to one lecturer (STU I2).

An undergraduate student conveyed how lack of students has an impact on his learning experiences by stating: "This affects me due to the fact that I don't have a group of students I can work together with and get clarifications and exchange of fresh ideas" (STUQ33). This shows that these priorities are interrelated and in order to meet one priority they might even have to achieve another priority in advance. Another student (STUQ70) conveyed how lack of students has an impact on the policies and regulations of these institutes:

> The main issue I see is the lack of students. When you have lack of students it impossible to put in policies and regulations. I think the school wants to bring in regulations, wants to streamline most of the stuff, but since there are only a few students in a class they are not actually capable of doing it. Maybe because of the fear of losing those students also.

As the above quote indicates the policies of the local level gets affected by the difficulties faced by the institutes in relation to recruitment of new students. Another respondent identified competition negatively by stating:

> [In] earlier days they tended to recruit students who have got only high marks for their degree or for their higher studies. But there are a plenty of universities starting in Sri Lanka. So now they have to face the competition [and] because of that reason they have to lower their standards so they can recruit plenty of students. So other

> students will face difficulties when they meet those students. They don't have enough knowledge (STUI3).

Another undergraduate student revealed how the institutes attempt to solve the problem of lack of students by introducing many programmes. As she put it:

> This led to generalization of the Institute and destroying the niche and prestigious feel it had. It has rather become overcrowded and mundane. According to my point of view they want to make a big profit (STUQ10).

As the above findings demonstrate this issue can create many other issues related to the quality of these institutes. The institutes which depend on student tuition fees sometimes deviate from the good practices and values that they initially wanted to maintain in order to survive in the sector. This is an issue that is caused by the private nature of these institutes of Sri Lanka.

Overall, the students' responses revealed that many of the five institutes analysed lack clear student admission procedures and the provision of accurate and clear information to the students.

Lecturers' Perceptions

The majority of the lecturers viewed the implementation and the maintenance of quality through student admission to these institutes as positive and they revealed that their institutes maintain high standards in student recruitment procedures. A full time lecturer who responded to the questionnaire stated that her institute is "Filtering students at admission" (LECQ48). Another lecturer in the interview further supported this idea of high standards of 'student admission' by asserting that "High standards are set in student recruitment … so that only the best would graduate" (LECI4).

Many lecturers also said that their institutes have prerequisites such as a minimum number of passes in the Ordinary Level and the Advanced Level examinations in order to maintain standards of the students. However, a part time lecturer who also works in a government university admitted that the students of his institute come from various educational backgrounds and regions leading to different knowledge levels. The lecturer highlighted that the students also include some foreign students such as Maldivians and the students come from various educational backgrounds like London Advanced Level (A/L) background and local Advanced Level (A/L) background. As the lecturer stated their ground knowledge is

different and they have provided a fundamental module to overcome such barriers and make them pass the credit. As he put it: "so I think that we have overcome that problem by equalizing the students here (LECI3)".

As the findings reveal many lecturers tend to believe that their institutes maintain a certain standard in student recruitment and even the lecturers who think that the students have different knowledge levels tend to believe that their support programmes rectify this problem.

Senior Managers' Perceptions

Procedures for the implementation and the maintenance of quality of the student admission were also discussed by some senior managers. Testing of English and mathematics skills of the students was shown as a good practice in relation to student recruitment. As a senior manager highlighted they need to check the English standards of the students since all the programmes are conducted in English and also some programmes require mathematical and analytical skills so they should check at least the students' mathematics achievement in the GCE O/L exam. The senior manager pointed out that the admission criteria as one of the important ways of maintaining quality standards, indicating how English language plays a major role in the quality of student learning at these institutes. Another senior manager who supported the above senior manager's view pointed out how the students are encouraged to take English language courses and mathematics in a foundation programme if they do not fulfill the required English or mathematics knowledge. It seems that the students have to pay an additional fee for these classes.

A head of a faculty pointed out how the knowledge level of the student input makes an impact on these institutes as:

> Brightest students the state sector attracts. We are not fortunate to get those best students. That is one thing. Still among the available students we try to get the best students to our faculty. When the inputs are good, quality is good. In the private operators you don't get that opportunity in Sri Lanka. Because of this disparity extra effort has to be taken to train these students sometimes. So for state institutions most probably that is not the aptitude level but language only. Here other deficiencies are also there. Marks are somewhat different from each other, not like in state universities (SMI9).

The above quote implies that even though there are clear student recruitment procedures the student admission may be affected by other educational capabilities and social viewpoints and

practices of the country. Jamjoom (2012) discusses a similar scenario in student recruitment of private higher education in Saudi Arabia by conveying that they mainly recruit students who were unable to enter a public university. Jamjoom argues that due to this reason sometimes there is a possibility to understand that the private institutes are for students who have financial strength but less competence in studies.

The quality of advertising designed for student recruitment purposes was also criticized by several senior managers and according to an interviewee "If you analyse any paper there are 100s of advertisements [aimed at recruiting students] and some of them are very misleading" (SMI5). As this senior manager asserted, the lack of transparency of information in the advertisements can mislead both the current and the prospective students of these institutes. However, the majority of the senior managers claimed that their institutes provide accurate and clear information and they have clear student recruitment procedures, in response to five questions[18] which were five point Likert scale questions (refer Appendix P, section 5); (see over for the Chart 6.1 illustrating these responses).

[18] Statement 1. We provide all the information about our course fees to the students, including the hidden charges.
Statement 2. We give accurate and important information to the students about our foreign provider.
Statement 3. We have strict admission policies and we do not enrol students who do not meet the necessary entry requirements.
Statement 4. We provide all the facilities and the resources that we promise to the students when they enrol.
Statement 5. We do not sacrifice quality to increase the number of students.

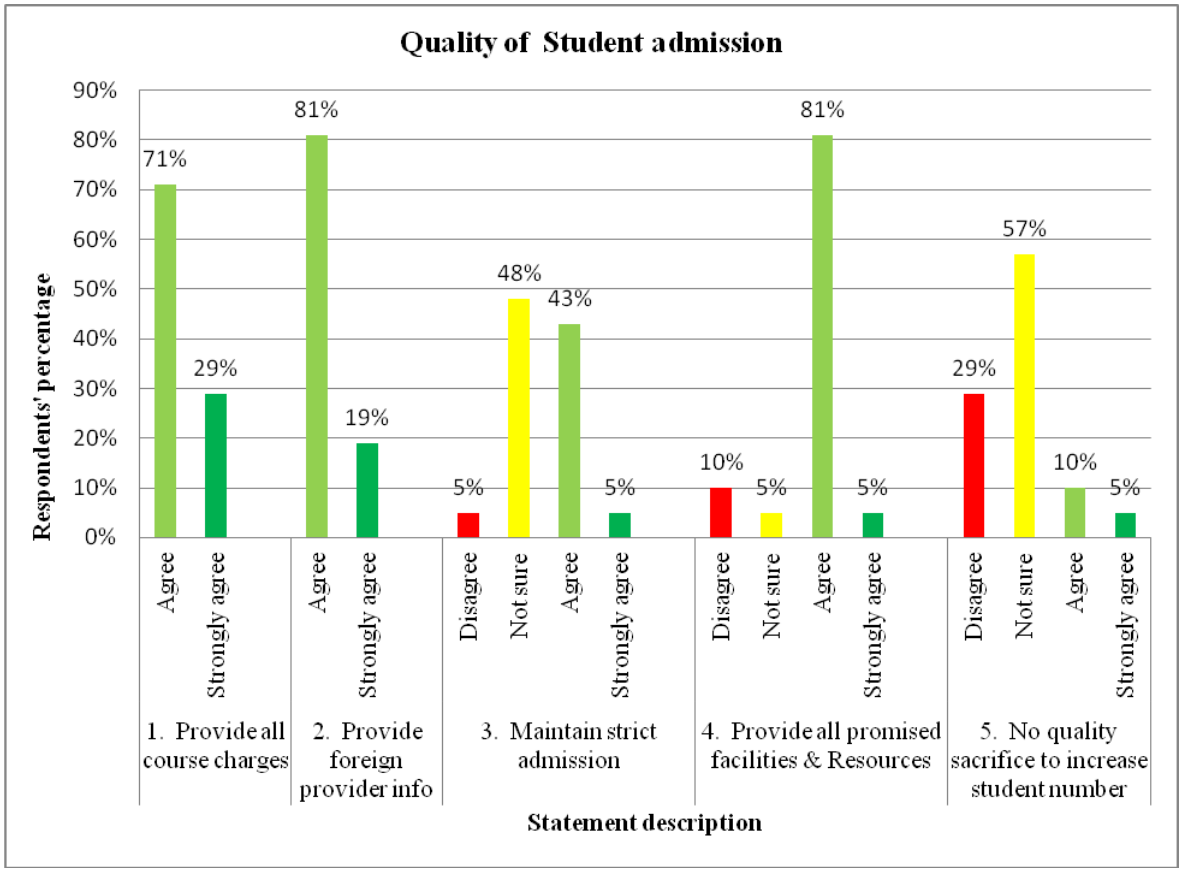

Chart 6.1 Quality of student admission procedures

All the senior managers agreed that they provide all the course fee information to the students and 29 percent of the senior managers strongly agreed with statement one. All the senior managers also agreed that they provide accurate and important information to the students about their foreign provider. Responses to the third statement, however, showed that more than half of the senior manager were either not sure, or disagreed that they have strict admission policies. The majority of the senior managers (86 percent) agreed that they provide all the facilities and the resources that they promised to the students when they enrol and only 10 percent disagreed with this fourth statement. While overall, the findings of the above four statements supported high quality in student admission many senior managers did not agree with the last statement, 'We do not sacrifice quality to increase the number of students'. According to the findings 57 percent of the senior managers were not sure about this and 29 percent of them disagreed, thus a total of 86 percent of senior managers clearly had concerns that quality sacrifices can occur during their student recruitment process. As only 15 percent agreed with the statement the findings appeared to be somewhat contradictory with the other four statements, indicating that some of these institutes might increase the number of students at the cost of quality. That is despite the overall findings of both the questionnaire and the interviews that suggested the majority of the senior managers considered they implement and maintain quality procedures for student admission.

Government Officials' Perceptions

In line with the above, several government officials had the view that these institutes lower their entry levels to recruit more students. A very senior official in a government organization who responded to the interview expressed his view in this respect:

> When they recruit students with low qualifications, for example with three passes, society will have a bad impression of these institutes and their attitude will be that these institutes have low quality. They get the impression that this is money centered and it is a business. Feeling that they are 'Graduate Kade' ['Kade' means 'shop' in English] (GOVI1).

According to this official, public perceptions of the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka are largely shaped by the recruitment standards that these institutes maintain. And, on the other hand, these public perceptions can have a negative influence on the institutes' student recruitment numbers (World Bank, 2009). Even though some institutes may recruit students with low qualifications in order to earn more profit, a government official argued that if they maintain quality in their institutes and treat the students properly then new students who are qualified enough will get attracted to these institutes and the profit will increase automatically. The government official's view supports the 'Quality is for free' view of Crosby (1996) who sees quality as an investment and not an expense. Another government official agreed with the above idea reporting that it is necessary to make some changes to the recruitment practices of these institutes in order to create a better image for themselves. He stated:

> They should know that they should give a concession to students who are near the Z score pass mark and enrol them to the institutes rather than recruiting students with three S passes or lower qualifications (GOVQ18).

As this official suggests, recruiting students who have obtained higher marks can increase the quality of these institutes. It appears that he viewed this aspect from the social justice point of view where the government expects more qualified graduates to contribute to the development of the country, thus implying that the institutes' local level policies need to be matched with the national level goals. Even though the government support to these foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka is at a minimum level, some of these officials expect the same level of contribution from these institutes of Sri Lanka as for the government universities.

A senior government official pointed out another very serious issue of quality and equity in regard to these institutes:

> They support only one segment of society: rich students who can afford course fees can enter these institutes even if they meet basic entry criteria. Poor students who obtained very good results, but could not enter a government university due to high competition for university entrance, do not get a chance to enter these institutes. The disadvantaged student segment is neglected (GOVI3).

This view confirms the idea of Mariampillai (2014) that the private higher education institutes limit their service to a particular segment by segregating students according to who can manage to pay and who cannot. The above mentioned two quotes also indicate how national level education policies and economic conditions create a pressure on the student admission policies of these institutes. On one hand the government official expresses the view that these institutes should enroll the academically capable students who were marginalized due to the financial constraints of the government in providing more university places. The government official clearly believes that would provide social justice for students from lower economic backgrounds. On the other hand, it raises the question about whether the government is entitled to hold such expectations given what some might see as a lack of justice to these institutes since there is less provision from the national level to these institutes in terms of financial support, proper legislation and policies. This view indicates how social justice can take different forms.

Overall, the government officials had concerns about the level of quality of student admission of these institutes. They argued that these institutes tend to recruit students with low qualifications. However, some officials also stated that if these institutes improve quality they can also attract more students to their institutes.

6.4 Financial Support

The theme ‘financial support’ discusses the students’ and the professionals’ perceptions of the implementation and the maintenance of the quality priority ‘Financial support to students’ while also arguing that financial support for the institutes themselves needs to be generated in order to support the students.

Students' Perceptions

A large number of students discussed how and to what extent their institutes provide them with financial support. The provision of certain scholarships and the installment payment schemes were identified by several students as positive factors in the effectiveness of these institutes. As a first year undergraduate student explained: "Financial relief was given to me in the form of fee payable in semester wise installments" (STU Q159), adding that they get a discount from their tuition fee if they introduce another student to the institute. So even though this method provides financial support to the students it also highlights how these institutes indirectly use their students for promotional activities to increase the number of students in their institutes.

Several local students mentioned that their course fees are very expensive with an undergraduate student saying:

> Couple of times when it comes to our course subjects, course fees have been very expensive. So I face lot of difficulty in paying my tuition fee since I am doing full time, like when you take two three subjects at a time. I face lot of difficulties in paying my tuition fees (STU I7).

Even though the institutes have to consider these students' difficulties in order to improve quality of their institutes, an undergraduate student brought out how the management views this issue:

> Mainly financial constraints. From their point of view they are charging minimum or reasonable fees and they have to ensure high quality or provide the best and it is difficult to maintain both. If they want to provide a high quality service then they have to charge much higher. For hiring good lecturers, providing good services, and for everything" (STUQ99).

It appears that the students' view and the senior managers' view towards tuition fees might be somewhat contradictory as the students thought their tuition fees were high while some students thought that the senior managers think that they charge reasonable tuition fees. As the above quote indicates, quality is associated with high cost and the students, being the users of these courses, have to pay for that cost in terms of high tuition fee if they require high quality. This view demonstrates how private higher education is treated primarily as a commodity where high cost, or in other words high tuition fees, equals high quality. This user oriented

'pay and take' concept for higher education also raises the issue of social justice because the students are not the sole beneficiaries from their studies; they are also potential contributors to the country in terms of social, economic, cultural and political development. The government tends to forget the public nature of this private activity because according to the findings these institutes lack financial support from the government. The institutes which depend on the tuition fees of the students tend to transfer this burden to the students for their survival. The rising tuition fees makes the students' lives more difficult and can have a negative impact on the students' overall learning (Yahia, 2013).

In summary, the students indicated that the financial support that they receive from these institutes is not adequate. They also indicated how their programmes are treated as a commodity as high quality involves higher tuition fees.

Lecturers' Perceptions

The lecturers who took part in both the questionnaire survey and the interview highlighted that these institutes have difficulty in providing financial support or relief to the students since the institutes have to pay a large sum of money as royalty to their foreign providers. As a full time lecturer who participated in the questionnaire survey put it: "Royalty payment is very high, exchange rate is very much higher in Sri Lanka compared to other countries" (LECQ40). This indicates that the royalty payment has a major impact on the quality of these institutes. Sri Lanka is a developing country with a high exchange rate and the institutes add this amount to the students' tuition fees. When analysing this case vertically it is evident that the national level economic factors create the conditions under which local level institutions must pay higher amounts of money to the foreign universities. On the other hand, the foreign providers also do not consider various countries' financial situations when providing their degrees across countries given that their intention is to earn the maximum profit out of these off shore programmes. This view supports the study of IDP which conveys that the foreign providers' main aim in providing offshore programmes is to generate additional revenue (refer Chapter 2, section 2.14). The students who are at the bottom level of this power structure become the victims of all the tuition fee related decisions made by the international and the local parties, which are to a certain extent determined by national level economic factors.

Several lecturers emphasized the significance of funding for effective learning of students in private higher education; one part time lecturer who also works as a lecturer in a government university stated:

> Their ability to finance their education is important. Without funding they will not be able to focus on their study and would not be able to maintain quality.

A number of lecturers stated how their institutes provide scholarships to some students who excel in their studies or sports in order to support them with their learning and thereby to improve the quality of their institutes. Despite these positive factors, the findings overall suggest that the students do not receive adequate financial support as the institutes themselves face financial difficulties, which are mainly caused by national and international level factors.

Senior Managers' Perceptions

Senior managers also referred to the high royalty payments and a director revealed how high quality is associated with high cost. As he asserted, the royalty fees are very high in the highly recognized universities and if they affiliate with these universities the students will not be able to afford the course fee. This director points out how financial barriers become an obstacle to quality. He argued that the course fee should be affordable to the students but affiliating with highly recognized institutes will stop many students from following the course. From his point of view it is better to provide affordable courses of an average quality, which supports the profit oriented nature of private higher education in Sri Lanka. The above view was further confirmed by another senior manager:

> Pressure due to numbers or dollar exchange rates, it's a key factor. Because everything you have to pay in dollars and when the dollar rate goes up the local institute gets the pressure. When the pressure comes certain quality issues will arise and finally the students have to suffer (SMI8).

The national economic environment therefore creates pressures on the local institutes in terms of high foreign exchange rates, which in turn leads to these institutes lowering their quality or passing the financial pressure on to the students. Since the foreign universities' fixed charges do not adjust to fit the economic factors of various countries, this means the pressure can be seen as generated from the international level, through national level to the local level.

The Asian Development Bank (2012) report highlights that the institutes with insufficient funding have to regularly focus on the contradiction between providing high quality higher education and securing adequate profit. Thus, they seek different cost control approaches such as offering programmes that do not need expensive equipment and infrastructure and

increasing student enrolment. This is in agreement with the findings of Stephen (2007) where he reports that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka mainly offer 'Business and Information Technology or Computer Science related courses'. Several senior managers argued that cost is directly related to the quality of these private institutes in Sri Lanka. As a senior manager in Marketing elaborated:

> Quality is actually, it goes hand in hand with the cost. So it's cost sensitive to be honest, unless you have huge grants coming in like government universities. Well, if you want quality you need to pay more. Like in any product, education although you say it is a service, when it comes to the programme you are going to join it as it is like a product" (SMI2)

This view implies that since these programmes are offered in private institutes they also have to face the consequences of the private nature of the institutes. Thus, there is a tendency to treat these programmes as a commodity and thereby the students as customers of these foreign products. This view contradicts with the UNESCO view described by Giroux, Ward, Froment, and Eaton (2001) which is that higher education should not be seen as a 'commodity'; that its existence is for serving public interests.

A senior manager who handles academic affairs pointed out a consequence of putting financial pressure on students, "Financial issues matter because now there are a lot of students who do part time studies and they personally fund it and employment pressure, sometimes because of job priorities, means some students drop out" (SMQ18). As conveyed, financial pressure can have a very negative impact on the students' learning. However, several senior managers expressed how they employ different discount schemes to support students financially, for example they get discount on their fees if they introduce new students to their institute. A number of senior managers also mentioned that they provide various scholarship programmes to the students who do well in sports or studies. But as the director of one institute expressed, "We can't cater for a certain segment of the middle class because our prices are quite high" (SMQ12). He brought out a notion of 'Class' in the service of education by revealing that their programmes are not for 'lower' class groups. Furthermore, cost factors can also limit these institutes only to a few main cities in Sri Lanka, limiting their accessibility to students from remote areas. Thus, these institutes may create a geographical as well as an economic gap between students. A senior manager elaborated:

> Now most of the foreign education like what we are offering in Sri Lanka, These foreign institute based in Sri Lanka ....their student population is restricted to Colombo, Kandy, Galle, Matara or a be little bit in Jaffna. Why is that? It's because of the affordability factor. Others don't know that… even if they have money, they don't know about these (the private institutions). Or they are scared to come, they think they will not suit there" (SMI3).

As the interviewee pointed out, these market driven institutes may promote the interests of a privileged social class based on their buying power. They discard 'equity' in higher education as equity includes not only increasing access but also providing welfare to the students, including suitable financial and educational support to underprivileged and marginalized groups (World Conference on Higher Education, 2009). To an extent these senior managers' views introduce a different meaning to the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Overall, the senior managers conveyed that they provide affordable courses to a particular class of students by affiliating with the universities that these students can afford and also by providing them with some scholarships and discount schemes on their tuition fees.

Government Officials' Perceptions

Even though the government officials mentioned that financial support is necessary for the students they did not provide any detailed information in relation to financial support to students. The findings from both the questionnaire and the interview of the government officials highlighted that providing financial support to private higher education is not their priority, since government policies and legislation do not cover private higher education to a great extent. Several government officials indicated that many institutes themselves face financial difficulties when they run institutional activities and therefore these institutes find it difficult to provide financial support to the students. However, they did not elaborate on these issues or show any government commitment in relation to financial support to these students.

6.5 Teaching and Learning

The theme 'teaching and learning' is identified from the findings of the stakeholder groups to represent the following priorities for quality:

1. Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning.
2. Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes.
3. Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities
4. Positive relationships between lecturers and students.
5. Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve students' learning.
6. Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice.
7. Employability of graduates and their career prospects.

As can be seen from the above, the majority of the priorities for quality identified by the stakeholder groups fall under the theme 'teaching and learning', indicating the significance of 'teaching and learning' for the quality of these institutes. Another factor identified from the findings was that these priorities can be interrelated and this implies that in order to meet one priority the institutes might have to meet another priority.

Students' Perceptions

Several students perceived that some lecturers lack teaching skills and some of them do not adopt new teaching methods even though they are qualified. As stated by one, "Even some qualified lecturers don't use new teaching methods" (STUQ152). An interviewee confirmed this idea by stating that they use traditional teaching methods and teach only what the students need for the exam. In contrast to these students' view towards lecturers' teaching skills, a large number of students of two institutes which also hold local degree awarding status indicated that their lecturers encourage deep learning of the students. In support of this view a student who responded to the questionnaire stated "Most of the lecturers are very good. Having group classes after every lecture to discuss in depth provides us with a better understanding" (STUQ5). Thus, it appeared from the findings that the students of these two institutes are more satisfied with the delivery of lecturers than the other three selected institutes which do not hold the local degree awarding status. Even though, several students had concern regarding lecturers' teaching skills it is important to consider that fact that the students' views can be biased and such comments may also rise when the students have unrealistic expectations, a grievance or simply not be well enough prepared to appreciate the lesson. This is evident as several students pointed out that some students themselves do not have a real desire for learning with an undergraduate student stating, "It's a spoon feeding environment. The lecturer has to give all the notes, exam related notes. Students study those books and pass the exam. Only a few of us tried to do more research on the subject" (STUI6). It seems that the

teaching in these institutes reflects the following comment, "Much of our current teaching and assessment seems to induce a passive, reproductive form of learning which is contrary to the aims of the teachers themselves" (Entwistle, 1997). The students' attitudes and values towards learning also have a major impact on quality of learning and some students may not be keen on understanding the subject in depth even when the lecturers use various techniques to improve their learning. An MBA student explained his view towards learning, "My priority is to pass out and to that extent I don't actually bother too much about the degree of delivery" (STUQ135). Thus, quality of learning needs to be sought from various aspects.

Several other students indicated how the language becomes a barrier for their learning as the foreign degrees are offered in English language. An undergraduate student highlighted his difficulty in understanding the subject due to the language as:

> I could not understand the foreign lecturers' accent sometimes. Since foreign lecturers stay in the country only for a short period they do the lectures with a rapid speed. Too fast, but they cover all the content. Students have a heavy work load within a small time period (STUI7).

The student implied that not even providing qualified lecturers from the foreign countries will necessarily improve students' real understanding of the subjects if the lecturers do not provide sufficient time for learning. In support of this view Corrigan (2014) argues that the skills that the native speakers have developed by teaching in English to the native speakers of English may not necessarily mean that they can teach the students whose first language is not English. It is important that the foreign lecturers understand the social, political, cultural, economic and linguistic background of these students when they deliver lectures in their receiver countries in order to improve the quality of teaching. Pyvis (2011) also supports this view by asserting that measures of quality should be 'context-sensitive'. Another student who responded to the questionnaire further explained the language difficulty as "Language problem- I came from Jaffna, my English and Sinhala knowledge is not good. I must work hard to learn English, another weight for me" (STUQ149). The student conveyed how the geographical location also has an impact on students' learning as the main language spoken in Jaffna is Tamil language. This idea also conveys how a post-conflict situation may lead to lack of English language exposure for students from the conflict areas which makes an impact on those students' deep learning. Therefore, it is necessary that these institutes adopt appropriate teaching methods and arrangements to improve these students' learning experiences.

The findings also suggested that these priorities can be interlinked and therefore meeting one priority might achieve other priorities to some extent. According to the findings the majority of the students associated the priority 'making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities' with the priority 'encouraging learning environment' and both of these priorities were strongly linked to 'deep learning of the students'. Approximately two-thirds of student participants perceived their learning environment in the institutes as encouraging. A key reason for this, especially among postgraduate students, was because their institutes recruit qualified lecturers; as stated by one. "When they recruit lecturers they consider their experience and qualifications" (STUQ109). A full time MSc student further confirmed this by stating that they get lecturers from Sri Lankan government universities and they have about twenty years of experience in teaching. She further added that they also have foreign educated lecturers who have postgraduate qualifications and therefore they have a proper understanding of the subject materials. The findings also showed that many students valued the opportunity of learning from government university lecturers, implying that they considered the government university lecturers to be of a high quality standard.

Several students pointed out that their institutes encourage their learning by conducting free support classes. According to an undergraduate student, "There are free language classes going on at the moment. The institute provides all the facilities including books and IT facilities, even more than expected" (STUQ83). However, a postgraduate student from the same institute expressed a different view of the extent to which the institute concerned fulfilled an 'encouraging learning environment' and 'learning resources such as library facilities', by revealing that "Research resources are limited here. Recent books are not available" (STUQ88). The different perceptions held by these two students suggest that creating an 'encouraging learning environment' and the 'availability of the learning resources' can be viewed differently based on the level of the degree enrolled in. For the postgraduate student the learning environment is not encouraging as her institute does not enable her to meet the expected research requirements. However, an undergraduate student from another institute conveyed a different opinion about the learning environment of her institute arguing that,

> They think that quality is just giving foreign degrees and having AC facilities, those kind of things they think as quality. When we see the internal working they have no quality. They don't really prioritize quality (STUQ57).

A student from a different institute revealed that even though the students received many resources, their institutes did not provide them on time. For example, the student stated that some of the text books they received only one month before the exam. Another undergraduate student also perceived her institute as not creating an encouraging learning environment:

> We had a coordinator who was really not approachable. She insults us. I talked to my friends. They can't even talk. They are afraid of getting offended. We do all our assignment submissions through her. Because she is not approachable it puts a lot of stress on us. We are afraid of speaking to her even to get something done. When we tell the truth she does not believe us. She lost our assignments and still we haven't recovered them (STUI7).

The above finding demonstrates how different students view the implementation and the maintenance of priorities for quality in different ways indicating that quality can be subjective to their various expectations of these institutes and their programmes. The above quote also conveys the significance of services for quality of higher education and thereby supports the view of Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) that teaching and learning as well as the services that the institutes provide to students are significant and both of these two processes are needed to bring a holistic nature to quality (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.2).

This different nature of quality was further strengthened by some female students. These undergraduate and postgraduate students revealed that cultural factors sometimes hinder their opportunities for learning. For example, a female postgraduate student indicated that unlike males they are not allowed to stay longer hours in the library at night. Several other female students highlighted that sometimes they are refrained from outside training of certain tasks which involve 'men's jobs' for instance, certain engineering or construction related work.

When questioned about the students' relationships with lecturers the majority of the students revealed that their relationship with the lecturers are fairly cordial. An undergraduate student in support of this view stated that he is really happy with the relationship that he has with these lecturers because about 95 percent of the lecturers are ready to help them anytime when they have a problem with their assignments (STUI3). However, an undergraduate student revealed that her institute did not maintain proper arrangements to retain lecturers on continuous basis and as he put it:

> They promised lots of things before I join the courses. Getting this and that... but it wasn't like that and certain modules were put back, delayed because they were not having suitable lecturers, some of them left in the middle of the course. They were changing continuously.

Another student also expressed concerns about lack of lecturer continuity: "Almost excellent but a lecturer must be fixed to a batch of students till the end of the course" (STUQ112). As the findings suggested the learning environment will not be encouraging if the institutes do not attempt to remediate these academic issues. However, this problem is not limited to the private institutes of Sri Lanka and it may be seen in other South Asian developing countries. Singh (2012) reveals that one basic problem is that the higher education institutes in India face the issue of 'poor faculty and inadequate faculty staff'. Therefore it is necessary to understand this problem in a wider context as to what causes these issues.

A large number of students identified lack of guidance in relation to student assessment as a barrier for their studies. In support of this view a student stated:

> The biggest issue being the UK invigilator rejecting our assignments. Therefore as mentioned earlier students need more guidance with examples to successfully submit the assignments and avoiding delays resulting in resubmissions and dragging out of the programme (STUI2).

The student findings indicated that the lecturers should provide them with proper guidance and constructive feedback in class which would enable the students to do their assignments accurately. The foreign verifiers could also provide more constructive feedback to the students when marking assignments so that the students will not repeat those errors and will learn the correct methods of doing assignments. After all, there should be ways to improve learning in the future in feedback and to become effective the feedback should improve students' thinking (Mikre, 2010). It is necessary to solve this issue immediately because this issue may also lead to other issues as several students stated that some students get their assignments done by other people. A fulltime Master's student asserted, "The quality of a degree depends on who does the work as now close to 80 percent of tasks are outsourced. The no 1 priority should be making sure who does the assignment" (STUQ144). This unethical activity of outsourcing assignments by some students can be seen as a consequence of their lack of understanding of writing a proper assignment which was in turn caused by lack of guidance from the institutes or the foreign examiners and the pressures arising from the foreign examiners in terms of

assignment resubmission. It is necessary that the home university provides proper training to the lecturers and the tutors of these institutes in Sri Lanka. As the study of Pyvis (2011) reports, the instances of student plagiarism decreased when the Chinese tutors were given proper training with regard to assessment by immersing them in the courses provided at the home universities during their training in the home university. As these findings convey, the quality of teaching has a major impact on the quality of student work.

The students constantly linked the quality priority 'providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice' to the quality priority 'Employability of graduates and their career prospects', indicating the significance perceived of the relationship between curriculum and employability of the students. Many students viewed their courses positively in this sense, as job oriented and providing practical knowledge which makes their graduates employable both locally and internationally; as one commented, "The curriculum and the education provided by the course content and its learning outcomes is relevant to the current job market in Sri Lanka and overseas in my opinion" (STUI4). This view was confirmed by another, asserting that "The institute encourages self-learning methods and we follow a pattern of gaining practical knowledge" (STUQ21). However, several students argued that their curriculum is designed to meet the provider country's requirements so does not fully meet the requirements of Sri Lanka. They supported the view of Tilak (2011) that these foreign degrees are more relevant to careers in foreign countries than the job market in developing countries (see Chapter 2, section 2.14.1) In support of this view an undergraduate student who follows an American degree elaborated that the text books were not related to Sri Lanka and even though general discussions happen in class about Sri Lanka, this does not adequately relate the subject to Sri Lanka. She further added that it would be more useful if the text books were related to Sri Lanka and not to the foreign countries. Another final year undergraduate student pointed out that it is difficult to relate foreign curriculum to Sri Lanka in some instances by indicating that:

> We learn all theory based on how it's executed abroad, ranging from laws to practices. And when we go to do our practicum, we discover that surprisingly nothing we learnt applies here. Because we are not taught from a Sri Lankan perspective (STUQ105).

Although not the majority view held by the student participants, the perception that merely including both theory and practice in the curriculum does not encourage employability within the country if these programmes failed to relate the curriculum to Sri Lankan work environment, must be seen as valid. These students suggest that the foreign universities which

engage in cross border higher education should consider the national level requirements and customize their programmes to help their graduates be employable within their own country. In support of this view Stella (2011) states that some Australian universities engaged in cross border delivery specifically designed the curriculum for receiver countries in order to support the capacity development of these countries. She further adds that in such situations they even changed teaching techniques, evaluation, and standards of entry.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that even though several students had concerns regarding lecturers' teaching skills, many students considered that their lecturers encourage deep learning. However, they asserted that the lecturers' feedback on student assessment needs to be improved. The students also pointed out that the students' real willingness to learn also has an impact on students' deep learning. The majority of the students indicated that their learning environment is encouraging though the extent that it is encouraging can be different based on their expectations of the programme and the institute. Furthermore, the gender and cultural factors were seen as factors that can hinder the learning of women.

Lecturers' Perceptions

The lecturers' questionnaire included four Likert scale type statements[19] (refer Appendix O section 4) which provided the lecturers' views on their implementation of several activities related to their teaching (see Chart 6.2). A large number of lecturers (96 percent) agreed that they provide constructive feedback to their students and the majority of the lecturers (99 percent) also agreed that they have a positive relationship with their students indicating that the lecturers take seriously the need to maintain quality of their academic activities. It appears from the findings that the lecturers of these institutes also encourage the students to do research work as 75 percent of the lecturers agreed with the third statement. However, only 49 percent of the lecturers agreed that they use computer software to check plagiarism. This could indicate lack of availability of such software in the institutes concerned.

[19] Statement 1. I provide constructive feedback to students on their work and academic performances.
Statement 2. I have a positive relationship with my students
Statement 3. I encourage students to do research work
Statement 4. I use computer software to check plagiarism in students' assignments and other students' work which carry marks for the course.

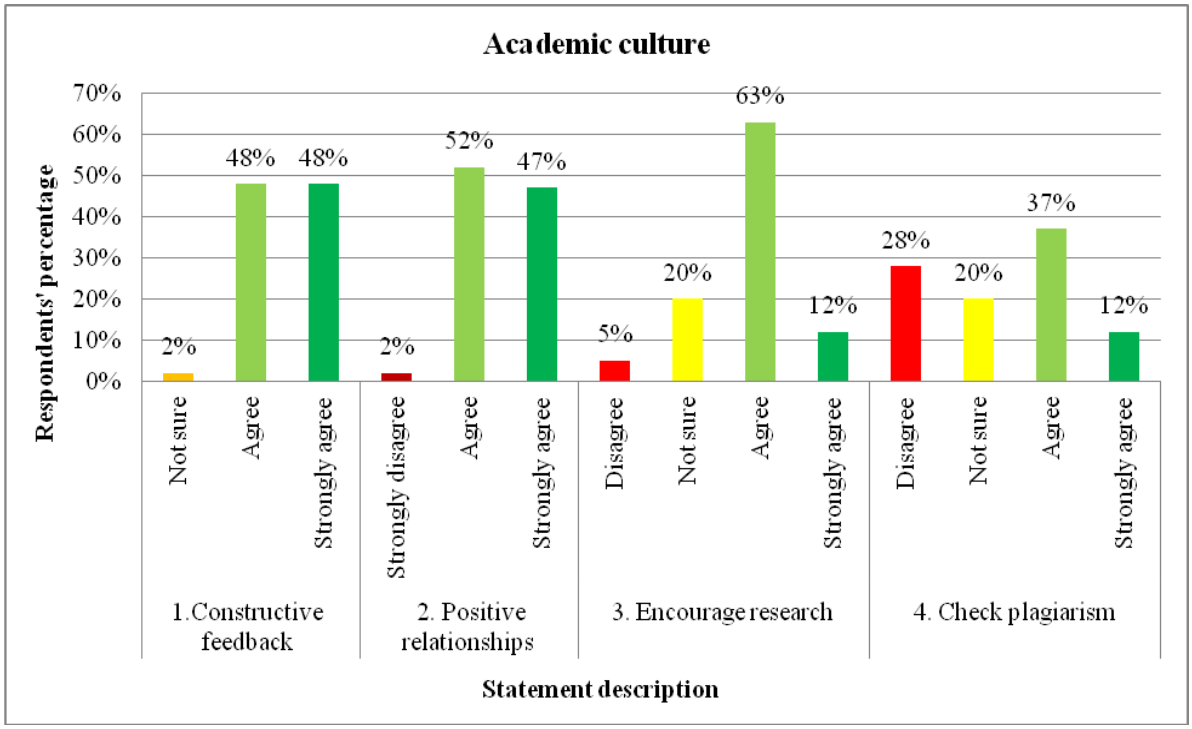

Chart 6.2 Academic culture of the institutes

The findings obtained from the open ended questions of the questionnaire and the interviews are presented in this section to understand the above findings in depth. These findings revealed that the duration of the delivery of lectures to post graduate students can be a barrier for the students' deep learning. The lecturers of the foreign universities visit these institutes and deliver lectures to the students within a very short period of time and the students are under pressure to learn an excess of material which exceeds their absorbing power. A full time lecturer put it as:

> Since the foreign lecture panel deliver lectures only within a limited time period the students get stressed and they are overloaded with work. This affects quality of the degree (LECQ44).

Another lecturer who participated in the interview further elaborated this idea by stating that the foreign lecturers complete a subject within five days in Sri Lanka since they stay only about five days in Sri Lanka whereas they deliver lectures for the same subject over a longer period of time in their home universities. The lecturer, by referring to master's students, stated how these students are expected to absorb the subject knowledge within a short time. On top of that the students also engage in employment during the day and they have to attend lectures at night. The lecturer pointed out how the processes which are designed to improve quality of

learning themselves can obstruct students' deep learning if the lectures are not arranged in an appropriate manner.

However, the findings also revealed that the outcome also depends on the students' real desire for learning and understanding the concepts. As a lecturer commented, "Some students only want to get an MSc rather than improving their knowledge" (LECI4). This issue was further emphasized as follows:

> They should really identify what they want, then we can give them a quality education, then we can develop successful students or people for the nation. They come here only for the title. So some people want to get an A, there are others who are looking for a title they are going for D. We have to recruit first the real 'wanters', that is, the keen students (LECI1).

The findings suggest that some learners' values and attitudes towards learning need to be developed in order to improve the quality of learning in these institutes. The lecturers should consider this matter and adopt necessary teaching techniques to correct these students' attitudes. This can also assist the institutes in reducing the knowledge gaps between the students with the same qualification.

Several lecturers identified regular meetings of the staff and even meetings together with their branch institute or institutes, lecture training programmes and workshops as some of the good practices employed by these institutes in order to develop techniques to improve students' learning. In support of this view one lecturer commented on how his teaching is improved through training programmes to cater to the need of the students. As he pointed out he obtained presentation skills and new techniques to mentor students. The lecturer further added that the lecturers become more qualified during their training programmes and as a result they provide more student centred learning to the students.

A full time lecturer who delivers lecturers to the masters students asserted that they encourage small group discussions to ensure that the students have understood the subject. The lecturer elaborated this idea further:

> And at the end of each and every topic, we are doing some small assessment, tutorials and things, again refreshing. So the examination, the assessment system, is

> nicely moderating, what you call modifying students' learning to a perfect target ... really helpful for the student's performance as well (LECI4).

This approach appears as a good practice that fosters student engagement and constructive dialogue between the lecturers and the students.

Both full time and part time lecturers identified hiring lecturers from the government universities as creating an encouraging learning environment for the students. They perceived this practice to raise the quality of students' learning when taught by well trained and experienced lecturers. Some lecturers in identifying implementation of quality in relation to teaching in a comparative manner by referring to the government universities, reinforce the extent to which the foreign degree awarding institutes, being private institutes, constantly compare their activities with the quality aspects of the government universities.

Several lecturers revealed the perception that cross border delivery of programmes can bring some barriers for positive relationships between the students and the foreign lecturers. A full time lecturer who conducts lectures for a master's degree programme highlighted this issue:

> There should be a backup or alternate lecturer in case the main visiting lecturer is unable to give the lecture. Such a situation was faced by our institute when a visiting lecturer had to return to her home country when her mother fell ill. The students had to wait 2 months to be taught by the replacement lecturer (LECI4).

The lecturer in the interview conveyed that the foreign providers should be more prepared for unexpected situations in order to maintain the trust of students of these institutes in Sri Lanka. In support of this view Stella (2011) reveals that when institutes depend too often on contract or casual staff there can be a negative impact on student learning environment with regard to the continuation overtime and across the institution. Some lecturers may not like to work overseas due to reasons such as being away from their families for a certain period, time spent on flying and health and safety considerations (Pyvis, 2011) and these factors can also contribute to the issue discussed above.

The lecturers' major concern when assessing students' work was about the students' tendency to plagiarize their work. As some lecturers revealed, their institutes do not have proper mechanisms to overcome this problem. A full time lecturer who responded to the questionnaire pointed out that "Some students get their assignments done by others, but the

institute does not have a proper mechanism to avoid these things". It appeared from the findings that the lecturers focus only on the issue of plagiarism itself and do not attempt to identify the reason for this unethical behavior of students. They do not attempt to identify whether their feedback on students' work is constructive or whether the students are satisfied with the lecturers' assessment of their work. It appeared from the findings that there is a gap between students' and lecturers' perceptions in this regard.

As the findings reveal, a large number of lecturers perceived that the curriculum offered in the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka meets the local as well as the international demands and the curriculum being internationally recognized is important. In support of this view a part time lecturer stated, "So if you look at the quality of our curriculum it is addressing for the local demand, as well as for the international demand" (LECQ57).

Overall, the findings revealed that even though these institutes maintain a certain level of quality in teaching and learning aspects they should focus on the aspects of 'student plagiarism' and the 'duration of the delivery of lectures by the foreign lecturers' in order to assure high standards in teaching and students' learning. The findings also indicated the students' real desire for learning has an impact on the quality of student learning.

Senior Managers' Perceptions

Senior managers had various viewpoints about the implementation and the maintenance of the quality of 'teaching and learning' in their institutes. One (SMQ17) stated that they provide local as well as overseas training to their lecturers in order to improve their teaching skills. Several senior managers also stated that they provide English support classes to the students who have difficulty in writing and understanding in English to ensure quality. However, the transparency of teaching activities of some of these institutes was a concern for some of the senior managers. In support of this view a senior manager indicated that in some instances the lecturers who were approved by their foreign provider to deliver the lectures do not actually deliver the lectures to the students. The lectures may be delivered by other lecturers who are less qualified than them or by lecturers who are not specialized in that subject area. Institute decisions such as these can have an impact on the students' overall learning and thereby to the quality of the output.

Several senior managers suggested overload of work for lecturers as a barrier for students' learning. A senior manager who participated in the interview highlighted how his institute expects their lecturers to teach an unreasonable number of modules per term. As he indicated,

this prevents students from getting exposed to the academics who have a profound knowledge in various subjects since one lecturer does not possess expertise in all the subjects. Furthermore, the learning environment becomes monotonous for the students. He added: "The students later on come and tell us 'you know this lecturer …there is only one lecturer who teaches every subject' (SMI8). According to this manager the lecturers deliver lectures on some subjects that they do not have a proper knowledge since the management wants them to conduct those lectures and this also overloads them with work. Another senior manager supported this idea by conveying how the quality of teaching is deteriorated in some institutes due to lack of lecturers in particular study areas. The lecturers who end with less job satisfaction may have a negative impact on the students' overall learning.

Several senior managers pointed out another important issue in terms of the learning environment; how the institutes provide different learning environments to students based on their gender. By supporting several students' views towards 'learning in connection with gender and culture', these managers pointed out that the learning environment may not be as encouraging to the female students as to the male students, due to gender and cultural barriers. A male senior manager in Marketing asserted:

> Cultural barriers. For example, Sri Lanka is a multi-religious country where in some parts culture plays a major role in the lives of people. In terms of education, students are sometimes barred from participating in collective activities or outside training activities due to cultural barriers. Especially women are more restricted in Sri Lanka. Women do not have the same professed rights as males. Some institutes do not allow female students to even stay for research purpose after 9pm due to security reasons. Males can stay 24*7 (SMI9).

As this senior manager implies even though the male and female students study the same courses and face the same assessments, the female students receive less time for study preparation from these institutes due to cultural factors. The national level cultural factors make a major impact on the decisions of the local level in relation to student learning. Being a Sri Lankan myself I can provide an example from my personal experience where I was prevented from training outside in a hotel school certificate course in one of the private hotel schools in Sri Lanka. The lecturer asked in the class who wants to participate in a very short training programme in one of the hotels in Sri Lanka. I was the only girl in the class, but I was the first person to raise my hand. The lecturer told me "Sorry, we usually do not send girls for

outside training" and I slowly put my hand down. It is evident from these instances that the learning environment may not be encouraging to female students due to cultural barriers.

These gender and culture based factors discussed above appear to contradict a statement of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights discussed in chapter 2 of the thesis (see section 2.2) where it emphasizes that it is not acceptable to exclude anyone on the basis of age, gender, race, language, religion or any social or economic conditions when 'granting access to higher education' (World Conference on Higher Education, 1998). It is evident from the findings that these institutes tend to exclude female students from 'access to learning' in some instances due to cultural and gender barriers prevalent in Sri Lanka, even though they grant admission to the female students to these programmes.

Two Likert scale questions were designed in the questionnaire (refer Appendix P, section 6) to investigate the senior managers' views on creating an encouraging learning environment for the students[20]. The results showed that all the senior managers agreed that their lecturers were well qualified and experienced with 52 percent of them strongly agreeing. The majority of the senior managers (95 percent) also agreed that the students have the facility of accessing the management staff easily. Thus, the senior managers implied that the learning environment for the students is encouraging in terms of provision of competent lecturers and a supportive management.

In relation to other teaching and learning issues, several senior managers viewed out sourcing of assignments by the students as a barrier for student assessment and learning and also a major issue for the institutes. A head of a faculty expressed his view in this relation by stating:

> So then students ask their friends to do the assignments and the big issue is they are paying outsiders to do the assignment… some people are paying Rs.10, 000 to do the assignments. But the students don't know anything about the subjects but they get the final certification so if they go for industry then there will be problem (SMI4).

[20] Statement one: We have a well qualified and experienced body of lecturers.
Statement two: The management staff are readily available to the students.

Another senior manager indicated that they conduct exams to minimize such unethical activities with assignments and as he highlighted exams are crucial because if there are no exams the students can get their assignment done by other people and he further added "that's how we adapt our programme according to our country" (SMI6). The senior manager pointed out that even though they follow the curriculum of their foreign providers they make adjustments to the curriculum to meet the requirements of Sri Lanka. Many senior managers agreed that they make minor changes to the curriculum offered by the home universities and one head of a faculty also highlighted that institutes which have the right to amend the home universities' curriculum when they offer it in Sri Lanka are the most suitable institutes. As he put it: "very hard to say whether a European degree is better or Sri Lankan degree or Indian degree because the institution that has the right to amend or change the syllabus as soon as possible is the best college" (SMQ16).

However, a senior manager who holds a position in marketing stated that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka cannot provide the conditions that enable teachers and students to meet the standards of the curriculum of the home universities. The senior manager argued "The simplest explanation is that while students abroad get the exposure directly from the sources who have developed the curriculum students abroad [Sri Lanka] will only learn from a secondary source" (SMI2). This idea suggests that the students of these institutes may miss some important aspects of learning when a programme crosses borders to a developing country like Sri Lanka. Despite that, the senior managers stated that the employability of the graduates of these institutes is high since the curriculum includes both the theory and the practical components. In support of this view a director asserted "By offering courses which provide theoretical and practical knowledge, we help to improve their soft skills. Our lecturers are mainly PhD holders with many years of experience" (SMQ3).

Overall, the findings suggest that these courses, which may fail to meet the same quality level as in their home universities, still have enough strength to meet local as well as international job requirements due to the adaptability of the curriculum. The findings also revealed that these institutes should focus on the job satisfaction of the lecturers by reducing their workload. They identified gender and culture as factors which can obstruct the learning process of the female students. There was also a concern about student assessment in terms of the outsourcing of assignments by the students.

Government Officials' Perceptions

Several government officials spoke in disagreement with these institutes' practice of hiring government university lecturers, within their government university working hours, to improve these students' learning and to build the image of and prestige of these institutes. One (GOVI2) emphasized how this practice can have an impact on the students of government universities when their resources are bought by the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka:

> Most of the academics in Sri Lanka think they are independent. As far as academic freedom goes they are independent but they are given government public tax payers' money. So they should work at least eight hours, but most of them are working much less. Most of those lecturers while not doing their official work at their university, work with foreign institutions. Is it ethically right? If the institute or CEO of the institute encourages that kind of behavior, I don't think he wants to maintain quality, he wants to earn money.

This very senior government official conveyed the complex nature of quality and how quality may encounter contradictions based on different stakeholder perspectives, aims and goals. As several government officials believed, providing an encouraging learning environment to the students of these institutes by hiring government university lecturers to improve quality may not necessarily bring out quality across the wider system. As in the story of 'the blind men and the elephant' each stakeholder group perceives the implementation of quality only through their own lens, suggesting that they need to look through a kaleidoscope. This practice of working in both government and private institutes concurrently was also evident in the Indonesian context; Welch (2007) reported that many of the lecturers put more effort and time into their second job than focusing on their primary position with the government universities. As Welch pointed out, that this is the case in Indonesia is mainly due to poor remuneration of the academic staff in government universities.

Many government officials did not consider that the facilities and the resources of the foreign degree awarding institutes are satisfactory. A senior government official described the variance between the degrees of the home universities and the institutes of Sri Lanka:

> The facilities available in Sri Lankan institutes are comparatively very low with respect to the foreign universities at their home country. Here the facilities mean

> both human and physical resources available for the students in the institutions (GOVI5).

The view of many officials was that since the students do not receive adequate facilities and resources, the learning environment may not be encouraging to the students and this issue may have an impact on the students' learning. As a government official mentioned, "Most of these places don't have permanent faculty. They depend on temporary staff who come from outside" (GOVQ17). As implied, in order to provide quality teaching and learning many of these institutes should develop a practice of recruiting full time staff so that the faculties get more stable while also providing more access of lecturers to the students.

Several government officials also asserted that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka do not offer a variety of study areas and mainly provide easy and less expensive programmes rather than meeting the real needs of the country. They argued that these institutes are primarily money oriented and do not encourage students' learning in hard sciences. A senior official involved in policy making of higher education supported this view:

> They don't have staff doing research, they don't encourage it and they have no money for it. In Colombo and other places they are attracted by the advertisements. They invest in IT labs and give IT degrees, but not hard stuff like Engineering. Wherever they can interface with IT devices they do it (GOVI3).

The evidence from Stephen (2007) revealed these institutes in Sri Lanka mainly offered subjects in Information Technology and Business related areas which were matched with the job market trends of Sri Lanka. Thus it appears from the findings from the government officials and Stephens that many of these institutes mainly focus on the labour market and ignore the hard sciences which can help immensely with the scientific development of a developing country like Sri Lanka.

The government officials also focused on the curriculum of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, as a senior government official stated, "Most of the institutes do not have facilities to provide practical components of the curriculum" (GOVQ15). This official asserts that including practical components to the curriculum cannot improve students' learning if the institutes do not have adequate facilities to provide the practical components which are included in the curriculum.

Another government official expressed the view that these institutes mainly focus on employability of the graduates and they sometimes do not concentrate on the overall development of the students as human beings and their adaptability to the society. The official argued:

> I know most of the places you don't get all these things. You have a classroom and teachers and they do the training part …sometimes they are not interested much in attitudes, they are interested only in developing soft skills, to develop a man who could easily find a job, but whether that man is fitting to the society is not of a question of these private places (GOVI6).

As the official conveyed, these institutes also have to focus on the overall development of the students rather than making graduates only for employability. Another senior government official further highlighted the implementation of quality of learning through cross border arrangements in comparison with the government universities, "foreign institutes focused on only the job market while Sri Lankan universities try to produce a graduate with wide knowledge about the subject" (GOVQ10).

The perception that the standards of the government universities are higher than the foreign degree awarding institutes can thus be seen as widespread and embedded in the belief that they produce graduates with wider knowledge about their area of studies and skills and values that fit them for the Sri Lankan context, rather than just the immediate requirements of the labour market. This suggests that the foreign degree awarding institutes need to broaden their focus to include students' knowledge development and their personal development.

Overall, the government officials indicated that the quality of these institutes in relation to teaching and learning should be improved and they should be up to the standards of the government universities. They demonstrated several criticisms against these institutes and these mainly included lack of full time staff, facilities and resources, lack of a variety of programmes and the hiring of government university lecturers during their university working hours.

6.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter six presented and discussed the findings from the students, lecturers, senior managers and the government officials in relation to their perceptions of how the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality. The four themes which are 'quality evaluations and verifications', 'student admission', 'financial support' and 'teaching and learning' assisted in understanding the students', lecturers', senior managers' and the government officials' various similar and differing perceptions of quality. Key findings were as follows:

- Several students and senior managers pointed out that external verification of some institutes may not be reliable as these institutes claim as they do not present the reality of the institute to the foreign providers.
- All the four stakeholder groups also believed that the quality of degrees in the home university is higher than the same degrees offered in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.
- Many lecturers and the senior managers thought that the institutes maintain quality in student admission. However, several students and government officials believed that these institutes may sometimes enroll ineligible students, due to their market driven approach towards higher education. Several government officials' responses also raised the issue of quality and equity in relation to student admission as these institutes cater mainly to the rich students who can afford to pay their tuition fees.
- Several lecturers and senior managers revealed that their institutes are unable to provide much financial support to the students since they have to pay a large sum of money to the foreign provider as the royalty fee.
- Several students perceived that their tuition fees are high even though the senior managers think that they charge a reasonable fee from the students.
- Government officials stated that several institutes face financial difficulties and therefore they are unable to provide financial support to the students.
- The majority of the students perceived that their learning environment is encouraging and many lecturers also supported their view. However, several students and senior managers thought the learning environment may be more encouraging for male than female students due to cultural issues of gender.
- Although both students and the lecturers identified hiring government university lecturers as part-time lecturers in their institutes raised the quality of teaching and

learning, several government officials disagreed with this practice, stating that hiring them during their government university working hours is unethical.

- A large number of students, lecturers and the senior managers believed that the curriculum of their institutes provides both theory and practical knowledge and they also cater to the local as well to the international job requirements. Some government officials viewed this differently, stating that these institutes focus too much on the job market rather than the students' personal and knowledge development.
- Several students, lecturers and senior managers identified outsourcing of assignment tasks as a serious issue in students' assessments, with several students pointing out a lack of guidance from the lecturers in relation to their assessment and assignment writing as a major cause for this problem.

Chapter 7 Integration, Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This study focused on how quality is understood by various stakeholders of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka and their consequences to various groups. The purpose is to understand what matters as quality in relation to these institutes in order to improve it. The dimensions of quality: 'definitions', 'purposes', 'practices' and the 'implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality' framed the study to answer the key research questions of the study.

This chapter reflects on the research problem described in chapter one and provides a response to the overarching research question: '*How is 'quality' understood, by whom, with what consequences for whom in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?* by detailing conclusions to the two key research questions and their sub questions. The chapter is organised in two parts. The first part of the chapter discusses a pressure cooker model as a way of conceptualizing quality with regard to this study and provides conclusions in relation to the research questions based on the research findings discussed in chapter 5 and 6. The second part of this chapter discusses the contribution of this research and provides recommendations for the key stakeholder groups of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. The key limitations of this study are then described, followed by suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with a concluding note.

7.2 Conceptualizing Quality as a Pressure Cooker Model

It was decided that the dimensions of quality which form the overarching research question can be better discussed in the form of a pressure cooker (refer Figure 7.1). Section 2.11 set the theoretical background for this model. This model discussed below provides an understanding of how the dimensions of quality relate to each other, how the gaps created by the issues arising and how the pressure created by them signals through the pressure cooker whistle sound. If this negative pressure is kept unattended the outcome will be an outburst of low quality within these institutes.

Model Description

Existing definitions and the purposes become molded, and new definitions and purposes are created, due to the influence of the stakeholder groups (refer Figure 7.1). This influence of the stakeholder groups may vary based on their salience as highlighted in section 2.3.2. Pressure may be directly created on the system as a result of the influence of the definitions and the purposes. The practices also can create pressure on the system when they do not match with the intended definitions or purposes of quality. During the implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality the practices either can get changed or new practices may arise. The outcome of practices can be positive or negative and direct pressure can be exerted onto the system.

The perceptions of students and professionals may have an impact on the implementation and maintenance of the priorities for quality and the key issues arising from their differing perceptions will also create pressure on the system. As is shown in the model, the various gaps created cause difficulties for the institutes and as this pressure increases it can pass on pressure at the level of implementation at any time. The pressure which emerges makes a whistle sound and announces to the relevant parties that it needs to be checked and the problems need to be rectified. For example the student feedback, complaints, or external verifiers' reports of these institutes may announce these issues indicating that they need to be solved. If the relevant parties did not solve these issues the outcome will be low quality provision of higher education, which means that the implementation is deficient with respect to definitions and purposes. When the pressure is attended to by the relevant stakeholders or the institutes, and when they identify and implement the solutions to those issues, then their quality improves. The 'Plan, Do, Check, Action cycle (PDCA)' (Refer section 2.5) is also applied to the pressure cooker model in order to plan, implement and check the activities of these institutes and thereby help with the above process. By applying the PDCA the right processes for the institutes can be identified within the pressure cooker model and once these right whistles are identified the quality improves or manages.

The stakeholder groups continuously provide ideas and suggestions from their perspectives, and as mentioned before to what extent that they use each viewpoint depends on their salience, that is 'power, legitimacy, and urgency'. As the findings suggest the foreign providers and the senior managers tend to have more power in relation to these institutes. The foreign providers hold power since they can cancel their programmes at any given time if they are unhappy with the education service of these institutes. They also conduct external quality verification of these institutes and thereby hold power to influence them. Even though, the students hold a lot

of power at the time of their enrolment for a program their power get lessened to some extent once their monetary obligation is fulfilled. This power gets transferred to the management level. This power relationship also implies a sign of the market driven approach where the person who has the financial strength holds more power in the Sri Lankan context. However, the students exhibit their remaining power by creating pressure to the system and to cite one example as illustrated in the findings they make complaints to the management about lack of diversity in lecturers as one lecturer covers too many subjects. The government officials also hold more power since the government can abolish or put constraints to these institutes at any given time by imposing law and policies if the government believes that it is necessary. The lecturers can put pressure on the institutes through their students to make the necessary changes and thus they indirectly hold some power.

Legitimacy is another important component of salience and it appears that the foreign providers hold more legitimacy in relation to these institutes since these institutes are mostly monitored by the foreign providers. The government seems to show some legitimacy by indicating that these institute should recruit more qualified students in order to help more qualified graduates to contribute to the development of the country by means of social justice. Senior managers themselves hold a greater legitimacy to make significant decisions and also to make the necessary changes to their institutes. In terms of urgency, the foreign providers' and the government's claims are considered as urgent since they decide the survival of these institutes. The higher ranking senior managers claims are considered urgent as they also represent a greater power. Students' claims are also considered important to some extent as the institutes depend on tuition fees. The lecturers may maintain a sense of urgency in the academic related areas. Thus, the ideas of these stakeholder groups are considered based on their salience. Then, within the system, the same procedures explained before for implementation of priorities for quality occur and this process will continue.

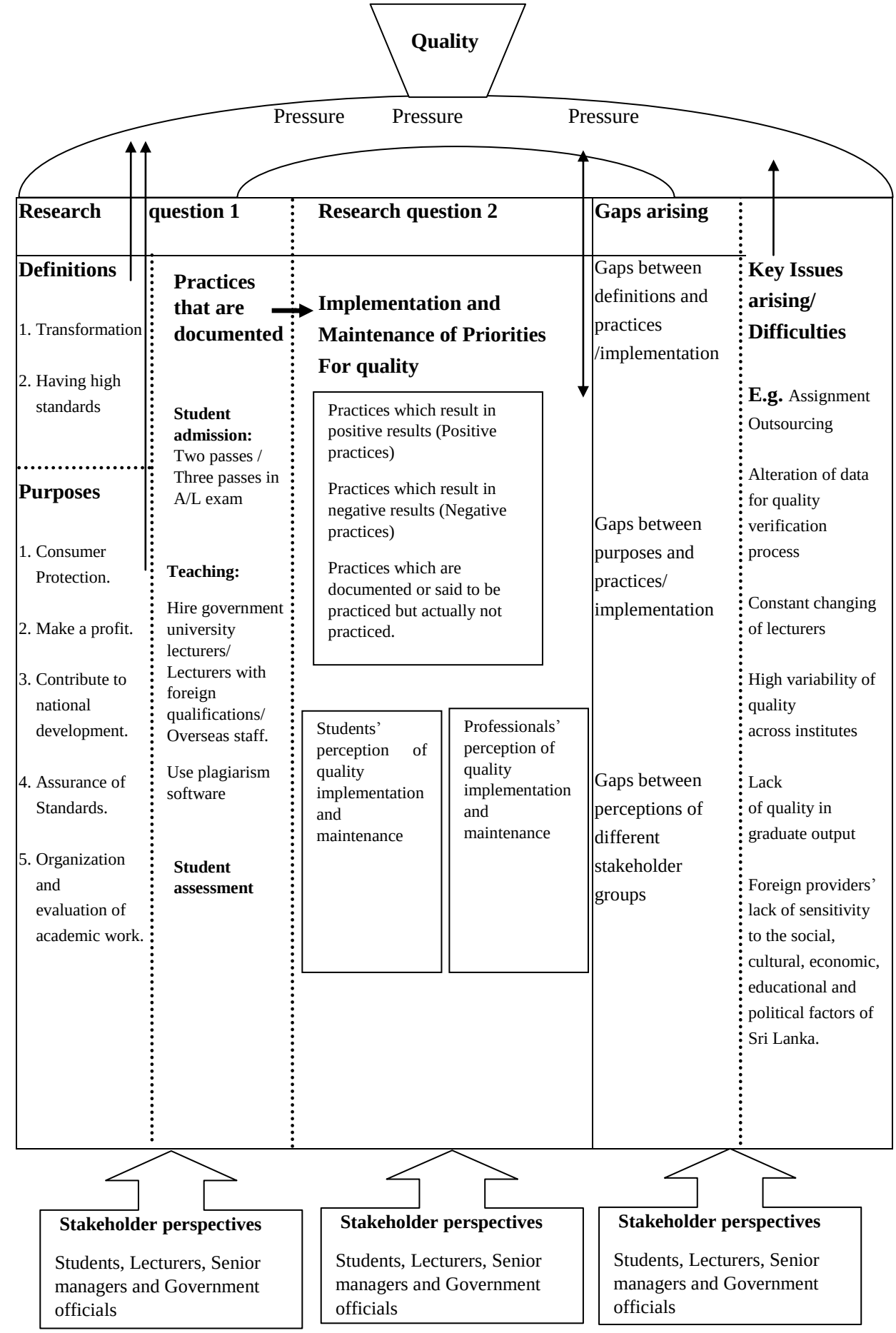

Figure 7.1: Pressure Cooker Model

7.3 Understanding stakeholders' perceptions of quality in the context of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka

The sub research questions that shape the overarching research question need to be considered in order to understand how quality is understood by the selected stakeholder groups. This section details the conclusions in response to the research questions while integrating the key findings discussed in chapter five and six to the pressure cooker model where it is necessary.

7.3.1 Conclusions

Research Question One:

The following section provides several concluding thoughts to the first research question "What definitions, purposes and practices are associated with the term 'quality' by foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?" while also addressing its two sub questions.

Main definitions

Chapter five discussed the various definitions of quality within the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka by demonstrating the elusive nature of quality. As the findings revealed, the stakeholders preferred 'transformation' and 'having high standards' as their most frequently used definitions of quality. A question arising with respect to the definition of quality 'transformation' is the amount of transformation that the students undergo? Some students will transform themselves by working hard, by having a serious commitment towards learning, while the others try to find the easy way out. Social and cultural factors may also contribute to the different levels of transformation. For instance, the gender factor can be an obstacle for learning of the female students in some circumstances (section 6.5). These gaps in the implementation of quality demonstrate that the level of achieving the definition of quality as 'transformation' is also subject to external forces, such as gender and culture. The standard of student admission and teaching also contribute to the level of transformation of the students (sections 6.3 and 6.5).

The definition of quality 'having high standards' also appeared to be blurred in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. A major issue with regard to this definition was identifying 'what the high standard is', as various stakeholder groups perceived high standards in different ways (Chapters 5 and 6) supporting the view that quality is a highly debatable term. The participants' responses showed differences among these various

stakeholder groups in terms of the standards of teaching, learning, assessment and student admission (Chapter 6). It is necessary to develop clear and proper communication between the stakeholder groups to decide what is acceptable and what is not in order to avoid creating negative pressure on the system.

The stakeholders' understanding of quality as 'an outcome of financial strength' is also worth considering as it brought out many inconsistencies like the other two definitions of quality: 'transformation' and 'having high standards'. The data analysis of the study showed that even though some senior managers identified 'value for money' as a most frequent definition of quality in relation to these institutes, several of the five institutes studied did not provide sufficient resources and research facilities and books (see section 6.5) raising the question whether real value for the money that the students paid was provided. As all the four stakeholder groups indicated, the limited financial capacity of these institutes also prevented them from providing a high quality education with facilities and resources which are high in standard. Thus, gaps were created between the definition of quality 'value for money' and the implementation of the priorities for quality. Furthermore, the consumers were neither protected nor received a benefit compensatory with their investment.

Different definitions identified demonstrate how the meaning of quality in higher education of Sri Lanka has somewhat changed with the development of foreign higher education in Sri Lanka. The stakeholders put more emphasis on factors such as 'meeting foreign providers' standards' and 'relevance of foreign curriculum to local needs' in their definitions of quality as this type of higher education mainly involves cross border activities. The stakeholders were also more concerned about the social, cultural and economic relevance of these foreign programmes and this aspect of compatibility was key to them when describing the quality of these institutes. This conceptualization of quality is a new aspect that has somewhat shifted the traditional meanings attached to the quality of public higher education which has a monopoly over the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. Thus, these findings filled a gap with regard to definitions of quality in higher education of Sri Lanka while also demonstrating how quality may have different meanings in different contexts.

Purposes of quality

The five themes that described the top purposes of quality include 'To Provide Knowledge and Skills Relevant to National Development, Consumer Protection, Assurance of Standards, To Make a Profit and Organization and Evaluation of Academic Work'. These purposes represent a wide area ranging from student learning at the local level to national development while

demonstrating the institutes' accountability to various groups such as students, government, and employers. It was also found that these purposes can be interdependent at some point since quality is an obscure term. It was also interesting to see how the purposes of quality were greatly related to the definitions of quality provided by the stakeholders (Chapter 5).

Main practices

Chapter five (see section 5.4) described the main practices associated with the term 'quality' and they were linked to the themes 'student admission, teaching, student assessment and quality assurance'. Practices related to teaching, student assessment and internal and external verification revealed that these institutes have documented several good practices to improve their quality and this creates a positive image of the institutes demonstrating a certain level of quality to the stakeholders. However, having various entry levels to student admission in undergraduate programmes implies a certain level of disparity among the knowledge levels of students. Overall, many practices documented showed a certain level of alignment with the definitions and purposes of quality identified by the respondents.

Research Question Two:

This section provides a response to the second research question "What are students' and professionals' perceptions of the ways the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain the priorities for quality in their institutes?" while also covering its two sub questions.

Chapter six discussed the students' and the professionals' perceptions of how these institutes implement and maintain the priorities for quality. Many students conveyed the existing gaps between definitions, purposes and the implementation of priorities for quality. Quality assurance does not merely become a local and national level expectation in cross border provision of programmes and its requirements and expectations go beyond borders. As several students perceived some of these institutes are sometimes unable to meet these multi-level expectations and therefore they deviate from their said practices in order to survive in a challenging environment (see section 6.2) and thus, exhibit lack of genuine accountability to their respective foreign providers. On top of that, as explained in section 6.2, the students may be pressurized to give positive feedback about their institutes rather than protecting their rights. Thus, some of these institutes knowingly or unknowingly deviate from their said definitions, purposes and the practices of quality and thereby create pressure on the system as it is shown in the pressure cooker model indicating that high quality is threatened. On top of this, as several students revealed, some students themselves deviate from the definition of

quality ‘having high standards’ and discard ‘consumer protection’ by violating the meaning of quality. For instance students tend to outsource their assignment tasks in order to obtain a paper qualification (see section 6.5) and thus, these institutes may fail to achieve transformation of their students. Cranton (2006) indicates, transformation by learning can be intricate when the academics are not trained and when the students may not possess the necessary skills for reflection. Some students saw this view towards their degrees as implying that they themselves promote commodification of their higher education. The student responses also suggested that ‘having high standards’ as a definition of quality should include ‘informing the achieved level of standards clearly to the stakeholders’ as many issues were created by the lack of transparency of these institutes. For example, several students did not know important information such as whether their institutes, degree programmes and the qualifications were recognized locally and internationally, even in the final year of their study. They had doubts whether they could obtain recognized jobs after completing their programmes. Lack of transparency within these institutes also misinformed some students as they thought that their institutes were approved by the UGC. Therefore, simply achieving high standards is not sufficient and it should be communicated to the stakeholders clearly and accurately. The students’ responses also conveyed that the viewpoints in relation to quality of these institutes somewhat differed based on the subjects and the degrees the students followed (Chapter 6). For example, masters students reported that their institutes lack facilities and research resources while the undergraduate students from the same institutes were satisfied with the available facilites and the resources. The perceptions of these students demonstrated how quality varies based on the degree type and the level of the degree.

The students who followed degrees sourced from the USA were more concerned about the irrelevance of some subjects of their curriculum than the students who followed degrees from other countries. As Pagoda-Arachchi (2007) argues, the Sri Lankan education system still retains its British legacy (see section 3.4) and this may have an impact on some students’ perceptions that some subjects of their American curriculum are irrelevant to the needs of the country.

The Lecturers, senior managers and the government officials reported that the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes was at an ‘average’ level when they were asked about their opinion about the overall quality of these institutes and thereby aligned with the students as they also conveyed the same viewpoint in this regard. In support of this, their perceptions revealed that some of the practices are only documented or said to be practiced, but actually not practiced by some of these institutes of Sri Lanka. Some of these quality issues have also

arisen from the students and the senior managers having a superficial understanding of quality (see sections 6.2 and 6.5 STUQ135 and STUQ144). Thus, these institutes knowingly or unknowingly tend to deviate from their vision and mission.

Some disparity among the perceptions of these professionals were also found as the government officials' perceptions of quality somewhat contrasted with lecturers and senior managers in relation to student admission, curriculum and government university lecturer recruitment. Many officials responded negatively to these aspects indicating a gap between the expectations of national level and the local level. However, the government officials showed no responsibility over the quality of these institutes and they reported that the foreign providers check the quality of these institutes. This view shows signs of division between public and private higher education within the country. This blurred and weak relationship between the government and the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka also caused some of the key issues at the implementation level. It appeared that the country has welcomed these aspects of privatisation and globalisation in higher education with weak higher education policies and legislation. It is also necessary to admit that 'quality assurance' is also an emerging and developing concept in Sri Lanka with regard to private higher education as the government is still planning to establish a quality assurance body to monitor these institutes.

The participants' responses discussed in chapter six also indicated that some institutes treated education merely as a commodity by encouraging unethical activities for their quality assurance. The senior managers themselves admitted that their institutes need to improve their quality verification activities. These findings suggest that even though 'quality is always positive', the activities related to quality assurance can create a negative impact on stakeholder groups if they are not conducted in the expected manner (see section 6.2). As it is discussed in section 6.2, the students may have to bear the consequences of these activities. Such ineffectiveness in quality assurance create pressure to the system implying that this institutional level problem is a national problem as the country requires more skilled and qualified people. When the quality assurance of these institutes is not accurate the quality of the entire higher education system gets threatened and this also has a negative impact on the international perception of the higher education system of Sri Lanka. A similar scenario with regard to 'lowering standards of quality assurance' was also reported from Lim's (2010) study (see section 2.8) in relation to foreign degree provision in Malaysia and Singapore indicating that this aspect of lowering the standard of quality assurance has also been seen in some other Asian countries.

Overarching research conclusions

This study which was built on and extended the ideas reported in World Bank's (2009) report (see section 1.2) was able to provide an in depth understanding of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka as intended. As the findings revealed even though this World Bank report claims that the foreign degrees are more relevant to the job market, the institutes analysed do not consider the overall development of the students adequately. The assertion of the World Bank (2009) report that that the stakeholders have concerns about the inconsistency in quality of some private higher education institutes in Sri Lanka was supported by this study as the stakeholder groups of this study reported that these institutes have a variety of quality levels. The findings of this study provided several reasons for the dilemma reported in the World Bank report, that these institutes also have a bad publicity about their poor quality though they provide programmes perceived as more effective and appropriate. It appears from the perceptions of the respondents that this duality has arrived from the deficiencies, inconsistencies or the incompleteness of activities related to quality of these institutes. As the findings of this study indicated 'the effective and appropriate programmes of these institutes' (World Bank, 2009) seem to have only one sided effectiveness. Several institutes provided low quality education causing variability of quality among institutes. Many of them lack courses in the hard science areas as also indicated by Stephen (2007). It appears from these findings that the institutes analysed fail to meet some of the requirements of the development policy framework of the government of Sri Lanka (see section 3.4). Even though these institutes increase employability they also limit access to higher education on the basis of economic status and some of their graduates may not possess the required skills and knowledge to fulfill the development needs of the country.

The perceptions of all the four stakeholder groups with regard to the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka indicated that the quality of the government universities was higher and these institutes should improve quality up to that level. Not surprisingly, the part time lecturers of these institutes who also work for government universities referred to quality comparision between these institutes and the government universities more strongly than the full time lecturers of these institutes. However, this finding contradicts with the study of Mariampillai (2014) who argues that the private providers and their graduates are better. Mariampillai claims that "the growth of private providers in Sri Lanka is seen as a result of the diminishing public confidence in the state managed universities" (p. 166). However, Mariampillai comes to this conclusion from a study based on only six participants (see section 2.9). Since this study provides both a broader and in depth understanding to the quality of the the foreign degrees offerred in Sri Lanka by overcoming

the limitations of Mariampillai's study explained in section 2.9, it is fair to claim that this study has the potential for more reliable data in relation to this context.

Different understandings of quality were presented from the findings confirming that quality is a debatable term as was highlighted in Chapter 2. However, the proper communication among stakeholder groups can minimize these gaps. The responses also demonstrated that quality can be uneven or unbalanced within programmes due to social, cultural and gender factors (see sections 6.5). Thus the quality inducing actions can also result in segregation. This view also implies that quality is a highly debatable term, as is what quality should constitute.

The financial aspect appeared as a key factor contributing to aspects of quality of these institutes. A key finding that needs consideration in relation to the financial aspect was that the students reported that the course fees are expensive, even though the senior managers thought that they provide reasonable tuition fees to a certain class of students. The students reported that the financial support they received from these institutes was inadequate. This vertical case study demonstrated that the local level institutes have to pay high royalty fees to the foreign providers due to national level economic factors. By being a South Asian developing country which had a 'civil war for for 26 years' (BBC, 2014) Sri Lanka faces many economic challenges and since the economic conditions decide the exchange rate of Sri Lanka these institutes have to struggle financially. It is also unfortunate that the foreign providers do not consider these financial situations in different countries when they provide degrees across countries, as their intention is to earn maximum profit from these off shore programmes. This insensitivity may also be seen as a form of exploitation, implying a new way of imperialism.

Another debatable view in terms of the financial aspect was the government officials' perception that these institutes should also cater to students from all economic backgrounds by providing financial assistance in order to provide social justice. As argued elsewhere in the thesis this view raises the question of whether the government is entitled to hold such expectations since the contribution from the national level to these institutes is limited in terms of financial support, proper legislation and policies. This can also be viewed as lack of justice to these institutes. Thus, the findings of this study revealed that social justice can take different forms under different circumstances, which can be caused by external factors such as economic factors.

The 'user pays' approach where the students are expected to pay their tuition fees also ignores the possibility that the benefits of higher education extend well beyond the students; there are

many other ‘users’, such as employers, the government and the public, who may benefit from the students’ knowledge contribution. This issue raises the argument of who else should support the students financially other than their institutes and the foreign providers. It can be argued that the ‘end users’ should share the cost of the higher education of the country. Thus, when viewed through this lens it is clear that private higher education of Sri Lanka also has a public aspect involved with it and this aspect needs to be emphasised in order to ease some of the pressures and tensions with regard to these institutes. Furthermore, education is a right of every citizen and therefore, as the Todd report which discussed the funding of tertiary education of students in New Zealand discusses, the government should assure and promote access to higher education as far as possible (Stephens & Boston, 1995). Of course it must be recognized that the extent to which a ‘developing’ country, with all the economic constraints that status implies, can do so will be more limited than in a relatively wealthy country such as New Zealand. This also indicates that, even though the definitions are made, or the quality is defined with various expectations, the implementation can take many forms and can undergo many changes when a system gets influenced by factors such as economic constraints. The cost sensitive nature of quality is also indicated from the above findings as the financial strength of the institutes and the students are keys to the implementation and the maintenance of quality of these institutes.

As the results illustrated the financial difficulties (see Chapter 6) create pressure on the system in various ways. This pressure gets passed down from one group to the other and its consequences revert like a boomerang to the place where the pressure was created at a given point. The government is unable to provide financial support to the institutes due to funding constraints, but it creates pressure on these institutes to maintain high quality to secure the quality of the higher education system of the country. The senior managers who receive pressure from the government, public and the foreign providers pass this pressure to the students, either as high tuition fees or as low quality programmes and services. The students receive pressure from the institutes if senior managers’ decisions create tensions for the lecturers in terms of poor results or lack of effective learning. The students of these institutes can also create a reciprocal pressure on the government if they graduate from low quality foreign institutes or universities with insufficient knowledge to contribute effectively to the development of the country. As can be seen from the pressure cooker model this pressure needs to be managed to improve the quality of these institutes.

Student admission was another key aspect that brought out significant findings. The stakeholder groups had diverse viewpoints about the quality of student admission of these

institutes. While several students and government officials recognized that these institutes lack quality in student recruitment in many ways, the lecturers and the senior managers thought that they maintain a certain level of quality of student admission in these institutes. A government official referred to some of these institutes as 'Graduate Kade' (Graduate shop) to denote the market driven approach of some of these institutes. However, the senior managers reported that they implement quality in student admission and the negative perceptions about quality of student admission of their institutes have arrived from the public mindset that the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka mainly recruit students who were unable to enter a public university. They also revealed that they have teaching mechanisms to overcome the gaps in student knowledge levels (sections 6.3 and 6.5). These contrasting viewpoints bring out more challenges to the quality assurance of these institutes. The above idea related to public mindset also highlights a significant aspect of perceptions that needs considering, that is perceptions of stakeholders can be biased in relation to quality when the country itself perceives that these institutes have low quality. The real quality may not be visible to them due to this perceived quality, so it is also necessary that all detach from this narrow mindset.

One of the key ideas identified from the responses in relation to the quality of these institutes was that educational quality should include the service aspect along with the teaching and learning aspects (Chapter 6). This view supported the view of Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007) that was explained in chapter 2, that is the teaching and learning as well as the services that these institutes provide to students are significant and both of these two processes should be included to bring out a holistic nature to quality. This view also implies that quality is a shared responsibility and not limited to particular a department of an institute.

It was also found from the overall study that the the respondents of the institutes which offer both UGC approved local degrees as well as the foreign degrees provided more positive responses in relation to quality of the teaching, learning and quality evaluation and verifications of their institutes. Even though the study expected to find differences between the quality of the old institutes and the new institutes, any major differences could not be identified implying that this difference between old and new did not provide a major impact on the quality of these institutes.

The stakeholders also perceived that the quality of the degrees of these institutes neither match with the quality of the degrees in the home universities nor with the quality of the government universities. The frequency of this response across stakeholder groups suggests that quality, however defined, tends to be not up to standard in the institutes studied. The 'Code of Good

Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee)' states that the standards of the programmes which are offered transnationally should be equivalent to both the provider countries and to the receiver countries (Council of Europe, 2014). It is also worth noting that even though trade in education is supposed to provide the same superior quality of the degrees of developed countries to the developing countries (Tilak, 2011) (section 2.14.1) this does not translate into reality in the same manner. Most of the leading exporters of higher education to Sri Lanka such as UK and USA are members of the OECD and therefore they follow the UNESCO/OECD (2005) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education (see section 2.14.2). These guidelines also emphasize that the education of the receiver country should be comparable to their provider country's education. It appears from the findings of this study that these countries should put more effort into following these guidelines.

Lane & Kinser (2011) argue that the home government and the host government should understand each other's expectations as these can be different. The findings of this study also supported this view by indicating that the provider countries should be more sensitive towards the social, cultural, economic, and educational aspects of Sri Lanka (Chapter 6). These institutes of Sri Lanka should also maintain mutual trust and respect and they should communicate well with the foreign providers to meet their expectations. This understanding will assist in minimizing the various levels of quality in different foreign degree awarding institutes.

7.4 Significance of the Study

7.4.1 Theoretical Implications

This study which undertook an investigation on dimensions of quality provides several implications for the theoretical arena. This study identified 23 definitions of quality and two sub definitions of the quality definition 'fitness for purpose' from the responses of the participants, while also revealing how there can be many variations to one definition of quality. An understanding of these various definitions strengthens the theoretical background of 'quality' as a term. Since no studies were found which investigated the definitions of quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from a multiple stakeholder perspective, this study filled a gap in the literature. The multiple stakeholders' perspective also

enhanced the holistic approach to quality as seeing the quality of an education system is like 'blind men seeing an elephant' as it was explained in the first chapter. Quality is sensitive in many forms and its sensitivity was revealed by the responses of the participants in relation to social, cultural, economic, educational, gender and political factors of Sri Lanka. The impact of gender on the quality of learning in private higher education is also a less researched area and these findings set a background for such a study by connecting the concept of gender with quality of learning in private higher education. Even though external factors such as social, cultural and economic factors impact on the understanding of quality have been discussed in the previous literature, they do not bring out a vertical analysis as done in this study by exploring how these external factors at the local level, national level and the international level are connected to each other to bring various understandings of quality. Thus, through this aspect this study contributes to the current literature.

A pressure cooker model was also introduced to conceptualize the gaps in a system with regard to the dimensions of quality. As explained elsewhere in the thesis this quality reporting model provided a mechanism for understanding the quality gaps, and how pressure is created on the system. This model could be useful in other education settings to demonstrate quality issues.

This study provided an overarching model by linking the dimensions of quality: definitions, purposes, practices and the implementation of priorities for quality. This search for interconnectedness between these dimensions and their outcomes is also a new aspect to quality in relation to the private higher education of Sri Lanka and thereby enhanced the theoretical understanding of the dimensions of quality.

7.4.2 Methodological Contribution

The study also contributed to methodological design by adopting a vertical case study approach to a major country system. A model was designed to illustrate how the local level, national level and the international level interact and influence each other. The vertical case study that this study adopted suggests that this methodology is a model designed to make it easier for any new researcher, or to any stakeholder, to understand a case such as cross border provision of higher education. This study also adopted a combination of case study methodology and mixed method approaches, a combination also enhancing the value of the study. This methodological approach served the study well while also increasing the reliability and the validity of the data.

The pragmatic philosophy adopted also assisted in answering the research questions in full, indicating that in the context of Sri Lanka, a complex subject like quality can be best answered within a pragmatic paradigm. The sample group selected for this study was also noteworthy as the study included the students, lecturers and senior managers of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka and also the government officials. This comprehensive choice of stakeholder groups represented a wide variety of perspectives and is therefore a contribution to methodological thinking, demonstrating that any researcher who is interested in multiple stakeholder perspectives in relation to higher education should choose as many stakeholder groups as possible in their sample to improve the validity of the data. Thus, the study is significant in terms of its methodological approach.

7.4.3 Significance of the Study in Policy and Practice

The context within which this study was undertaken, 'the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka', also indicates the significance of this study as there is very limited research on these institutes. Although few students stated that there is a need for more research in this area, a government official who supported this view declared:

> If you can make a definitive statement about the quality of these institutes or operations we might even put another quality assurance unit to look into them. If they are getting ripped off we must know about it (GOVI2).

The above quote suggests the importance of this study at the national level since the government of Sri Lanka is planning to form an independent body to assure the quality of these institutes. They can consider the findings of this research when they make decisions related to the functions of this independent body. Thus, this research is timely, and useful to the government. The government may also make changes to their policies and legislation in relation to higher education after considering these findings. It is important to note that some of the issues are strongly related to the school education setting that was discussed in the section 3.3. The parents' search for private tuition for better quality education for school education also implies that even school education promotes the notion of quality as available to those who can afford it, in spite of the free education policy. Thus, the division based on economic class is somewhat visible within the school sector and it is not limited to private higher education. This study suggests that the government should reconsider some of the policies and legislation in general education as well as higher education and make necessary

changes in order to obtain more fruitful results for the higher education sector and to the country.

This study will also be useful to the senior managers of the institutes in understanding the different perceptions of the various stakeholder groups with regard to their dimensions of quality. The foreign providers may also gain an insight to the quality of these institutes and could make changes to their practices with regard to quality assurance of their institutes. The employers will also get an idea of the quality of these institutes and their graduates and this understanding will help them when they hire or train graduates of these institutes. Publication of the study could also make the public aware of the implementation and the maintenance of the priorities for quality of these institutes.

The students and any prospective students could also receive a more accurate and in-depth understanding of the quality of these institutes. They could consider the results of this study when they make important decisions such as choosing an institution in which to study. They will also obtain a proper understanding of the dimensions of quality from a perspective other than their own, a multiple stakeholders' perspective.

A very interesting factor was that many institutes showed their willingness to obtain new ideas in relation to quality of their institutes. This was evident in that all of the institutes did not hesitate to participate in this study and showed a keen interest in the research, indicating the significance of this study. This also assisted in increasing the reliability of the study.

7.5 Recommendations

This section provides recommendations to the key stakeholder groups based on the solutions that the respondents provided and also by considering the overall findings of this study.

Recommendations for Students

- As the study revealed that the students can be misguided by some of these institutes due to the lack of perceived transparency of some of these institutes, and lack of communication or lack of information to the students. It is necessary that the students check with the UGC of Sri Lanka whether their prospective institute is recognized by the UGC. They can also go to the website of the foreign provider and check their affiliations and recognition before they start the programme. The ranking of the parent

university can be obtained from the internet and they can also call the parent university to check the nature of their affiliations with the Sri Lankan institute. It is also important that the students request written documentation about the benefits and the facilities that their institutes promise to provide because then the students can question the institutes with the documents as evidence.

- The students can make the government aware if they face any issues in relation to quality and request the government to safeguard them from fraudulent activities.
- The students should seek help from their lecturers and the student counsellors to solve their academic related problems. The students should seek their help to understand how to write assignments without any plagiarism and also to identify their interested area and choose subjects accordingly.

Recommendations for Lecturers

- Lecturers should interact more with the students and provide clear and detailed guidelines about student assessment to the students. The lecturers' expectations locally and the foreign provider's expectations should be explained to the students with regard to student assessment. This will help them to prepare for their exams and assignments properly.
- The lecturers can help the students to understand their capabilities and then can guide the students to improve their knowledge and skills in that area. They can educate the students about the significance of deep learning and make them aware of the importance of having a genuine interest for learning rather than focusing only on a paper qualification.
- The lecturers can pressurise the management by not supporting any unethical activities and this will help to protect the students and also the dignity of the lecturers. Since there is a lack of human resources in the country, the institutes may have to consider the lecturers' ideas because they will not be able to run their programmes without proper lecturers.
- The lecturers would benefit from active participation in quality assessment processes. Where Quality Assurance is an understood part of a lecturer's work, teaching and learning activities become more quality driven.

Recommendations for Management of the Institutes

- It would be beneficial to the students if the management increase the transparency of information and provide relevant and accurate information to the students. Thus, they can be more accountable to the students. It would be helpful if they focus on the long term benefits for students. They can introduce a localized information database which is supported by their parent university.
- If the institutes maintain an ethical and balanced view by considering the ideas of the other stakeholders, the public will have a better image of these institutes. It is important that they promote transparent quality assurance and make the public aware about the outcome of their quality assurance procedures since the public are sometimes unaware of these outcomes.
- They can request the foreign providers to help them to conduct more research about their institutes and also to provide more training to their staff.

Recommendations for Foreign Providers

- Since these are distinct operations from abroad they can design a programme which has a mix of modules which are appropriate for Sri Lanka and also good for the provider countries. They could also provide a proxy Sri Lankan based UK library.
- The foreign universities may undertake more rigorous quality assurance activities and quality audits. For example, they can make several uninformed visits to these institutes to obtain an accurate perception of quality.
- The foreign providers can also encourage these institutes to conduct more research about these institutes to help them to overcome their problems.

Recommendations for Employers

- The employers could help these institutes by providing internship opportunities to the students of these institutes.
- They could also have joint discussions with these institutes to decide the relevance of the curriculum and the requirements of the job market. Then, the institutes can offer more appropriate courses and subjects.
- The employers could also help the government by providing information about the level of contribution of the students from these institutes. They can also support these institutes financially to conduct research to overcome issues related to quality. The employers will benefit when the graduates of these institutes are talented and perform well. The employers could also provide loan facilities to the high performing students

by making an agreement with those students that they will serve these employers after the completion of their studies. The loan repayments could be deducted from their salaries. In this way the employers can get the best performing students to their companies as employees.

Recommendations for Government

- It is necessary that the government set up an independent body without a delay to monitor these institutes in order to safeguard the students. However, the members for this body should be selected carefully and they should not be biased in any manner. The government could also maintain a website and a database in a central place which provides all the information, including research done about these institutes. Then the government can inform them that if they want to operate in Sri Lanka they should divulge their information to that website so that students and parents can make decisions easily. The government could provide a quality standard which is compulsory for all the institutes and if the institutes want to offer these programmes then they must maintain that standard. For example, if the lecturers do not have proper qualifications then the government can ask them to pay a fine and then rectify their mistakes.
- The government could also conduct more research on these institutes to help them to overcome their issues.
- The government should try to provide more soft loans and grants to support these institutes and then the institutes can reduce their financial difficulties.

Recommendations for Public

- The public should not solely judge these institutes based on the perceived quality. They should consider both their positive and negative aspects and assist these institutes to overcome their weaknesses without engaging in protests against their existence. They should choose institutes wisely by considering their recognition and the quality of their graduates.

7.6 Limitations of the Study

This study encountered several limitations. Considering the scope of the study and the time period available for data collection this study was limited to five foreign degree awarding institutes; the study would have been more enlightened if the number of institutes for the sample could have been increased. Another major barrier was the limited budget available for

this study meaning that the study was conducted under financial constraints. Employers as a stakeholder group were not included in this study considering the scope of this study as explained in the section 2.3.2.

7.7 Suggestions for Further Research

This study investigated the dimensions of quality in the context of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka which therefore cannot be considered directly applicable to the aspects of quality of such institutes in another country. However, researchers in other countries could adopt the pressure cooker model to investigate the dimensions of quality in relation to their context. This study was limited to the receiver country's perspective. Therefore, another aspect which has capacity for further research in relation to quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of any country would be to conduct similar research from the perspective of the foreign providers. Another key aspect identified from the perceptions of this study's stakeholders was their constant comparison with the quality of the government universities. Thus, a comparative study based on the government universities of Sri Lanka and the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka is worth considering.

7.8 Concluding Remarks

The study was undertaken to investigate the various ways that the quality is understood in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka and their consequences to various stakeholders. The overarching model of the study, by linking dimensions of quality, has provided insight to quality issues and established what matters as quality in order to improve it. The general perceptions of the respondents about the quality of these institutes was that their quality is only at the average level and the standards of the degrees of these institutes need to match with both the standards of their home universities and the government universities of Sri Lanka. This is necessary for their survival as well as for greater accountability to stakeholder groups. The responses of the participants demonstrated that the quality challenges of these institutes are situated within a socially, culturally, educationally and economically bounded system with flawed policies and regulatory environment. On top of this, it appeared that there is little support from the government financially, policy wise and regulatory wise. There are growing concerns about the lack of understanding between the provider country and the receiver country as some major issues were caused by this incongruence.

Sri Lanka, being a developing country, needs to have a more robust and fruitful education system to reach its development goals. The foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka which play a major role in higher education of Sri Lanka need to undergo rigorous changes with regard to their policies, curriculum, and regulatory mechanisms in order to contribute to the country's overall development in a more positive manner. Even though their existence has eased some tensions of the country in terms of increasing access to higher education, some major social issues could be better addressed. Therefore, it is necessary that all the stakeholder groups develop continuous dialogue to understand their various viewpoints and to promote good governance and protocols. This will assist in providing a more effective foreign education in Sri Lanka which can elevate the quality of higher education sector as a whole. After all, as a proverbial saying points out 'It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness'.

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Appendix A: Pictures of Student Protests Against Private Universities

(Jayawardena, 2012; Lankanewspapers.com, 2010; TamilNet, 2005)

Appendix B: John Godfrey Saxe's (1816-1887) Version of the Famous Indian Legend

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, -"Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he,

“‘Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!”

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: “E’en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!”

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a rope!”

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.
So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!
(Yen, 2008)

Appendix C: Comparisons of Quality Concepts

Factors	Concepts	Exceptional Traditional Standards		Perfection of zero defects	Fitness to purpose	Value for money	Transformation
Key words		Special	Passing the bar	Consistency to special	Related to stated function	Efficiency	Qualitative change
Nature		Absolute	Absolute	Absolute	Relative	Relative	Relative
Phenomenon in focus		Institute	Institutions/ degrees	Units	Institutions/ Individuals	Institution/ Individual	Individual
Locus		Input	Input/output	Process	Output	Output	Process
Measure		Intuitively/ by expertise	Standardization	Continuous Control	Assessment	Market success	Value added
Improvement		Exclusively	Evaluation	Control	Mission/ Evaluation	Laissez-faire	Freedom/ empowerment
Stakeholder Preference		Oxbridge/A cademies	Government/ Employers	-	Government	Government	Academics/ students

(Ehsan, 2004, p.70)

Appendix D: List of quality criteria with their citations

Quality Criterion	Citations
Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	Chan (2011); Yahia (2013)
Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	Chan (2011); Worthen and Berry (2002); World Conference on Higher Education (2009); Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2007)
Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve students' learning	Chan (2011) ; Zachariah (2007)
Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff	Welch (2007); Zachariah (2007), Gibbs (2010)
The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students	QAA (2017); Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007)
Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	IIEP-UNESCO (2011); Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Directors (2002)
The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas	Chan (2011); IIEP-UNESCO (2011); Singh (2012)
The availability of flexible programmes	Chan (2011)
Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	Worthen and Berry (2002)
A clear student recruitment procedure	Chan (2011)
Strict admission policies	Chan (2011) ; Zachariah (2007)
Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	Zachariah (2007)
Adequate support services for students	Gibbs (2010)
Positive relationships between lecturers and students	Worthen and Berry (2002)
Maintenance of ethics in the institute	Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007); Rumyantseva (2005) ; Hallak and Poisson (2007)
Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka	Stephen (2007)
Size of the student population	Gibbs (2010); Worthen and Berry (2002)
Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute	Naidoo (2007)
Student progression and success rates	Worthen and Berry (2002)
Employability of graduates and their career prospects	Zachariah (2007); Worthen and Berry (2002); World Bank (2009)
Research activities and research potential of the institute	Committee of Vice-Chancellors & Directors (2002) ; Stella (2007).
Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	Peiris & Ratnasekera (2007)

Appendix E: Sri Lanka: Country Profile

AREA

	Sq.km.	'000 ha.	Mn. acres
Gross	65,610	6,561.0	16.2
Excluding Inland Waters	62,705	6,270.5	15.5

CLIMATE

Temperature (2013)	Low Country,	min. 24.4 °C (75.9) °F	max. 31.7 °C (89.1) °F
	Hill Country,	min. 18.3 °C (64.9) °F	max. 26.7 °C (80.1) °F

Annual Rainfall (Avg.) (2013) – 1,687 mm

DEMOGRAPHY

Population Mid year (b) ('000)	20,328 (2012)	20,483 (2013)
Population Growth (%)	0.9 (2012)	0.8(2013)

Province	Population (2013) '000	Land Area (Sq.km.)	Density of Population
Western	5,866	3,593	1,633
Central	2,592	5,575	465
Southern	2,493	5,383	463
Northern	1,073	8,290	129
Eastern	1,571	9,361	168
North Western	2,393	7,506	319
North Central	1,276	9,741	131
Uva	1,278	8,335	153
Sabaragamuwa	1,941	4,921	394
Total	**20,483**	**62,705**	**327**

Composition of Population (2012 Census)

By Ethnicity	%	By Religion	%
Sinhalese	74.9	Buddhist	70.2
Sri Lankan Tamil	11.2	Hindu	12.6
Indian Tamil	4.2	Islam	9.7
Sri Lankan Moor	9.2	Christian	7.4
Other	0.5	Other	0.0
By Sector (e)	**%**	**By Age Groups**	**%**
Urban	18.3	0 – 14	25.8
Rural	77.3	15 – 59	62.0
Estate	4.4	60 & above	12.2

EXTERNAL SECTOR

		2011	2012	2013(c)
Exports (Goods, Services)	Rs.Bn.	1,509	1,730	1,949
	US$ Mn.	13,643	13,573	15,079
Imports (Goods, Services)	Rs.Bn.	2,461	2,766	2,776
	US$ Mn.	22,254	21,729	21,508
External Assets, (g)	Rs.Bn.	910	1,092	1,121
	US$ Mn.	7,989	8,586	8,574
External Debt	Rs.Bn.	3,730	4,717	5,199
	US$ Mn.	32,748	37,098	39,741
	% of GDP	57.0	62.2	59.9
Exchange Rate (Avg.)	RS/US$	110.57	127.60	129.11
	Rs./SDR	174.54	195.38	196.19

FISCAL SECTOR

Revenue and Grants	Rs.Bn.	983.0 (h)	1,067.5 (h)	1,153.3
Expenditure & Net Lending	Rs.Bn.	1,433.2 (h)	1,556.5 (h)	1,669.4
Budget Deficit	Rs.Bn.	-450.2 (h)	-489.0 (h)	-516.1
	% of GDP	-6.9 (h)	-6.5 (h)	-5.9
Public Debt	Rs.Bn.	5,133.4 (h)	6,000.1 (h)	6,793.2
	% of GDP	78.5 (h)	79.2 (h)	78.3

SOCIAL INDICATORS

Human Development Index (2012) – **0.715**
(min.0.0, max. 1.0)

Life Expectancy, Years (2012) – **75.1**
(Average)

Literacy Rate (a), % (2012)

Average	95.6
Male	96.8
Female	94.6

ECONOMY

REAL SECTOR

GDP at Market Prices	Rs Bn.	US$ Bn.
2011	6,543	59.2
2012	7,579	59.4
2013 (c)	8,674	67.2
Per Capita GDP	**Rs.**	**US$**
2011	313,542	2,836
2012	372,814	2,922
2013 (c)	423,467	3,280

Growth of GDP (in Real Terms) %

2011	8.2
2012	6.3
2013 (c)	7.3

Sectoral Composition of GDP, %

	Agriculture	Industry	Services
2011	11.2	29.3	59.5
2012	11.1	30.4	58.6
2013 (c)	10.8	31.1	58.1

Unemployment, % of Labour Force

2011	4.2 (d)
2012	4.0 (d)
2013 (c)	4.4 (d)

Inflation (f) : Change of CCPI (Annual Avg.) %

2011	6.7
2012	7.6
2013 (c)	6.9

MONETARY SECTOR

Reserve Money	Rs.Bn.	Growth %
2011	439.5	21.9
2012	484.4	10.2
2013 (c)	488.6	0.9
Narrow Money (M_1)	**Rs.Bn.**	**Growth %**
2011	438.7	7.7
2012	450.0	2.6
2013 (c)	484.6	7.7
Broad Money (M_2)	**Rs.Bn.**	**Growth %**
2011	2,192.6	20.9
2012	2,593.2	18.3
2013 (c)	3,058.8	18.0
Broad Money (M_{2b})	**Rs.Bn.**	**Growth %**
2011	2,491.7	19.1
2012	2,929.1	17.6
2013 (c)	3,417.9	16.7

a) Based on Census of Population and Housing 2012, Department of Census and Statistics.
b) Based on Census of Population and Housing carried out in 2012, covering the entire island.
c) Provisional.
d) All districts included.
e) Provisional data based on the 5% sample.
f) 2006/07 = 100
g) Calculated at market value and includes Asian Clearing Union receipts.
h) Revised

1

(Central Bank of Sri Lanka, 2014)

Appendix F: List of Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka

No:	Institute name	Field of Study	Board of Study
1	University of Ballarat Sri Lanka Study Centre	Commerce	University of Ballarat, Australia
2	GISM - Graduate Institute of Science & Management	Commerce	Massey University, New Zealand
3	Royal Institute of Colombo	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT	University of London, UK
4	Cosmopolitan College of Business and Technology (CCBT)	Commerce	Oxford Brookes University, UK
5	Mercury Institute of Management	Commerce	Oxford Brookes University,UK
6	Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT)	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT	Staffordshire University, UK
7	International College of Business & Technology (ICBT)	Commerce / Computer Science/IT/ Engineering/ QS & Construction Mgt/ Nursing	Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK Middlesex University, UK Sheffield Hallam University, UK Birmingham City University, UK The University of Sunderland, UK
8	British School of Commerce	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT	London School of Commerce, UK Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK Anglia Ruskin University, UK
9	Business Management School (BMS)	Commerce	Northumbria University, UK Edinburgh Napier, UK University of Leicester, UK
10	Auston Institute	Commerce/Commerce (Engineering/Technology Management)/ Computer Science/IT	London South Bank University, UK Birmingmham City University, UK
11	Western College for Management & Technology	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT/ Engineering	University of Bolton, UK
12	South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM)	Commerce, ICT/Media, Engineering, Medicine	Buckinghamshire New University, UK Nizhny Novgorod State Medical Academy, Russia, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand

13	Australian College of Business & Technology (ACBT)	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT	Edith Cowan University, Australia
14	Oxford College of Business	Commerce	Heriot-Watt University UK
15	Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT)	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT/Engineering	Curtin University Australia, University of Newcastle, Australia, University of Tasmania, Australia RMIT, Australia University of South Australia, Queensland University of Technology, Australia Deakin University, Australia
16	Gateway Graduate School	Commerce / Computer Science/IT/ Psychology	University of Canterbury, New Zealand, University of Nottingham, Malaysia Campus, University of Worcester, UK, University of Central Lancashire, UK
17	Regent International Institute for Higher Studies (RIIHS)	Commerce	Indira Gandhi National Open University, India
18	AIMS College of Business & IT	Commerce	International American University, USA
19	American National College (ANC)	Commerce/ Hospitality management/ Computer Science/IT/Law	Northwood University USA, Missouri University of Science and Technology USA, University of West London, UK
20	Spectrum Institute of Science and Technology	Science/Psychology, Sociology and Criminology / English Literature, Journalism and Political Science /	University of Mysore India Edinburgh Napier University, UK
21	American College of Higher Education	Commerce	Excelsior College USA, Broward College , USA
22	Singapore Informatics	Commerce/ Computer Science/IT	University of Portsmouth, UK
23	Imperial Institute of Higher Education	Commerce	University of Wales UK, University of Salford, UK

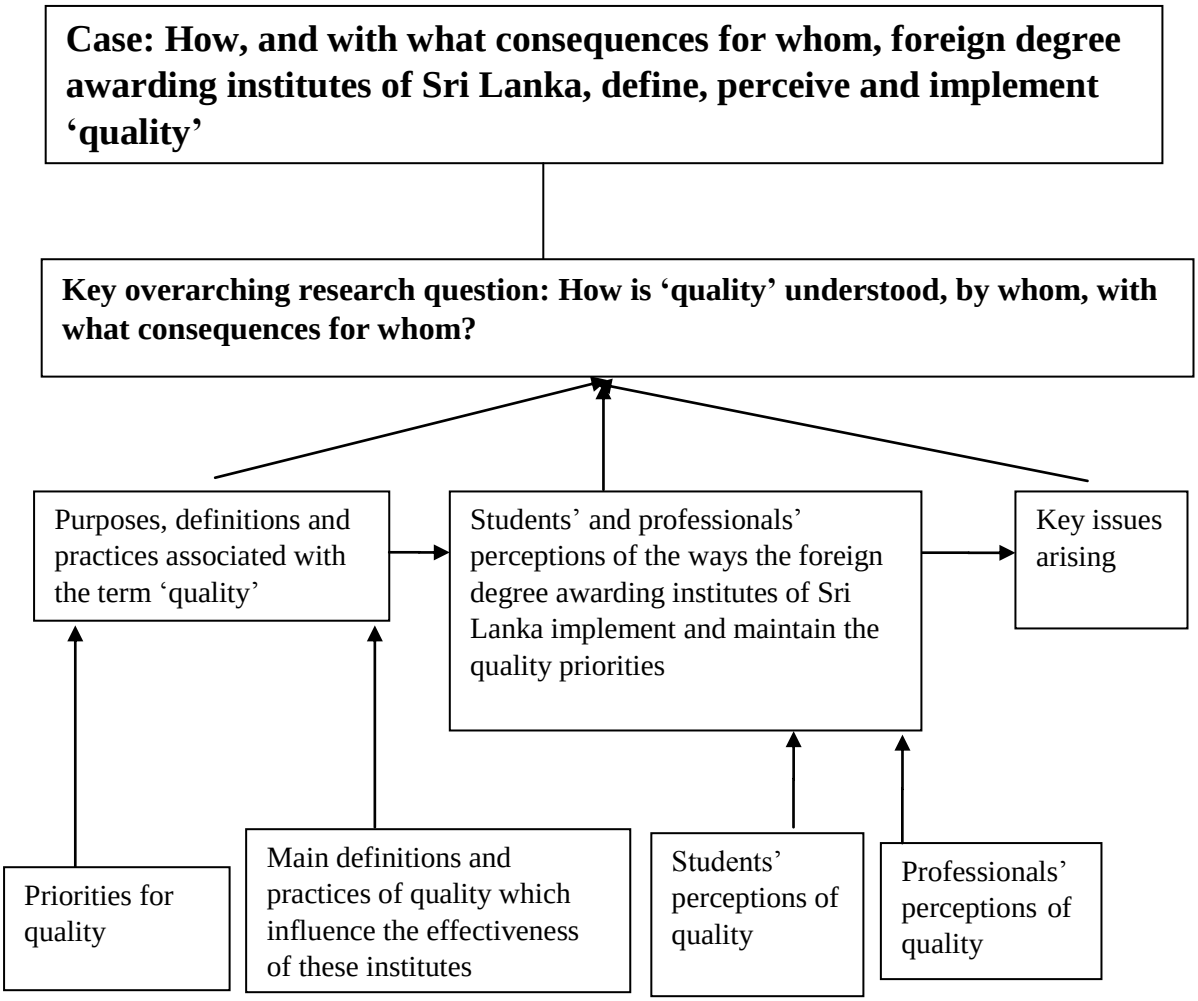
24	London Business School (LBS)	Commerce	Ubiquity University, USA
25	Horizon Campus	Business and Law, Education, Psychology, Bio Technology	University of London International programmes, UK Karnatake State Open University, India Nilai University, Malaysia
26	Colombo International Nautical & Engineering College (CINEC)	Commerce/ Engineering/Technology Management/ Sport and Leisure/ Maritime Science/ Computer Science / IT Logistics and Transport	University of Wolverhampton, UK Dalian Maritime-University China, University of South Australia
27	International Institute of Health Sciences (IIHS)	Nursing/Health administration	Open University of Malaysia, Asia e University, Malaysia,
28	Northshore College of Business and Technology	Computer Science/IT/ Engineering/ Commerce	University of the West of England, UK
29	IDM Computer Studies (Pvt) Ltd	Computer Science/IT/ Education	University of Greenwich, UK University of Wolverhampton, UK British Computer Society- Chartered Institute of IT, UK Open University Malaysia
30	Londontec City Campus	Computer Science/IT	Teesside University, UK
31	ESOFT Computer Studies	Computer Science/IT/Commerce/ Engineering	British Computer Society-Chartered Institute of IT, UK, Kingston University, UK London Metropolitan University , UK
32	Matrix Institute of Information Technology	Computer Science/IT	British Computer Society- Chartered Institute of IT, UK
33	Pioneer Institute of Business and Technology (PIBT)	Computer Science/IT/ Commerce	University of Greenwich, UK Anglia Ruskin University, UK
34	Informatics Institute of Technology (IIT)	Computer Science/IT	University of Westminster, UK
35	CFPS Academy of Legal Studies	Law	University of London International programmes, UK,

36	Colombo Institute of Research and Psychology	Psychology	Coventry University, UK
37	Academy of Design (AOD)	Fashion and Design, Interior Design, Graphic Design	Northumbria University, UK
38	College of Chemical Sciences (CCS)	Chemistry	Northumbria University UK
39	Lanka Institute of Fashion Technology (LIFT)	Fashion Design	Mod'Art, Paris
40	Brandix College of Clothing Technology	Bachelor of Applied Science	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Australia
41	City School of Architecture	Architecture	University of the West of England, UK
42	OpenArc School of Business and Technology Ltd.	Information Technology	British Computer Society (BCS), UK
43	Colombo School of Construction Technology	Quantity Surveying, Construction Management	University of Salford, UK, Birmingham City University, UK
44	Aquinas College of Higher Studies	Psychology and Counselling	National University of Ireland, Galway
45	Asian Aviation Centre	Aerospace Engineering	Kingston University, UK
46	British College of Legal Studies (BCLS)	Law	University of London International programmes, UK
47	National School of Business Management (NSBM)	Commerce, Computer Science/IT/ Engineering	University College Dublin, UK Limkokwing University, Malaysia, University of Plymouth, UK
48	Saegis campus	Enterprise Systems Management, Business Administration, Business Information Technology	Birmingham City University, UK, Heriot-Watt University, UK
49	Graduate school of Management (GSM)	Doctoral programme (PhD), Business Administration	Open University Malaysia

(Gamage & Wijesooriya, 2012)

*The last three institutes mentioned in this table were obtained from a web search and they were not included to the 46 private institutes identified by the study of S. Gamage & Wijesooriya (2012). Some of the data included in the table were obtained by searching the institutes' names via google and this process assisted in obtaining the most recent information of the institutes .

Appendix G: Roadmap for Investigating the Overarching Research Question



Appendix H: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Students' Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601
Symonds Street
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone:+64 9 6238899

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study in the form of questionnaire. I have obtained permission from your institute to collect data during your class break time and obtained your name and the classroom number from the administrator of your institute. Your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment or assessment of you as the head of your institute has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment or assessment of you.

This study attempts to identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. In order to identify these priorities it is necessary to identify what you understand by quality. This study also explores to what extent that these institutes implement and maintain quality, the difficulties that these institutes face when implementing and maintaining these quality priorities and also the possible solutions to those problems.

You have been selected since you are a student and I am interested in your opinion about quality in relation to your institute. You will benefit from this study when you write answers to the questions of the questionnaire since this will help you to think deeply about the quality matters of your institute. Your institute will also benefit from this study since your institute

can use the finding of this research to improve the quality of your institute. You also can consider the findings when you make decisions related to quality of foreign degree awarding institutes. However, if the findings provide negative information about foreign degree awarding institutes you might have to face some challenges. I intend to publish the findings of this study in a journal articles or in a book which is prepared from my thesis. Since the questionnaire is anonymous even if the information you provide is reported/published, your identity will be protected.

You have also been selected randomly and your participation is voluntary. It will take about thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire. I will visit the institute for about a week for research purposes and you will be given two days to return the questionnaire. Please put your completed questionnaire into the envelope given to you and then drop the envelope into the students' questionnaire Drop in Box which will be kept near the reception area of your institute. If you do not wish to participate in this research then please preserve the anonymity of your non participation by returning a blank questionnaire in the same manner mentioned above. You cannot withdraw your data after submitting your questionnaire since your identity cannot be identified.

Since the data is collected in Sri Lanka I will keep these data in a locked cabinet at home which is safe. When I return to New Zealand I will keep them in a locked cabinet on University of Auckland premises. The consent forms which I obtained from your institute will be stored separately from the questionnaire data. These data will be retained for six years and then destroyed by shredding all the questionnaires. The findings of this study will be emailed to the head of your organization with a request to send it to the students.

Please do not write your name on the questionnaire since I wish to use these questionnaires anonymously. Please note that if you return a completed questionnaire this will be taken as your agreement to take part in this research.

Researcher contact details: Name: Mihirini Wickramasinghe
E mail: mihirisam@yahoo.com
Telephone: Local: 0772477029 New Zealand: 0064210753983
Supervisor contact details: Name: Dr. John Hope E mail: j.hope@auckland.ac.nz
Telephone: +64 9 6238899
Head of School contact details: Name: Associate Professor Christine Rubie-Davies
E mail: c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz Telephone: +64 9 6238899

If you have any concerns about this research you may contact my supervisor or Head of School, listed above.

"For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711."
APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 for (3) years, Reference Number 8359

Appendix I: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior Managers'/ Government Officials') Questionnaires

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study in the form of questionnaire. I have obtained permission from your organization to collect data during work time and obtained your name and the name of the department from the administrator of your organization. Your participation or non-participation will not affect your employment as the head of your organization has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that your participation or non-participation will not affect your employment.

This study attempts to identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. In order to identify these priorities it is necessary to identify what you understand by quality. This study also explores to what extent these institutes implement and maintain quality, the difficulties that these institutes face when implementing and maintaining these quality priorities and also the possible solutions to those problems.

You have been selected since you are a lecturer/senior manager/ government official and I am interested in your opinion about quality in relation to these. You will benefit from this study when you write answers to the questions of the questionnaire since this will help you to think deeply about the quality matters of the foreign degree awarding institutes.

Your organization will also benefit from this study since your organization can use the findings of this research to improve the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. You also can consider the findings when you make decisions related to quality of foreign degree awarding institutes. I intend to publish the findings of this study in a journal article or in a book which is prepared from my thesis. Since the questionnaire is anonymous even if the information you provide is reported/published, your identity will be protected.

You have also been selected randomly and your participation is voluntary. It will take about thirty minutes to complete the questionnaire. I will visit the institute for about a week for research purposes and you will be given two days to return the questionnaire. Please put your completed questionnaire into the envelope given to you and then drop the envelope into the questionnaire Drop in Box which will be kept near the reception area of your institute. If you do not wish to participate in this research then please preserve the anonymity of your non participation by returning a blank questionnaire in the same manner mentioned above. You cannot withdraw your data after submitting your questionnaire since your identity cannot be identified.

Since the data is collected in Sri Lanka I will keep these data in a locked cabinet at home which is safe. When I return to New Zealand I will keep them in a locked cabinet on University of Auckland premises. The consent forms which I obtained from your institute will be stored separately from the questionnaire data. These data will be retained for six years and then destroyed by shredding all the questionnaires. The findings of this study will be emailed to the head of your organization with a request to send it to the staff.

Please do not write your name on the questionnaire since I wish to use these questionnaires anonymously. Please note that if you return a completed questionnaire this will be taken as your agreement to take part in this research.

Researcher contact details:	Name: Mihirini Wickramasinghe E mail: mihirisam@yahoo.com Telephone: Local: 0772477029 New Zealand: 0064210753983
Supervisor contact details:	Name: Dr. John Hope E mail: j.hope@auckland.ac.nz Telephone: +64 9 6238899
Head of School contact details:	Name: Associate Professor Christine Rubie-Davies E mail: c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz Telephone: +64 9 6238899

If you have any concerns about this research you may contact my supervisor or Head of School, listed above.

"For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711."

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 for (3) years, Reference Number 8359

Appendix J: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Students' Interview

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
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Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone: +64 9 6238899

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS' INTERVIEW

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study in the form of an interview. I have obtained permission from your institute to collect data during your class break time. Your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment or assessment of you as the head of your institute has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that your participation or non-participation will not affect your enrolment or assessment of you.

This study attempts to identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. In order to identify these priorities it is necessary to identify what you understand by quality. This study also explores to what extent that these institutes implement and maintain quality, the difficulties that these institutes face when implementing and maintaining these quality priorities and also the possible solutions to those problems.

You have been selected since you are a student and I am interested in your opinion about quality in relation to your institute. You will benefit from this study when you provide answers to the interview questions since this will help you to think deeply about the quality matters of your institute. Your institute will also benefit from this study since your institute can use the finding of this research to improve the quality of your institute. You also can consider the findings when you make decisions related to quality of foreign degree awarding institutes. However, if the findings provide negative information about foreign degree awarding institutes you might have to face some challenges. I intend

to publish the findings of this study in a journal articles or in a book which is prepared from my thesis. If the information you provide is reported/published, this will be done in a way that does not identify you as its source. Your identity will be treated in the strictest confidence and limited to the researcher and the supervisor.

You have also been selected purposively since you meet the criteria, that I am interested in, namely a range of subjects, age, gender, ethnic group, school attended and name of the degree. Your participation is voluntary. It will take about thirty minutes to conduct the interview. I will visit the institute for about a week for research purpose and you can select a place and a time which is convenient to you to do the interview during this time. Your interview will be audio recorded since recording is essential to the research and then transcribed. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement. If you wish to see or edit the transcripts of the recording then a copy of the transcript will be emailed or handed over to you. You can withdraw from involvement in this research at any stage without explanation. You can withdraw your data within two weeks' period after submission of data.
Since I use a digital voice recorder to record the interviews, all the audio recorded data will be transferred to a folder in a laptop computer which is protected by a password. Since I use only one digital voice recorder I will delete one interview recording to record the other interview after copying them to a folder in my lap top. A back up of these recording will be kept in a folder of a USB drive which will also be protected by a password. Since the data is collected in Sri Lanka I will keep these data in a locked cabinet at home which is safe. When I return to New Zealand I will bring them along with me and will keep them in a locked cabinet on University of Auckland premises. The audio recorded data will be stored separately from the transcripts. I will also keep a copy of data for myself to use for my research purpose and these data will be stored securely on a password protected computer by me. The data will be kept for six years and then destroyed by deleting all the computer files. Any hard copies which have related data will be shredded.

The findings of this study will be emailed to the head of your institute and will be requested to send it to the students. These findings will be a collection of data obtained from all the institutes and organizations. The findings will not be your own data alone and it does not identify you as its source. You will also receive a copy of the findings if you provide me your email address or any other contact details.

If you would like to take part in this research please contact me via telephone or email mentioned below under 'Researcher contact details'.

Researcher contact details: Name: Mihirini Wickramasinghe
E mail: mihirisam@yahoo.com
Telephone: Local: 0772477029 New Zealand: 0064210753983
Supervisor contact details: Name: Dr. John Hope E mail: j.hope@auckland.ac.nz

Telephone: +64 9 6238899

Head of School contact details: Name: Associate Professor Christine Rubie-Davies

E mail: c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz Telephone: +64 9 6238899

If you have any concerns about this research you may contact my supervisor or Head of School, listed above.

"For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711."

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 for (3) years, Reference Number 8359

Appendix K: Sample of a Participant Information Sheet for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior Managers'/ Government Officials') Interview

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
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PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET FOR PROFESSIONALS' INTERVIEW

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I am currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study in the form of an interview. I have obtained permission from your organization to collect data during work time. Your participation or non-participation will not affect your employment as the head of your organization has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that your participation or non-participation will not affect your employment.

This study attempts to identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes in Sri Lanka. In order to identify these priorities it is necessary to identify what you understand by quality. This study also explores to what extent these institutes implement and maintain quality, the difficulties that these institutes face when implementing and maintaining these quality priorities and also the possible solutions to those problems.

You have been selected since you are a lecturer/senior manager/government official and I am interested in your opinion about quality in relation to these institute. You will benefit from this study when you provide answers to the interview questions since this will help you to think deeply about the quality matters of these institutes.

Your organization will also benefit from this study since your organization can use the finding of this research to improve the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka. You also can consider the findings when you make decisions related to the quality of foreign degree awarding institutes. I intend to publish the findings of this study in a journal article or in a book which is prepared from my thesis. If the information you provide is reported/published, this will be done in a way that does not identify you as its source. Your identity will be treated in the strictest confidence and limited to the researcher and the supervisor.

You have also been selected purposively since you meet the criteria, that I am interested in, namely, job designation, age, gender and the educational level. Your participation is voluntary. It will take about thirty minutes to conduct the interview. I will visit the institute for about a week for research purpose and you can select a place and a time which is convenient to you to do the interview during this time. Your interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed since recording is essential to the research. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement. If you wish to see or edit the transcripts of the recording then a copy of the transcript will be emailed or handed over to you. You can withdraw from involvement in this research at any stage of the interview without explanation. You can withdraw your data within two weeks' period after completion of the interview.

Since I use a digital voice recorder to record the interviews, all the audio recorded data will be transferred to a folder in a laptop computer which is protected by a password. Since I use only one digital voice recorder I will delete your interview recording after copying it to a folder in my lap top, and before recording another interview. A back up of these recording will be kept in a folder of a USB drive which will also be protected by a password. Since the data is collected in Sri Lanka I will keep these data in a locked cabinet at home which is safe. When I return to New Zealand I will keep all data in a locked cabinet on University of Auckland premises. The audio recorded data will be stored separately from the transcripts. I will also keep a copy of data for myself to use for my research purpose and these data will be stored securely on a password protected computer by me. The data will be kept for six years and then destroyed by deleting all the computer files. Any hard copies which have related data will be shredded.

The findings of this study will be emailed to the head of your organization with a request to send it to the staff. These findings will be a collection of data obtained from all the selected organizations. The findings will not be your own data alone and it does not identify you as its source. You will also receive a copy of the findings if you provide me your email address or any other contact details.
If you would like to take part in this research please contact me via telephone or email mentioned below under 'Researcher contact details'.

Researcher contact details: Name: Mihirini Wickramasinghe E mail: mihirisam@yahoo.com
Telephone: Local: 0772477029 New Zealand: 0064210753983
Supervisor contact details: Name: Dr. John Hope E mail: j.hope@auckland.ac.nz
Telephone: +64 9 6238899
Head of School contact details: Name : Associate Professor Christine Rubie-Davies
E mail: c.rubie@auckland.ac.nz Telephone: +64 9 6238899

If you have any concerns about this research you may contact my supervisor or Head of School, listed above.

"For any queries regarding ethical concerns you may contact the Chair, The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, The University of Auckland, Office of the Vice Chancellor, Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142. Telephone 09 373-7599 extn. 83711."
APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 for (3) years, Reference Number 8359

Appendix L: Sample of a Consent Form for Student Interview

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601
Symonds Street
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone: +64 9 6238899

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENT INTERVIEW

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I grant permission to the researcher to interview me concerning the above mentioned study.
- I understand that my participation or non-participation will not affect my enrolment or my assessment as the head of my institute has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that students' participation or non-participation will not affect their enrolment or assessment of them.
- I understand that I can select a time and a place convenient to me during the week that the researcher is available in my institute.
- I also understand that it will take approximately thirty minutes for the interview.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded, the recorded data will be transcribed and the transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement.
- I understand that I can withdraw from involvement in this research at any stage without explanation.
- I understand that I can see or edit the transcripts of the recording and/or withdraw it only within two weeks after the interview.

- I understand that if the information I provide is reported/published, this will be done in a way that does not identify me as its source.
- I understand that I will receive a summary of findings if I provide my contact details or I can view them at a place mentioned by the researcher.
- I understand that my identity will be treated in the strictest confidence and limited to the researcher and the supervisor.
- I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.
- I understand that the consent forms, audio recorded interview data and the transcripts will be stored separately.
- "If you would like a copy of the Summary of Results, please include your email address here _____".

Name _____
Signature _____ Date _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 8359

Appendix M: Sample of a Consent Form for Professionals' (Lecturers'/Senior Managers'/Government Officials') Interview

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92601
Symonds Street
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone: +64 9 6238899

CONSENT FORM FOR PROFESSIONALS' INTERVIEW

THIS FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS

Project Title: Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Name of Researcher: A.K.D. Mihirini Nisansala Wickramasinghe

I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand the nature of the research and why I have been selected. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered to my satisfaction.

- I grant permission to the researcher to interview me for the use of the above mentioned study.
- I understand that my participation or non-participation will not affect my employment as the head of my organization has assured this by signing a consent form which includes a statement that employees' participation or non-participation will not affect their employment.
- I understand that I can select a time and a place convenient to me during the week that the researcher is available in my organization.
- I also understand that it will take approximately thirty minutes for the interview.
- I understand that I will be audio recorded, the recorded data will be transcribed and the transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement.
- I understand that I can withdraw from involvement in this research at any stage without explanation.

•I understand that I can see or edit the transcripts of the recording only within two weeks after the submission of data.

• I understand that I can withdraw my data only within two weeks' period after submission of data.

• I understand that if the information I provide is reported/published, this will be done in a way that does not identify me as its source.

• I understand that I will receive a summary of findings if I provide my contact details or I can view them at the places mentioned by the researcher.

• I understand that my identity will be treated in the strictest confidence and limited to the researcher and the supervisors.

• I understand that data will be kept for 6 years, after which they will be destroyed.

• I understand that the consent forms, audio recorded interview data and the transcripts will be stored separately.

• "If you would like a copy of the Summary of Results, please include your email address here _____".

Name _____
Signature _____ Date _____

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND HUMAN PARTICIPANTS ETHICS COMMITTEE ON 10-Aug-2012 FOR (3) YEARS REFERENCE NUMBER 8359

Appendix N: Student Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR STUDENTS

Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. When you have finished, please drop your questionnaire form in to the questionnaire form drop in box that is placed in the reception area of your institute. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Section 1: About you

Please underline the correct answer or write in the space provided below where it is necessary.

1. Age group: 16 – 25, 26-35, 36 or above
2. Gender: male / female
3. Nationality :

   .....
4. Ethnicity: Tamil / Muslim / Burgher / Sinhalese / Other (please specify

   ……..)
5. Year of Study: (First year/second year etc.):

   .....
6. Name of your institute:

   .....
7. Subject (Business/ IT etc.) and name of degree (BA /MSC/PHD etc.):

   .....
8. Mode of study: Part time / full time
9. Duration of your study/ degree in years:

.....

10. Is your institute approved by the University Grants commission?

    Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Section 2: <u>Students' understanding of the meaning of quality</u>

1. Here are some of the ways of thinking about quality. Please place these in rank order of the most to the least suitable for the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, by putting the number (one-five) against each of the following statements, number one being the most suitable and number four being the least suitable meaning.

    1. **Quality as excellence:** This is about going beyond high standards. ☐

    2. **Fitness for purpose**
       This suggests that quality has meaning in relation to the purpose. For example, providing education in relation to the cultural, social or educational needs of the country. ☐

    3. **Value for money**
       This view of quality sees quality in terms of return on investment. ☐

    4. **Transformative**
       This view focuses on changing the students by improving their knowledge, skills and talents. The quality is achieved by changing the students' lives for the better. ☐

    5. **Perfection (or consistency)** ☐
       This is mainly about zero defects and getting things right first time. This approach focuses on process and it sets requirements which it aims to meet perfectly.

2. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

    .....
    .....
    .....

Section 3: <u>Priorities for quality in higher education</u>

1. Please identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from the following list of criteria for quality. Indicate your priorities by placing numbers in the boxes to indicate the ordering of your views, number one equals the highest priority, number two equals the second highest, and so on. You do not need to number all the boxes. You can stop numbering boxes when you feel that you have identified the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes, but please identify more than one priority.

- Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships ☐
- Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning (e.g. the use of good teaching strategies to improve students' critical thinking abilities) ☐
- Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feed back about students' work to improve students' learning ☐
- Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff ☐
- The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students ☐
- Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities ☐
- The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas ☐
- The availability of flexible programmes (e.g. availability of various choices of courses in the programme, availability of flexible lecture times) ☐
- Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice ☐
- A clear student recruitment procedure ☐
- Strict admission policies ☐
- Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes ☐
- Adequate support services for students (e.g. Free English classes, free academic writing classes, counselling services and career guidance) ☐
- Positive relationships between lecturers and students: (e.g. good communication with the students, understanding and encouraging lecturers ☐
- Maintenance of ethics in the institute (e.g. respecting other institutes and advertising only in an ethical way) ☐
- Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka (e.g. the relevance of the content of the course to the students' future careers) ☐
- Size of the student population ☐
- Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute ☐
- Student progression and success rates ☐
- Employability of graduates and their career prospects ☐
- Research activities and research potential of the institute ☐
- Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider ☐

2. Please state if you identify any other 'priorities for quality' and also mention which priority numbers that you would give to them if they were included to the list of criteria mentioned above?

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Section 4: <u>Experiences related to the admission procedure</u>

1. What kind of financial support that you receive from your institute? (e.g. affordable fees for courses or scholarship)

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.....

2. Did your institute provide you all the facilities, resources and services they promised to you? If not please explain what they promised but did not provide.

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Section 5: <u>Learning experiences</u>

1. Does your institute or programme help you for your career prospects? If yes, in what ways?

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2. In your opinion, does your programme meet the requirements or needs of Sri Lanka?(e.g. social, cultural, economic or educational needs)

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3. What do you think about the quality of the delivery of lectures at your institute?

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Section 6: <u>Quality matters and the solutions</u>

1. What are the main ways that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality (high quality)?

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2. An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign provider and the government when they make decisions in relation to quality. How do they implement and maintain quality in such situations?

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3. In your opinion, how does your institute assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign providers and the government? Include and information about different approaches for different stakeholders.

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4. In your opinion, to what extent that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality?

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.....

5. In your opinion, what difficulties does your institute face when implementing and maintaining quality in your institute?

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6. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems? (e.g. What kind of help from the University Grant Commission, your institute solving problems by itself, getting help from the government, foreign providers and International bodies)

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7. In your opinion, what are the main factors influencing the quality of your institute?

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8. What problems have you faced in relation to the quality of your foreign degree awarding institute?

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9. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Please explain.

.....
.....

Appendix O: Lecturer Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR LECTURERS

Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. When you have finished, please drop your questionnaire form in to the questionnaire form drop in box that is placed in the reception area of your institute. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Section 1: About you

Please underline the correct answer or write in the space provided below as necessary.

1. Age group: 21 – 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 or above

2. Gender : male / female

3. Name of your institute:

   .....

4. Mode of lecturing: full time / part time

5. Nature of your job: Lecturer for a government university and also for a foreign degree awarding institute / only a lecturer for a foreign degree awarding institute

6. Work experience as a lecturer: (number of years)

   .....

7. Your highest educational qualification:

   .....

Section 2: Lecturers' understanding of the meaning of quality

1. Here are some of the ways of thinking about quality. Please place these in rank order of the most to the least suitable for the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, by putting the number (one-five) against each of the following statements, number one being the most suitable and number four being the least suitable meaning.

   1. **Quality as excellence:** This is about going beyond high standards. ☐

   2. **Fitness for purpose**

This suggests that quality has meaning in relation to the purpose.
For example, providing education in relation to the cultural, social or educational needs of the country. ☐

3. **Value for money**
   This view of quality sees quality in terms of return on investment. ☐

4. **Transformative**
   This view focuses on changing the students by improving their knowledge, skills and talents. The quality is achieved by changing the students' lives for the better. ☐

5. **Perfection (or consistency)**
   This is mainly about zero defects and getting things right first time.
   This approach focuses on process and it sets requirements which it aims to meet perfectly. ☐

2. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

   .....
   .....
   .....

Section 3: <u>Priorities for quality in higher education</u>

1. Please identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from the following list of criteria for quality. Indicate your priorities by placing numbers in the boxes to indicate the ordering of your views, number one equals the highest priority, number two equals the second highest, and so on. You do not need to number all the boxes. You can stop numbering boxes when you feel that you have identified the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes, but please identify more than one priority

- Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships ☐
- Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning (e.g. the use of good teaching strategies to improve students' critical thinking abilities) ☐
- Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feed back about students' work to improve students' learning ☐
- Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff ☐
- The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students ☐
- Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities ☐
- The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas ☐
- The availability of flexible programmes (e.g. availability of various choices of courses in the programme, availability of flexible lecture times) ☐
- Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice ☐
- A clear student recruitment procedure ☐
- Strict admission policies ☐
- Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes ☐
- Adequate support services for students (e.g. Free English classes, free academic writing classes, counselling services and career guidance) ☐
- Positive relationships between lecturers and students: (e.g. good communication with the students, understanding and encouraging lecturers ☐
- Maintenance of ethics in the institute (e.g. respecting other institutes and advertising only in an ethical way) ☐
- Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka (e.g. the relevance of the content of the course to the students' future careers) ☐
- Size of the student population ☐
- Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute ☐
- Student progression and success rates ☐
- Employability of graduates and their career prospects ☐
- Research activities and research potential of the institute ☐
- Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider ☐

2. Please state if you identify any other 'priorities for quality' and also mention which priority numbers that you would give to them if they were included to the list of criteria mentioned above?

   .....
   .....
   .....

Section 4: <u>Academic culture</u>

Please decide to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements by ticking the relevant box.

1. I provide constructive feedback to students on their work and academic performances

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

2. I have a positive relationship with my students

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

3. I encourage students to do research work

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

4. I use computer software to check plagiarism in students' assignments and other students' work which carry marks for the course.

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

Section 6: <u>Quality matters and the solutions</u>

Please write your answer to the following questions in the space provided or tick the appropriate box as necessary:

1. What are the main ways that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality (high quality)?

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

2. An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign provider and the government when they make decisions in relation to quality. How do they implement and maintain quality in such situations?

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

3. In your opinion, how does your institute assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign providers and the government? Include and information about different approaches for different stakeholders.

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

4. In your opinion, to what extent that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality?

   .....
   .....
   .....

5. What difficulties does your institute face when implementing and maintaining quality?

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

6. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems? (e.g. What kind of help from the University Grant Commission, your institute solving problems by itself, getting help from the government, foreign providers and International bodies)

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

7. In your opinion, what are the main factors influencing the quality of your institute?

   .....
   .....
   .....

8. What quality control mechanisms are available in your institute in relation to the courses you teach?

   .....
   .....
   .....

9. Do you think that the courses available from the foreign provider meet the cultural, social, economic and educational needs of Sri Lanka? Please explain.

   .....
   .....
   .....

10. What problems have you faced in relation to the quality of your foreign degree awarding institute?

    .....
    .....
    .....
    .....

11. What do you think about the quality of the student assessment in your institute?

    .....
    .....
    .....

12. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

    Please explain.

    .....
    .....

Appendix P: Senior Manager Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR SENIOR MANAGERS

Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. When you have finished, please drop your questionnaire form in to the questionnaire form drop in box that is placed in the reception area of your institute. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Section 1: About you

Please write in the space provided below.

1. Age group: 21 – 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 or above

   .....
2. Gender: male / female

   .....
3. Name of your institute:

   .....
4. Your designation:

   .....
5. Work experience as a senior manager in higher education: (number of years)

   .....
6. Your highest educational qualification:

   .....

Section 2: Senior managers' understanding of the meaning of quality

1. Here are some of the ways of thinking about quality. Please place these in rank order of the most to the least suitable for the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, by putting the number (one-five) against each of the following statements, number one being the most suitable and number four being the least suitable meaning.

1. **Quality as excellence:** This is about going beyond high standards. ☐

2. **Fitness for purpose**
   This suggests that quality has meaning in relation to the purpose.
   For example, providing education in relation to the cultural, social or educational needs of the country. ☐

3. **Value for money**
   This view of quality sees quality in terms of return on investment. ☐

4. **Transformative**
   This view focuses on changing the students by improving their knowledge, skills and talents. The quality is achieved by changing the students' lives for the better. ☐

5. **Perfection (or consistency)**
   This is mainly about zero defects and getting things right first time. This approach focuses on process and it sets requirements which it aims to meet perfectly. ☐

2. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....
   .....

Section 3: <u>Priorities for quality in higher education</u>

1. Please identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from the following list of criteria for quality. Indicate your priorities by placing numbers in the boxes to indicate the ordering of your views, number one equals the highest priority, number two equals the second highest, and so on. You do not need to number all the boxes. You can stop numbering boxes when you feel that you have identified the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes, but please identify more than one priority.

- Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships ☐
- Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning (e.g. the use of good teaching strategies to improve students' critical thinking abilities) ☐
- Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feed back about students' work to improve students' learning ☐
- Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff ☐
- The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students ☐
- Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities ☐
- The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas ☐
- The availability of flexible programmes (e.g. availability of various choices of courses in the programme, availability of flexible lecture times) ☐
- Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice ☐
- A clear student recruitment procedure ☐
- Strict admission policies ☐
- Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes ☐
- Adequate support services for students (e.g. Free English classes, free academic writing classes, counselling services and career guidance) ☐
- Positive relationships between lecturers and students: (e.g. good communication with the students, understanding and encouraging lecturers ☐
- Maintenance of ethics in the institute (e.g. respecting other institutes and advertising only in an ethical way) ☐
- Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka (e.g. the relevance of the content of the course to the students' future careers) ☐
- Size of the student population ☐
- Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute ☐
- Student progression and success rates ☐
- Employability of graduates and their career prospects ☐
- Research activities and research potential of the institute ☐
- Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider ☐

2. Please state if you identify any other 'priorities for quality' and also mention which priority numbers that you would give to them if they were included to the list of criteria mentioned above?

.....
.....
.....

Section 4: <u>Quality of cross border higher education from a global aspect</u>
Please decide to what extend that you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate box.

1. I am aware of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

2. I am aware of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GAT) in relation to cross border higher education

☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Not sure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

Section 5: <u>Quality issues related to the admission procedure</u>
Please decide to what extend that you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate box.

1. We provide all the information about our course fees to the students, including the hidden charges (e.g. : exam fees, library charges and charges for recreational facilities)

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

2. We give accurate and important information to the students about our foreign provider

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

3. We have strict admission policies and we do not enrol students who do not meet the necessary entry requirements

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

4. We provide all the facilities and the resources that we promise to the students when they enrol

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

5. We do not sacrifice quality to increase the number of students

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

Section 6: <u>Lecturer competence and management availability to the students</u>
Please decide to what extend that you agree or disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate box.

1. We have a well-qualified and experienced body of lecturers

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

2. The management staff are readily available to the students

☐ *Strongly disagree* ☐ *Disagree* ☐ *Not sure* ☐ *Agree* ☐ *Strongly agree*

Section 7: <u>Available facilities and support for the staff</u>

Please write your answer to the following question in the space provided:

1. Do you provide sufficient facilities, financial benefits and training to the employees? Please explain.

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Section 8: <u>Quality matters and the solutions</u>
Please write your answer to the following questions in the space provided or tick the appropriate box as necessary:

1. What are the main ways that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality (high quality)?

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2. An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign provider and the government when they make decisions in relation to quality. How do you implement and maintain quality in such situations?

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3. In your opinion, how does your institute assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign providers and the government? Include and information about different approaches for different stakeholders.

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4. In your opinion, to what extent that your institute implements and maintains priorities for quality?

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5. What are the difficulties that you face when implementing and maintaining quality in your institute?

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6. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems? (e.g. What kind of help from the University Grant Commission, your institute solving problems by yourselves, getting help from the government, foreign providers and International bodies)

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7. In what ways does your institute assure the quality of your institute and the courses?

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8. How does your institute assess the quality of the programmes and the institute? Please explain.

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9. What are the main factors influencing the quality of your institute?

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10. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by your institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Please explain.

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Appendix Q: Government Official Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Te Kura Akoranga o Tāmaki Makaurau
Incorporating the Auckland College of Education

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

(Form for Officials of University Grants Commission, officials of the Ministry of Higher Education and Policy makers)

Quality of cross border higher education in Sri Lanka: An investigation into the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka.

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. When you have finished, please drop your questionnaire form in to the questionnaire form drop in box that is placed in the reception area of your organization. Your answers will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Section 1: About you

Please underline the correct answer or write in the space provided below as necessary.

8. Age group: 21 – 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 or above

9. Gender : male / female

10. Name of your organization:

.....

Section 2: Government officials' understanding of the meaning of quality

1. Here are some of the ways of thinking about quality. Please place these in rank order of the most to the least suitable for the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka, by putting the number (one-five) against each of the following statements, number one being the most suitable and number four being the least suitable meaning.

   1. **Quality as excellence:** This is about going beyond high standards. ☐

   2. **Fitness for purpose**
      This suggests that quality has meaning in relation to the purpose.
      For example, providing education in relation to the cultural, social or educational needs of the country. ☐

   3. **Value for money**
      This view of quality sees quality in terms of return on investment. ☐

4. **Transformative**
   This view focuses on changing the students by improving their knowledge, skills and talents. The quality is achieved by changing the students' lives for the better. ☐

5. **Perfection (or consistency)** ☐
   This is mainly about zero defects and getting things right first time.
   This approach focuses on process and it sets requirements which it aims to meet perfectly.

2. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

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Section 3: <u>Priorities for quality in higher education</u>

1. Please identify the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka from the following list of criteria for quality. Indicate your priorities by placing numbers in the boxes to indicate the ordering of your views, number one equals the highest priority, number two equals the second highest, and so on. You do not need to number all the boxes. You can stop numbering boxes when you feel that you have identified the main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes, but please identify more than one priority.

- Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships ☐
- Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning (e.g. the use of good teaching strategies to improve students' critical thinking abilities) ☐
- Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feed back about students' work to improve students' learning ☐
- Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff ☐
- The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students ☐
- Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities ☐
- The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas ☐
- The availability of flexible programmes (e.g. availability of various choices of courses in the programme, availability of flexible lecture times) ☐
- Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice ☐
- A clear student recruitment procedure ☐
- Strict admission policies ☐
- Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes ☐
- Adequate support services for students (e.g. Free English classes, free academic writing classes, counselling services and career guidance) ☐
- Positive relationships between lecturers and students: (e.g. good communication with the students, understanding and encouraging lecturers ☐
- Maintenance of ethics in the institute (e.g. respecting other institutes and advertising only in an ethical way) ☐
- Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka (e.g. the relevance of the content of the course to the students' future careers) ☐
- Size of the student population ☐
- Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute ☐
- Student progression and success rates ☐
- Employability of graduates and their career prospects ☐
- Research activities and research potential of the institute ☐
- Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider ☐

2. Please state if you identify any other 'priorities for quality' and also mention which priority numbers that you would give to them if they were included to the list of criteria mentioned above?

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Section 4: <u>Institutional quality, quality matters and the solutions</u>

1. What are the main weaknesses that you identify in the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka in relation to quality?

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2. In what ways do the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka implement and maintain priorities for quality (high quality) in their institutes?

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3. An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign provider and the government when they make decisions in relation to quality. How do they implement and maintain quality in such situations?

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4. In your opinion, how do these institutes assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign providers and the government? Include and information about different approaches for different stakeholders.

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5. In your opinion, to what extent that these institutes implement and maintain priorities for quality?

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6. What difficulties do these institutes face when implementing and maintaining quality in their institutions?

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7. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems? (e.g. What kind of help from the University Grant Commission, institutes solving problems by themselves, getting help from the government, foreign providers and International bodies)

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8. In your opinion, what are the main factors influencing the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

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9. Do you think that the courses available from the foreign provider meet the cultural, social, economic and educational needs of Sri Lanka?

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10. In what ways is the quality of these degrees assured?

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11. In what ways is the quality of these institutes assured?

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12. What problems do you encounter in relation to quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

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13. What responsibilities does your organization undertake in relation to the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

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14. How does the government support to improve the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

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15. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by an institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country? Yes☐ No☐. Don't know☐

Please explain.

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Appendix R: Interview Questions for Students

1. Age group (16 – 25, 26-35, 36 or above)
2. Gender (male/female)
3. Nationality:

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4. School attended:

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5. Year of Study:

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6. Subject (Business/ IT etc.) and name of degree (BA /MSC/PHD etc.):

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7. Mode of study: Part time / full time
8. Duration of your study/ degree in years:

   .....
9. Is your institute approved by the University Grants commission?

   .....
10. E-mail address/ Contact number :

    .....
11. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?
12. What are main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka**?**
13. In your opinion, how does your institute implement and maintain priorities for quality in their courses/ institute? An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign providers and the government when they make

decisions in relation to quality. How do they implement and maintain quality in such situations?

14. In your opinion, how does your institute assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign provider and the government? Do they use different approaches?

15. In your opinion, to what extent does your institute implement and maintain priorities for quality in their courses/ institute?

16. Did your institute provide you all the facilities, resources and services they promised to you? If not please explain what they promised but did not provide.

17. Can you explain what kind of learning experience that you receive from your institute? (may be in terms of assessment, gaining knowledge, relationship with lecturers, learning environment)

18. What are the main factors influencing the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?
19. In your opinion, what difficulties does your institute face when implementing and maintaining quality in your institute?

20. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems? (e.g. help from the University Grant Commission, your institute solving problems by itself, getting help from the government, foreign providers and International bodies)

21. What problems have you faced in relation to the quality of your institute?

22. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by an institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country? .Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

Please explain.

23. What is your overall opinion about the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka? I mean do they maintain high quality in general?

Appendix S: Interview Questions for Professionals (Lecturers/Senior Managers/ Government Officials)

1. Age group: 21 – 30, 31-40, 41-50, 51 or above

2. Gender : male / female

3. Your designation:

4. Work experience:

5. Your highest educational qualification:

6. How do you define quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

7. What are main priorities for quality in relation to the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka**?**

8. In your opinion, how does your institute/ these institutes implement and maintain priorities for quality in their courses/ institute? An institute needs to think about many aspects such as their students, staff, profit, the foreign providers and the government when they make decisions in relation to quality. How do they implement and maintain quality in such situations?

9. In your opinion, how does your institute/these institutes assure quality or make quality visible to different stakeholders such as students, lecturers, administrative staff, the foreign provider and the government? Do they use different approaches?

10. In your opinion, to what extent does your institute/ these institutes implement and maintain priorities for quality in the courses/ institute? Please explain.

11. What are the main factors influencing the quality of the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka?

12. What do you think about the overall learning experiences that the students receive from your institute/ these institutes?

13. How does your institute assess the quality of the programmes and the institute? Please explain.

14. In your opinion, what difficulties does your institute face when implementing and maintaining quality in your institute?

15. What solutions do you suggest to solve those problems?

16. What problems have you faced in relation to the quality of your foreign degree awarding institute?

17. Do you think that there is any difference between the quality of a degree of a foreign university offered by an institute in Sri Lanka and the quality of the same degree in the home country? Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't Know ☐

    Please explain.

18. What is your overall opinion about the foreign degree awarding institutes of Sri Lanka? I mean do they maintain high quality in general?

Appendix T: Demographic Data of the Students of Questionnaire and Interviews

Demographic Data Type		Questionnaire		Interviews	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Name of the Institute	Institute One	29	18.1 %	1	11.1 %
	Institute Two	28	17.5 %	1	11.1 %
	Institute Three	41	25.6 %	2	22.2 %
	Institute Four	32	20.0 %	3	33.3 %
	Institute Five	30	18.8 %	2	22.2 %
Gender	Male	102	63.8 %	6	66.7 %
	Female	58	36.2 %	3	33.3 %
Age Group	16 – 25	121	75.6 %	5	55.5 %
	26-35	30	18.8 %	3	33.3 %
	36 or above	9	5.6 %	1	11.1 %
Nationality	Sri Lankan	141	88.1 %	6	66.7 %
	Maldivian	17	10.6 %	3	33.3 %
	Other	2	1.2 %	-	-
Ethnicity	Tamil	35	22.0 %	1	11.1 %
	Muslim	42	26.2 %	3	33.3 %
	Burgher	1	0.6 %	-	-
	Sinhalese	80	50.0 %	5	55.5 %
	Other	2	1.2 %	-	-
Study area	Business	59	36.9 %	4	44.4 %
	Information Technology related	56	35.0 %	3	33.3 %
	Health Science / psychology related	28	17.5 %	1	11.1 %
	Engineering related	11	6.8 %	1	11.1 %
	Tourism related	3	1.9 %	-	-
	Confidentiality maintained	3	1.9 %	-	-
Mode of study	Part time	43	26.9 %	4	44.4 %
	Full time	117	73.1 %	5	55.5 %

Appendix U: Demographic Data of the Professionals of Questionnaire and Interviews

Demographic data type		Demographic data of lecturers				Demographic data of senior managers				Demographic data of government officials			
		Questionnaire		Interviews		Questionnaire		Interviews		Questionnaire		Interviews	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	34	56.7 %	3	42.9 %	11	52.4 %	6	66.7 %	18	72.0 %	5	83.3 %
	Female	26	43.3 %	4	57.1 %	10	47.6 %	3	33.3 %	7	28.0 %	1	16.7 %
Age Group	21- 30	18	30.0 %	1	14.3 %	1	4.8 %	1	11.1 %				
	31- 40	19	31.6 %	5	71.4 %	10	47.6 %	3	33.3 %	5	20.0 %	2	33.3 %
	41-50	13	21.7 %	-	-	7	33.3 %	3	33.3 %	15	60.0 %	3	50.0 %
	51 or above	10	16.7 %	1	14.3 %	3	14.3 %	2	22.2 %	5	20.0 %	1	16.7 %
Job Nature	FDAI only	37	61.7 %	4	57.1 %								
	FDAI and Gov. university	23	38.3 %	3	42.9 %								
Qualifications	Undergraduate	19	31.7 %	1	14.3 %	1	4.8 %	1	11.1 %				
	Post graduate dip / Masters/ MPhil	37	61.7 %	5	71.4 %	16	76.2 %	6	66.7 %				
	PhD or above	4	6.7 %	1	14.3 %	4	19.0 %	2	22.2 %				
Designation	Academic related					9	42.9 %	3	33.3 %				

	Director					7	33.3 %	4	44.4 %				
	Other					5	23.8 %	2	22.2 %				
Name of the Institute	Institute One	12	20.0 %	1	14.3 %	3	14.3 %	2	22.2 %				
	Institute Two	15	25.0 %	1	14.3 %	3	14.3 %	2	22.2 %				
	Institute Three	13	21.7 %	1	14.3 %	8	38.1 %	2	22.2 %				
	Institute Four	11	18.3 %	2	28.5 %	4	19.0 %	2	22.2 %				
	Institute Five	9	15.0 %	2	28.5 %	3	14.3 %	1	11.1 %				
Name of government organization	Organization one									8	32.0 %	3	50.0 %
	Organization two									9	36.0 %	2	33.3 %
	Organization three									8	32.0 %	1	16.7 %
Mode of lecturing	Part time	23	38.3 %	3	42.9 %								
	Full time	37	61.7 %	4	57.1 %								

The term FDAI is used to denote ‘Foreign Degree Awarding Institutes of Sri Lanka’.

Appendix V: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Students

Description of quality criterion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	20.48	3.14	1
Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	19.77	3.20	2
Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	19.44	3.20	3
Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	19.30	3.30	4
Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve student learning	19.27	3.64	5
A clear student recruitment procedure	19.20	3.22	6
Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	19.13	2.79	7
Positive relationships between lecturers and students	19.00	3.37	8
Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff	18.88	3.36	9
Maintenance of ethics in the institute	18.11	4.31	10
The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas	18.03	5.10	11
The availability of flexible programmes	17.74	5.07	12
Adequate support services for students	17.69	4.49	13
Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	17.63	5.23	14
Employability of graduates and their career prospects	17.60	5.27	15
Student progression and success rates	17.58	4.70	16
The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students	17.43	4.75	17
Size of the student population	17.27	5.50	18
Strict admission policies	17.24	6.31	19
Research activities and research potential of the institute	17.01	5.27	20
Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka	16.62	5.40	21
Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute	16.36	6.80	22

Appendix W: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Lecturers

Description of quality criterion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	20.68	2.72	1
Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	20.12	2.14	2
A clear student recruitment procedure	19.97	3.01	3
Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve student learning	19.57	3.23	4
Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	19.41	2.44	5
Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	19.22	4.69	6
Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	19.15	2.68	7
Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff	19.09	3.38	8
Strict admission policies	19.03	3.22	9
Maintenance of ethics in the institute	18.70	3.50	10
Positive relationships between lecturers and students	18.54	2.85	11
Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	18.41	4.30	12
Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka	17.91	3.82	13
Research activities and research potential of the institute	17.66	4.20	14
The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas	17.50	5.36	15
The availability of flexible programmes	17.47	5.56	16
Adequate support services for students	17.45	4.93	17
Employability of graduates and their career prospects	17.39	4.53	18
The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students	17.05	4.79	19
Student progression and success rates	16.80	5.33	20
Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute	16.58	8.11	21
Size of the student population	16.33	5.91	22

Appendix X: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Senior Managers

Description of quality criterion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	20.71	1.48	1
Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	20.05	1.84	2
Employability of graduates and their career prospects	19.75	2.62	3
Positive relationships between lecturers and students	19.71	1.26	4
A clear student recruitment procedure	19.58	2.06	5
The availability of flexible programmes	19.57	2.87	6
Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	19.37	1.96	7
Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	19.22	2.48	8
Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve student learning	19.20	2.68	9
Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	18.10	2.42	10
Strict admission policies	17.75	2.17	11
Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka	17.72	3.69	12
Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	17.69	2.95	13
Adequate support services for students	17.33	2.80	14
Research activities and research potential of the institute	17.25	3.95	15
Maintenance of ethics in the institute	17.00	1.73	16
Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff	17.00	2.38	16
Student progression and success rates	16.45	4.15	18
Size of the student population	16.18	3.34	19
The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students	16.10	2.02	20
The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas	15.00	4.24	21
Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute	7.00	-	22

Appendix Y: Ranking of Quality Criteria by the Government Officials

Description of quality criterion	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Providing a curriculum which has a balance of theory and practice	20.54	1.55	1
Delivering lectures in an appropriate way to improve students' deep learning	20.50	0.70	2
Employability of graduates and their career prospects	20.33	2.30	3
Providing accurate and clear information related to courses, fees, the institute and the foreign provider	20.31	1.86	4
A clear student recruitment procedure	20.29	2.22	5
The availability of flexible programmes	20.28	1.70	6
Strict admission policies	19.90	2.07	7
Research activities and research potential of the institute	19.87	1.12	8
Creating an encouraging learning environment in the institutes	19.71	1.70	9
Maintenance of ethics in the institute	19.50	2.44	10
Convenience for students in terms of the location of the institute	19.50	0.70	11
Providing courses which meet the economic, cultural, social, educational requirements of Sri Lanka	19.46	1.84	12
Providing constructive students' assessments and constructive feedback about students' work to improve student learning	19.46	2.93	13
Positive relationships between lecturers and students	19.00	2.44	14
Providing adequate training, facilities and financial benefits to staff	18.83	2.99	15
Student progression and success rates	18.80	2.48	16
Making learning resources available such as library facilities and IT facilities	18.60	2.79	17
Financial support to students in terms of affordable fees for courses or scholarships	18.40	2.13	18
Size of the student population	18.00	5.65	19
Adequate support services for students	17.33	2.58	20
The availability of a feasible appeal and complaints procedure for students	17.25	0.70	21
The availability of student facilities such as cafeterias and recreational areas	-	-	