

INSTITUTE-INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP

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According to the industrial survey of 1983, there were 102,000 registered and informal industrial units in Sri Lanka with employment 639256. Under the open market economic policy, less attention has been paid to Small and Medium Industries (SMI's) which account for 90% of industrial establishments and 70% employment in the manufacturing sector. A recent study showed that the level of technology used are low to face the global competition. Another study showed that the SMI's are highly under capitalized. In order to make the SMI's competitive and sustainable, a strong private-academic-public partnership is required. But the question is whether we are going to force our capabilities and resources to SMI's or build capacities of the SMI's to face the new developments. One should understand the great diversity, and their method of operation from family businesses, clustering and subcontracting etc. Most policy makers and academia have not considered the priority sectors where the opportunities are very high in the field of Mechanical Engineering consultancies. To site a few examples Product development, Design of Fixtures, Dies etc, Development of machinery and equipment for agriculture and agro based industry. The academic institutes should adopt a different approach in working with the SMI,s. The results should clearly show the benefits to the three bottom lines, namely Economic Profits, Environment Friendliness and Social benefits. In approaching or identifying the SMI,s I suggest that the Institute should network with the industry representatives who are generally accepted as Partners. Universities should change or modify the objectives of training or moulding the engineers .Why not we produce entrepreneur engineers?

Mr.Nihal Cooray MIE(SL),C.Eng graduated with B.Sc Eng(Hons) from the University of Moratuwa in 1972. He has postgraduate diploma in Industrial Engineering from the Open University of Sri Lanka. For 12 years he was mechanical Engineer at Celon Hardware Co-operation, Yakkala and later St.Anthoney's Group. Now he is a certified Clean Productivity Audit, ISO 9000 consultant, Manager Environmental and Industrial Engineering Small and Medium Enterprise Development project (project SMED). He is also the manager for UNDO project of SMED for Subcontracting and Partnership Exchange.