

# ASSESSMENT OF THE FUTURE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION NEEDS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Management skills are seen as the crucial competitive edge and the key ingredient for success, whether one talks about the competitiveness of a nation, an enterprise or a state sector service institution. When we talk about management, we refer to the efficient utilisation of ever limited resources; in other words, improving the productivity of an enterprise or the whole nation. The economic miracle of Japan, which within a couple of decades became an economic giant, was due largely to its ability to produce quality consumer goods at a competitive price. This was a direct result of the innovative management concepts and procedures utilised in Japan. Most American and Western European countries have readily adopted the Japanese Management concepts and procedures now.

Like Japan, few other Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, have made significant strides towards achieving rapid development. These countries are usually referred to as the NICs (Newly Industrialised Countries) and are seen as having the potential of mimicking the significant development achieved by Japan. The NICs success is due mainly to effective long term planning, political stability, setting out a conducive policy framework for industrial development coupled with a well thought out Human Resource Development (HRD) program, giving due significance to technical and managerial skill development to aid the industrialization process.

Sri Lanka has also witnessed the rapid development made by the south Asian neighbours and the resulting rise in living standards. The post 1977 governments have put a major policy thrust in achieving rapid development, implicitly trying to duplicate the successes of the NICs. Part of this policy was to facilitate an export led growth, through the establishment of Free Trade Zones (FTZs), encouraging garment exports and relying on the private sector as the engine of growth as defined in the New Industrial Policy <sup>(1)</sup>. Recently, it was announced that the Government policies will be geared for Sri Lanka to achieve the NIC status by the year 2000. Such ambitious development objectives should be coupled with other support programmes, particularly in the area of HRD. While we are awaiting the formulation of the necessary HRD policy statement to achieve the NIC status, it is useful to analyse past policies on management skill development in the country and identify suitable guidelines for the future.