THE ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TRENDS IN PLANNING AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY LED DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR SRI LANKA

L. MUNASINGHE* AND D.P.W. JAYAWARDENA

Department of Industrial Management, University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka.

* Corresponding author (E-mail: lalith@kln.ac.lk)

ABSTRACT

It is important to accurately identify the trends of a technology to formulate realistic policies relevant to it. Number of examples related to IT industry proves that this is no exception to IT. This article discusses the global trends of IT applications in areas like education, access to information, governance, public services, business & commerce, industry, agriculture, home & leisure and their relevance to Sri Lanka. The potential key impediments and trends with respect to the two main investment opportunities namely the software and IT education & training are also highlighted. Sri Lanka has the potential to take advantage of the emerging trends in many areas. This paper stresses the need to formulate a national policy on IT that would actively promote its application in as many spheres as possible and eliminate the obstacles stifling their implementation.

Keywords : IT application areas, IT trends, Software industry, IT Education and training.

INTRODUCTION

IT industry is growing fast. It affords many opportunities for Sri Lanka to address economic development and eradicate unemployment problems. India is a good example of using IT opportunities to the fullest benefit. During 1999-2000, India's software exports amounted to US$ 4 billion and during the last decade Indian software and services sector recorded annual growth rates exceeding 50%. Any concerted effort to utilise this potential must first have a clear understanding of the IT trends, which are dynamic. A policy developed without adequate understanding of the role of the IT trends is bound to fail or deliver only partial results. This paper takes an overview of the IT development patterns from a global perspective and draws attention significantly on the successful Indian model. The underlining critical issue is to clearly identify the IT trends. It is also necessary to have a clear overview of the IT application areas is the Sri Lankan context (commerce, industry, governance, etc.) and critically analyse the unique situation in Sri Lanka compared to the accepted western application model. After such