



Faculty of Health-Care Sciences: *from Arasady to Pillaiyarady*

Prof. K E Karunakaran
Dean (2006 – 2013), FHCS
Deputy Vice Chancellor, EUSL

Faculty of Health-Care Sciences is the first faculty, located outside the main campus of Eastern University, Sri Lanka and initiated functioning in the year 2005. Faculty of Agriculture which began functioning since 1981 at the main campus and Faculty of Technology that began its activities in 2017 also at the main campus; both are now functioning at Palacholai.

Initial works for the establishment of study programs in Human Health Sciences at EUSL were conducted way back in the 1990s. A Medical Faculty Committee were formed. The committee comprised Late Prof. T. Varagunam former Chancellor of EUSL, and few more intellectuals. They worked on a new format of curriculum for MBBS degree taking into consideration to incorporate the pedagogies of twenty first century higher education. These were reforms proposed and adopted by universities in many countries. The committee continued to work on preparing a comprehensive curriculum and also worked towards forming a Faculty for Health Sciences. There was an unprecedented delay in getting these materialized. Thus the University had decided to commence a study program in Nursing which could be implemented through Faculty of Science. There was a big demand for post basic diploma in Nursing among the Nurses working in Government Hospitals. Taking into consideration the then Vice Chancellor Prof. Rev. G F Rajendram spearheaded designing and conducting such study program. The first batch has been recruited in the year 1997. The location was 50, New Road, Batticaloa. Two batches of the program have been conducted and in the interim efforts were taken to commence a BSc. In Nursing as an external degree which was implemented in 2002. Eastern University, Sri Lanka signed a MoU with University of Tromsø, Norway in the development of Nursing program and as a result several benefits were obtained. Among them was a Clinical Skills Laboratory constructed and equipped.

Thus 50, New Road, Arasady, Batticaloa premises popularly known as Uthaya motors became the seat for higher education in Health Sciences.

Faculty of Health-Care Sciences at Arasady

In 2004, a development consultant was appointed for the initial formation of a Faculty in Health Sciences. Late Dr. V Kunanandem started working in this premises. The Paddy Marketing Board premises across the New Kalmunai Road was also taken into the purview for the development of Faculty infrastructure. An Interim Faculty Board was formed consisting of Deans of the Faculties of EUSL and Consultant Specialists of Teaching Hospital Batticaloa under the chairmanship of the Vice Chancellor. The then Chancellor Prof. Varagunam actively participated in these meetings. The MBBS curriculum and Departmental structure were all new and modern, not so far implemented in any of the Sri Lankan Universities. Gazette notification was published in 2005 of the formation of Faculty of Health-Care Sciences with six administrative departments. Money was allocated to refurbish the existing Paddy Stores and mill into Department Offices, Lecture Halls and Laboratories. The Uthaya motors premises housed the office of the Dean, Administrative office, computer laboratory, Library, and offices for a few departments. A building was constructed for the canteen which was promptly used as lecture hall and subsequently, library. Still it is used for lectures and never for the intended purpose.

Nevertheless, an extent of approximately 50 acres of land in the prime location at Pillaiarady was set aside for EUSL as early as the establishment of FHCS. The taking over process of the land was complex. It took over a decade with much painstaking efforts.

One of the tasks undertaken by the Development consultant was preparing a master-plan for the comprehensive infrastructure for FHCS. Dr. Kunanandem took much interest and looked for such developments at universities overseas. He did significant work on this aspect. It was however completed in 2009 when the author of this article presented the master-plan to the University. It was approved at all levels. The cost of the project was big, running in millions of rupees. Finding funds were a real task. It was in this juncture we needed assistance. Political elite in Batticaloa showed some enthusiasm. I am happy to mention the name one such person, a Member of Parliament and also deputy minister Mr. Vinayagamorthy Muralitharan who showed interest in the project. I also like mention that the present Dean Dr.T.Sathanathan, played a vital role in connecting the faculty with deputy minister. Mr. V. Muralitharan arranged meetings with certain Chinese fund providers. It didn't materialized. After that he made his fullest effort to bring the fund from the Kuwait. Thereby, fund was obtained via Kuwait assistance and the rest are known by every single person in the University.

Faculty of Health-Care Sciences, Pillaiyarady.

It took over two years for the infrastructure development for the faculty at this location. The buildings were officially handed over to the university in the end of March 2022. Faculty started moving into this complex gradually, occupying the student hostel, staff residences, office of the Dean and departments & library. The Dean's election took place at the new location in September 05th 2023. Dr. T. Sathaanathan, one of the founder members became as the Dean and Teaching-learning activities started.

It looked everything was smooth at this new location with massive infrastructure etc. in reality however, certain essential necessities are not fulfilled. A good example is the non-existent internal road network within the premises. The main entrance is still under construction. Certain other necessities need to be completed. On top of all, maintenance of the buildings and premises, security in the somewhat massive extent of land and properties are real challenge.

Conclusion:

The road for FHCS from Arasady to Pillaiarady was not so smooth. Understandingly, challenges and shortcomings exist. The faculty moved from the center of the city with much facilities availed at the hand's reach, to a somewhat sub-urban site with the dire need for the facilities to be developed for the use of staff and students. It is with fervent hope that the faculty must come up to become an epicenter for health-Care studies, Care for the community and Research. Until then, I remain!

**"Trade unions have been an essential force for social change, without which a semblance of a decent and humane society is impossible under capitalism."
Pope Francis**

