

# Merging Academic Research and Industry Development Requirements for a Better Responsive Construction Sector

Chandanie Hadiwattege, B.Sc (Hons.) and Sepani Senaratne, Ph.D  
University of Moratuwa  
Sri Lanka

A university is a scholarly organism committed to inquiry, investigation and discovery at all levels. Especially universities which produce graduates to a particular industry, have a greater responsibility to develop respective industries through innovation and change. It is commonly accepted that the lecturers receive a number of benefits resulting from their research activity which accrue to financial and intellectual resources of the university, and which subsequently benefit students, and ultimately the relevant industry. The construction industry is having very unique challenges of its own and is frequently identified as a slow moving industry. However to move ahead with the developing world, the construction organisations should be able to respond to change and develop. This implies that academic research carried out in the built environment should be in line with the development requirements of construction industry. Moreover it is crucial that the academic research findings be adopted by the construction industry. However, there is lack of evidence that construction industry readily adopts new findings of academic research into their practice. There could be number of reasons behind this which is not fully explored yet in previous studies. Hence this PhD research study aims to understand the reasons behind and develop effective mechanisms to merge academic research and industry development requirements by overcoming the current implementation barriers for a better responsive construction sector for Sri Lanka. A comprehensive literature review is the first step of this study within which to identify the current scenario. The field study will be mainly carried out in Sri Lankan context using a “mixed research method”. Within this, the researcher intends to carry out two opinion surveys separately with academics and industry practitioners. Opinion survey with academics will explore the nature of research that they currently carry out, especially how the origination of research problem is related with industry practitioner feedback and the transfer of research outcomes to the industry practitioners. Opinion survey with industry practitioners will explore their development requirements of the Sri Lankan construction industry, interest for research as a way forward to the development of the industry, how they receive research outcome and integrate it to the industry practice and what are the existing barriers for research knowledge capture. Based on the survey findings guidelines to merge the two ends will be developed. The suitability and the applicability of the developed guidelines will be verified through case study method possibly with an action research element. It is anticipated that based on above research findings implications can be drawn for the both academics and industry practitioners on how to successfully merge academic research with construction industry development requirements.

**Key Words:** Construction Industry, Development, Higher Education Research