ABSTRACT

Today more than half of the world's annual merchant tonnage traverses Southeast Asian waters and as a result of that container transport operation have been extending inland, providing more comprehensive service across the shipping sector. However the continual growth of containerized freight gives rise to problems and challenges for the expansion of the existing port systems mainly due to the scarcity of space. Sri Lanka also has been affected by this problem and as a result of that, Inland Container Depots (ICD's) have been shifted to the outside port premises in order to better facilitate them.

Even though a special need exists for better ICD operation in Sri Lanka due to the emergence of the new ports, there are a number of problems that have been identified which restricts the smooth operations. Therefore dissertation has been designed to address the main issues in ICD operations in Sri Lanka with the view of improve the Depot Operations.

The methodology of the dissertation was adopted by considering mainly the survey approach and it was supplemented by number of interviews on issues pertaining to the ICD operations with the managers, executives as well as the key frontline hands-on operational staff in Depots. The data collected were analyzed, using statistical methods including Pareto analysis and Correlation and Regression Analysis.

According to the findings of study, it has been identified that, machinery breakdown, documentation errors, limited depot space, inaccurate forecasts and highly damaged containers are the significant problems in Depot operations. Other than above, the key finding was that, accurate communication systems with advanced technology can integrate all the operations in the depot operation and depot management system, usage of RFID technology and so on will enhance the ICD operation by reducing the delays and enhancing the performances greatly.

Finally, the study concluded with the suggestions to improve the Depot performances and indicating the major limitations and potentiality for future researches which can be derived from this study.