

# UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN SRI LANKA

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Rt. Rev. Dr. S. JEBANESAN  
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## PREFACE

This study on the relationship between university education and employment in Sri Lanka is the result of a co-operative research project between the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) of Unesco and the Marga Institute in Sri Lanka. At IIEP, this forms part of a research project designed to explore in several countries the relationship between the employment of graduates and the development of higher education in both quantitative and qualitative terms. These studies, as well as other activities in the research programme of the IIEP, reflect the constant concern in educational planning and policy-making about the relationship between education and employment. In addition to contributing a data-base on the countries studied, it is hoped that these studies may also help in the development of more elaborate methodologies for studying similar problems in other countries. The Marga Institute which undertook the Sri Lanka case-study has been engaged in several research projects which have their focus on youth, employment and education. This study accordingly fitted into one of the priority research areas of the Marga Institute. It also provided the Institute with an opportunity of getting involved in a collaborative research project with an important arm of Unesco.

The task of educational planning today is becoming more and more complex and extends beyond the development and application of models of quantitative correspondence between the output of an educational system and needs of the labour market as they are forecast from time to time. Perceptions, attitudes and expectations, not only of students but also of employed graduates, academic staff and prospective employers, play an important role in the relationship between education and employment, and require more of our attention if we are to understand better the dynamics of the relation-

ship between education and work. Ideological factors, shifts in developmental priorities, and changing attitudes and expectations of the society, require that the planning methodology incorporates techniques which are sensitive to these aspects and ensure constant adaptation to them.

This study attempts to provide an exploratory basis for various dimensions of the linkage between higher education and the employment of university graduates. The information and methodological base which is thus created should allow for better guidance of planners and policy-makers in the future development of higher education programmes. For Sri Lanka, the study is of particular relevance as it comes at a time when the proposals contained in the White Paper for educational reforms at the secondary and tertiary levels are under discussion.

The analysis of the relationship between university education and employment in Sri Lanka sheds light on some of the specific features of the country's education system and its socio-economic environment. Thus among the countries of the South Asian region, Sri Lanka has the largest enrolment ratio at primary and secondary levels, but a comparatively low enrolment ratio for third-level education. Yet, the country is faced with the problem of unemployment of university graduates. To remedy this it has taken some bold measures : the Graduate Training Scheme (1972), the introduction of job-oriented courses in the universities in the same year, the crash programme for the recruitment of teachers (1976), the creation of the 'Job Bank' (1978) and the Graduate Placement Scheme (1981) and greater opportunities for job creation through the liberalisation of economic policy adopted by the present government which allows for more individual initiative, with enlarged participation of the private sector, and increased investment from abroad.

The preliminary results of the study were the subject of review at a National Workshop, attended by a large number of educational decision-makers of the country as well as a team of international experts, which took place in Colombo in 1981. Many of the comments and suggestions received from the participants at the Workshop have been taken into account in finalising the study.



In conducting this study, both Institutes have obtained the full co-operation of all Sri Lankan authorities concerned, particularly the University Grants Commission, and wish to acknowledge this assistance most sincerely.

It is a particularly pleasant duty to be able to acknowledge the close professional collaboration that has marked this research programme. The present study is a striking example of the application of IIEP's policy that no research be undertaken without close co-operation with the research team in the host country. The arrangement whereby this book is published as a joint effort of IIEP/Unesco and the Marga Institute is an expression of such co-operative effort.

Financial support for this study has been provided to the IIEP by voluntary contributions from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Ministry for Economic Co-operation (BMZ) of the Federal Republic of Germany, and is acknowledged with gratitude. The Marga Institute has provided the local research budget for the study.

We are grateful to all the contributors to this study for the efforts they have put into this volume. The opinions expressed in the study are their own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the IIEP or Unesco.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background and objectives of the IIEP research project

During the last decade the universities around the world have been under attack from the different sections of the society because of their failure to respond to the societal needs. Questions are being raised about their contribution to national, social and economic development, relevance of their programmes, their method of functioning, and even about their purposes. The hardest question comes from the student and graduate community. What have universities done for them in promoting upward social mobility in recent years? In performing suitable social roles? In getting suitable employment? These questions are related to the broad framework of the relationship between education and employment. Is there or should there be a relationship between education and employment? Researchers have different points of view in this respect.

Research on the relationship between education and employment in recent years has been based on four different and more or less conflicting points of view in four schools of thought<sup>1</sup>. First among them is the view that education provides people with skills to develop and manage the economy and related services and, therefore, investment in education is an investment in human capital implying investment in productive capacity of the people. The second view is that education not only provides skills for performing different vocational tasks, it also disseminates social values, in promoting upward mobility in the society and that education acts as a screening device to select the ablest people for the best

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1. Versluis Jan.: *Education and Employment: A Synthesis*, World Employment Programme Working Paper, I.L.O., Geneva, 1978.

jobs. The third view is that productivity is an attribute of a job and not of a person. People are matched to jobs by criteria which may be associated to education, but education is not a determinant of productivity. This theory has been termed as the labour-market segmentation theory. The fourth view, which is related to the third one, is that the idea of correspondence between education and employment is an illusion existing only in the minds of school-leavers and has little to do with performance on the job. The usual practice of recruiting school-leavers for certain jobs according to certain educational qualifications makes new job-seekers believe that they are entitled to these types of jobs.

The above four schools of thought can, in fact, be grouped into two categories. The first two schools of thought believe in the contribution of education to social and economic development of people. The latter schools raise doubts in the role of education in such development. To the potential users of these views or theories, especially in the context of a developing country, problems of analysis are crucial. Some of these problems have been elaborated later. Whatever might be coming out of the different schools of thought, educational activities, in particular at the third level were expanding fast during the last two decades.

Enrolment in third-level education in developing countries has increased six-fold during the period 1960-80. This increase in enrolment has also led to an increase in the number of graduates from institutions of higher education. Three factors may be identified as being responsible for the rapid expansion of higher education; first among them is the economic factor. In most developing countries, the policy behind the development of higher education was to supply the economy as rapidly as possible with the educated manpower necessary to eliminate human resource "bottle-necks" in expanding sectors. Many of the countries, having secured political independence during the last three decades, sought in the national interest to replace the expatriates holding high-level decision-making positions in a wide range of public and economic services. The vacuum created by their departure led to an increased demand for the output from secondary schools to become university graduates or receive some technical or sub-professional training. Therefore, emphasis had to be laid on the development of higher education.



At this stage, with demand exceeding supply and attention focussed on those types of higher education where graduates were in short supply, little thought was given to unemployment. The distribution of income and employment were implicitly thought to be problems that would be solved by rapid economic expansion and by the upward mobility of the poor through increased educational opportunities. At the same time, industrial development was favoured over agricultural development because agriculture appeared to be able to survive with unskilled labour, and because the planners and politicians thought that only dynamic industrial growth could absorb the masses of underemployed especially in rural areas, and lead the economy into "take-off." It was also believed that this would sustain economic growth, increase consumption and improve the overall economic condition of the people. Economists were quick to argue that investment in human resources was a powerful factor for economic growth. The rates of return for such investment, although calculated very approximately, and sometimes arbitrarily, showed that in terms of productivity the rate of return on educational expenditure was as high as—if not higher than—the investments elsewhere. Thus, more and more money came to be invested in education with the institutions of higher education receiving a large share, a share justified by salary differentials that in turn were legitimised by educational differentials.

In other words, the implicit strategy of rapid growth alone (with emphasis on the industrial sector), rather than an overall strategy of growth, employment and distribution had a profound effect on the planning and expansion of education in those countries. Secondary and higher education were expanded much more rapidly than primary schools were built in the countryside, favouring urban higher-income groups rather than the rural poor, and urban industries rather than agriculture. The education which was introduced in rural areas taught children a curriculum almost totally unrelated to rural problems. Expansion was so rapid that sufficient attention could hardly be paid to the quality of instruction. This resulted in heavy wastage within the education system and meant that the training school was often irrelevant to the training needs on the job. Schools generally lacked the capacity to adapt themselves to changing society, and external pressure had to be applied to make them useful to the realities of working life.

There has not been any formal relationship between educational planning and manpower planning in most of these countries, so that matching between education and employment has been an unknown exercise until very recently.

Not surprisingly, the type of educational expansion which this overall development strategy produced in the non-socialist countries probably contributed to short-term economic growth by lowering the wages of educated labour at all levels relative to what they might have been, had educational institutions not been rapidly expanded in urban areas, but it also probably contributed to emigration from rural to urban areas.

The close relationship between educational change and development strategy can be seen as a 'correspondence' of educational change to economic and social change. It is a two-way relationship: educational change can influence economic and social change by awakening the 'awareness' of the people, and through scientific and technological innovations, whereas the mode of operation of the economy, its structure and its ideology, influence the structure and functions of the formal school system.

Thus, in capitalist economies the social divisions between the working class and the middle class, and within the working class itself, are likely to be reproduced by the schools; children from different social origins are likely to be sorted into economic and social roles which are related to their parents' social class standing. Furthermore, as we have mentioned, the educational system helps to produce ever higher levels of skills in the society even though these skills cannot be fully employed. Where labour unions are more powerful in capitalist societies (primarily in industrial Europe, the United States of America and Australia), schooling has tended to serve working class interest in social mobility and—very indirectly—in better conditions of employment.

In socialist societies, schooling serves socialist development strategies and vice-versa. Since the class division between capitalists and workers has been eliminated in socialist economies and the income and status differences between various kinds of work have been reduced, schools generally provide the possibility for more social mobility than in capitalist countries. Nevertheless, because the total elimination of the class structure is not only



dependent on the political philosophy of socialism but on attitudes, customs and beliefs of individuals and communities, achievement in this area may not be total in certain cases. In fact, there may exist important differences between different kinds of workers. Formal education may still 'sort' the children of peasants, workers and the educated middle classes into different kinds and levels of education. Since the ideology of socialism is different from that of capitalism, schools in socialist countries tend to accentuate the achievements of labour rather than of individual entrepreneurs and put more stress on social service and the group rather than the individual. Even so, the sorting function of the schools, as well as the need for highly-skilled manpower in socialist countries, puts stress on individual performance. Finally, the full employment and income distribution policies of socialist countries create a context in which job security and relative income do not depend nearly as much on schooling (and therefore parents' social position) as in capitalist countries. Finishing secondary school versus university should make less difference in finding employment and little difference in future income.

The reason for expansion of education was also social and cultural. For example, education was thought to be a cultural good for individual moral development in many of the countries of the Orient and was thought to have nothing, or very little, to do with the economic well-being of the individual. This was true in many cases until western education spread to those countries with its materialistic and skill-formation bias. The ancient universities of India and Egypt are examples. When western education came to these countries, the traditional cultural aspect could not be set aside entirely. In many countries, the feeling of relating education with employment was a mixed one as late as the mid-seventies. For some countries education was allowed to expand even at higher levels without giving consideration to employability of the school-leavers. Education, for many countries, was also considered to be a basic human right and democratization in education became a national goal in many countries. Although priority should have been given to primary-level education, with an improved communication system, benefits of higher education were more readily perceived. Once the children had received some education, they understood the benefits of having more education and demanded more.

Most of the institutions of higher education charged very low fees, while the special economic incentives and prestige and power attached to the jobs obtained by graduates with higher education attracted more and more students. The social pressure was too high for higher education to allow some countries to divert the resources towards lower levels of education, particularly to primary education.

There were also political factors responsible for expansion in higher education. To all the countries, and to all the regions within a country, an institution of higher education was regarded as a symbol of national or regional prestige. Economic criteria played but a small role in the establishment of many of the institutions of higher education, and employability of the output often played no role at all.

The rapid expansion of higher education has created as many problems as it has solved. Principal among these :

1. the lack of relevance of the content and structure of the system of higher education with respect to the national needs since in most of these countries the expansion was hardly combined with the consideration of changed needs of the society in the political, social and economic spheres;
2. lack of confidence on behalf of the key production sectors of the economy in the institutions of higher education, due to the absence of any interaction between the industries and institutions of higher education;
3. rural exodus because of the location of these institutions in urban areas;
4. increase in expectations among the students which could not be met; and
5. most important, the mismatch in quantitative and qualitative terms between the output of the system and its employability.

To be fair, the authorities of higher education have been partly handicapped by the problems of the operation of the employment market and its everchanging nature. It has been difficult for them to assess the absorptive capacity of the economy, due to difficulties in forecasting the manpower needs. The principal difficulties are lack of information on :



1. resource potential of the country ;
2. changing technology and labour productivity ;
3. educational needs for different kinds of jobs ;
4. occupational mobility,
5. attitudes and expectations of the potential employees and employers ; and
6. recruitment and promotion practices of the employers.

Even if such information were available, economic uncertainties would still prevail. However, these difficulties may be tackled only by making the system of higher education more flexible in order to cope with the changing economic priorities.

It is in this context that the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) launched a research project to relate the development of higher education within a country with the changing needs of the employment market, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, so as to improve the basis for planning the development of higher education and to reduce the mismatch between the type of training offered by the institutions and the types of skills needed by the labour market.

It was believed that all the schools of thought mentioned above had some reasons and justification but none of them could fit into the situation prevailing in a particular country at a particular point in time. The approach followed by IIEP was, therefore, not to accept any of the above theories in the context of a developing country on which precise information about the actual operation of the socio-political structure is not known. The IIEP approach has not accepted capitalist theory of social operation as such, as the basis of the human capital theory, nor will it accept the Marxian theory which is behind the segmentation approach, nor the "diploma disease" theory where school-leavers are assumed to be incapable of finding the real correspondence between education and the job, but has put the actual operation of the education system and the labour market to test. To us it appears that all these theories are constantly under revision and it is extremely difficult to identify a country's social system precisely by its following a particular model of development. Whatever model for development a country accepts, it adopts the model according to its socio-economic cultural environ-

ment. With these points of view in mind, the IIEP project on higher education and employment had the high-level objective of providing a knowledge base to draw implications for planning higher education with an orientation towards meeting employment needs of the country.

To meet this objective, an analysis of quantitative aspects is not enough and any investigation has to consider relevant qualitative aspects also, such as expectations of students, graduates and employers, as well as quantitative aspects such as employment needs, trends of output of the educational system, intakes to the system, structure of the labour force, etc.

## 1.2 Conceptual framework of the project

The phenomenon of interdependence between educational development and the overall socio-economic development of a country calls for an analysis of the resource potential in natural, physical and human categories. To develop each region in a balanced way, the development strategy of a country should take account of whatever natural resource potential is available in that region. The process of exploitation and the choice of technology will be determined *inter alia* by natural resource potential. The exploitation of these resources needs skills which must be provided by the education system. The way in which natural resources are exploited, therefore, influences the educational development strategy in structure and content. It is also dependent on the available and potential physical resources such as building, equipment, transportation and communication facilities. Development of these physical resources depend, in turn, on the development of education and vice versa. An analysis of physical resource potential therefore becomes an important task in ascertaining the role of education in the overall development strategy of a country or a region.

In the analysis of the development of human resources, traditions, customs and beliefs cherished by the people cannot be ignored. Demographic changes influence the human resources potential as well. Education, for that matter, higher education, has to be planned in such a way as to develop this human resource potential in order



to respond to the needs of the social and economic development of the country while considering the expectations and attitudes of the people. An analysis of human resource development therefore becomes imperative in the overall analysis of the relationship between higher education and employment.

The conditions of work, recruitment and promotion policy of the employment market influence the type of qualification that an employee would have. The full employment policy, on the one hand has to guarantee a job for every individual. In countries where this policy does not prevail, employment is an objective of the individual. Therefore, the development of human resources becomes dependent on the operation of the labour market and the prevailing employment policy. The policy of human resource development for economic and social needs, calls for an analysis of the skills needed for the various activities of the economy. The output of the education system, by type of skills taught, has to be known for proper utilisation of the human resources it generates. Before the education system can be planned with respect to intake, content and structure, it is only logical that demands for such skills in quantitative terms be estimated beforehand to whatever extent possible. These estimates of demand, which traditionally have been called manpower demands but in our conception are broader than that, because of the consideration of the qualitative aspects, are susceptible to inaccuracy due to economic uncertainties and the changing nature of the perceptions, attitudes and expectations of the different segments of the society. However, some guidance is needed as to the direction that the development of education in general, and higher education in particular, should take in quantitative terms to cater for the future needs for skills so as to avoid unemployment or underemployment.

It is believed that these estimates, if properly prepared, can provide such guidance. These quantitative estimates of needs for skills can be checked with the actual values to identify the degree of inaccuracy and to form a checklist of missing parameters and variables. They are also useful for setting the foundation of the strategy for the development of the structure and organisation of the education system.

It is assumed that where higher education is concerned the estimates are easier to make, because of the increased degree of correspondence between the skills imparted in the higher education



system and the skills needed on the job, than for other levels of education. With regard to the problems of estimating future needs for highly qualified manpower, an analysis of the matching between the quantity of trained people and the quality of the training content demanded by the economy and responsiveness of the institutions of higher education becomes particularly useful. This analysis of matching brings out the shortcomings of the education system not only quantitatively but also qualitatively. A careful diagnosis of the education system forms the basis of any future strategy for the higher education system and also provides a yard-stick for achievements in restructuring the social system through change in the educational system, and illuminates the problems encountered in achieving the targets of socialization and equality of opportunities in the world of work. These problems may be seen in the various education "paths" of different population groups, which result in the different working opportunities in the labour market.

To identify the factors obstructing socialization and equality of opportunities requires a sociological analysis of the population, their perceptions, attitudes and expectations from the labour market. This analysis must give details of such socio-economic characteristics as parental educational and income background, age, sex, region of home, type of school attended, etc.

An analysis of the problem of unemployment and under-utilization of graduates in respect of the training received and the skills needed by the job can provide useful information for decision-making to improve the relationship between higher education and the world of work. This analysis would also involve a study of the process of employment and its effectiveness as perceived by the graduates and the employers.

An institutional mechanism for interaction among the students, their parents, the institutions of higher education, the graduates, the employers and the planners and decision-makers could also assist in improving such a relationship. A better match between the expectations and the admission policies of the institutions of higher education could result in better academic performance and better socialization. This could be achieved through the design of more rational selection criteria and a better counselling system.

A better match between the expectations and qualifications of graduates and the expectations and requirements of the employers could result in higher productivity, more job satisfaction, and less structural imbalance in highly qualified manpower with the adoption of better employment procedures and selection criteria. A matching system among the different segments of the society could be a useful tool to develop a 'fine tuning' procedure for constant revision of the higher education system and the labour market which would be able to take into account the changing technology, re-ordering of developmental priorities, changing structure of the education system, and changing perceptions, attitudes and expectations of the different segments of the society.

An attempt has been made in this project to go into as much detail as possible in following the above conceptual framework in the same sequences as the discussion above. Such a research has to be interdisciplinary, involving economists, historians, psychologists, sociologists, educationists and computer scientists. It also calls for an extensive data base, which will be discussed at a later stage.

It should, however, be noted that the problem of economic uncertainties, which are not only due to factors within the national control but influenced by the international situation, cannot be resolved. Only the flexibility of the system of higher education can reduce the effects of such uncertainties. With these limitations in mind, we go ahead to analyse the problem of the education system in general, university education in particular and employment of graduates in Sri Lanka within the framework of the IIEP Research Project.

### **1.3 The relationship between education and employment in Sri Lanka : the issues, objectives and methodology of the research**

To understand the relationship between education and employment in Sri Lanka, it is necessary to look into the societal system of the country as it prevailed in the past, with particular attention to the role of education in the working life and the role of work in the educational life. Before the impact of the western commercial



civilization, Sri Lanka, like most other developing countries, had a traditional society with a dominant role of the village community and a subsistence agrarian economy. Education in that society had to provide occupational skills, behaviour codes, initiation into the value system and an understanding of the ultimate objective of life in terms of religion. Education was an integral part of life at its different stages, from childhood to old age. Ancillary crafts and occupations had to support the primary function of food production for the community. The activities that a member of the society had to undertake in his different roles in the society were all indivisible elements of a single learning system where the elders educated the young in different institutionalized life situations, in the religious institutions, in the work-place and in the family. The societal leaders, the elders, the expert craftsmen and the religious teachers set the standards and provided the learning. Learning and work were closely linked.

This system worked in a technologically simple and economically static society. Even during the colonial period, the same system prevailed in rural Sri Lanka, which covered almost the entire country except for the few urban pockets and a very small modern sector of the economy created at the advent of the commercial civilization.

During this period, primary education was the state responsibility and was provided to a substantial part of the population in national languages, free of charge. Education in the English language was provided for a small privileged group on a fee-levying basis in private schools. It was however only those who successfully completed primary education in the English language that could have access to secondary and higher education. This was indeed only a very small part of the total education system and was adapted to the needs of subordinates of the colonial rulers for their administration and commercial activities. This dual system continued until 1945 when universal free education was introduced with subsequent adoption of national languages as the medium of instruction. These steps opened the door of educational institutions at all levels to the entire population of school going age.

However, the programmes of education which were geared to the small modern sector of the economy, namely the government and the mercantile sector, did not undergo any substantial change

to take into account the mass output of the system with very little change in the employment needs. As mentioned earlier, the upward social mobility that was due to education had to slow down drastically, giving rise to unmet expectations of the school-leavers and university graduates. The modes of instruction also left aside very fundamental aspects related to the development of values, formation of character, etc., which were the core of the traditional Sri Lankan education. The family, the village community and the religious institutions were isolated from the education system. The modern education system did not relate itself to the roles in life and the social objectives that citizens of an independent nation had to pursue. It contained very little orientation towards the social role of the citizens, including employment.

Meanwhile, the traditional learning system which provided the social skills in the past was fast disintegrating. The changing needs of the society, especially due to the development efforts, made it incapable of responding because of its very static nature. The citizens were left with an irrelevant modern education system and almost invalid traditional learning system at a time when they were supposed to modernize the economy, transform the subsistence agrarian economy to a modern agricultural sector and develop an administrative infrastructure that could take Sri Lanka to an economic take-off. Most of the problems mentioned in the earlier sections in relating education to employment in general had also crept into the Sri Lankan society.

However, the situation in Sri Lanka in respect of graduate employment is an interesting case, and different in some respects from that in the neighbouring South-Asian countries. The country has a very high literacy rate, the highest in the region. Its primary and secondary education systems have a better coverage of the relevant age-group population than the neighbouring countries of the region. However, the participation rate in higher education, less than 2 per cent of the relevant age-group population, should have protected the country from the problem of educated unemployment at the university level. But this is not the case.

The problem of educated youth has been very critical in Sri Lanka during the last decade, has led to the youth insurrection in 1971, and has attracted the attention of not only the national authorities but also international agencies. At the request of the national



authorities, the ILO undertook jointly with the authorities the task of developing a programme of action for matching employment opportunities and expectations in 1971.<sup>1</sup> In 1972, the government adopted the 'graduate trainee scheme' and 'job-oriented programmes' in universities as remedial measures for the problem of educated unemployment. In 1976, a scheme for recruiting in a massive way Arts graduates as teachers was also introduced. During the period 1967-77, intake to universities was also severely controlled. All these measures in some way were directed to check the problem of unemployment of university graduates.

With a change in the government, together with a substantial change in the economic and educational policy, a new set of measures have been taken to tackle the problem of educated youth in the country. A very recent attempt by the Sri Lanka Federation of University Women also deals with the problem of employment of female Arts graduates in the country and suggests measures to correct the situation.<sup>2</sup> Whether these measures have been or will be successful is the subject of debate and analysis.

As will be noted in the subsequent analysis, unemployment in Sri Lanka for university graduates has been a structural problem. At the absolute level the problem may not be that critical, as reflected in the shortage of professionals in certain areas whereas there is surplus in other areas. This gives some leeway to tackle this problem by adjusting the admission policy. It is also hypothesized that similar adjustment can also be applied in the career information mechanism, organization of educational programmes, and administration of these programmes. These are supply side considerations. On the demand side as well there may exist ways of adjustment. The investment policy, recruitment and promotion practices of employers, organisation of work, etc. could be suitably adjusted to allow for employment generation. With these assumptions the immediate objectives of the present study could be stated as follows :

1. Identification of the socio-economic variables which have a bearing on the relationship between education and employment in Sri Lanka;

1. ILO, *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations: A Programme of Action for Ceylon*, Geneva, 1971.

2. SLFUW, *Report on the Study of Unemployment among Women Arts Graduates*, Colombo, 1980.



2. Identification of the inconsistencies in the development of school education in general and university education in particular, which have an influence on the employment problem of university graduates and to suggest measures to correct them;
3. Identification of the problems of implementing employment-oriented educational programmes at university level, and to suggest better alternatives;
4. Identification of the causes and consequences of the problem of employment of university graduates in the country;
5. Identification of the students' perceptions of university education and their implications for the employment market;
6. Assessment of the graduates' experience in university life and its relevance to working life;
7. Assessment of the education system in respect of its relevance, by the university academic staff and the employers.

To achieve the above objectives the following tasks were undertaken, contributing to different parts of the study :

1. An analysis of the socio-economic set-up of Sri Lanka to meet the first immediate objective of the research mentioned above. (Chapter 2).
2. An analysis of the development of the education system in quantitative terms, including the efforts taken by the educational institutions to relate education to employment, (Chapters 3, 4 and 5 ) to meet the second and third objectives.
3. An analysis of the operation of the labour market, diagnosis of the employment situation and description of measures adopted by the national authorities to tackle the problem of graduate employment, (Chapter 6) to meet parts of the fourth objective.
4. An analysis of the functioning of the education system and the labour market as perceived by the students, graduates, academic staff and employers (Chapters 7 through 10). In this analysis, emphasis is to be laid on the qualitative

aspects of the problem, e.g. the role of attitudes and expectations of the citizens, the relevance of the training and educational programmes, satisfaction of the different segments of the society in the operation of the system of education and the institutions of employment. The role of socio-economic and cultural variables of the population in relating education to employment is also to be considered. This analysis is directed towards meeting the last three objectives of the research identified above. The whole study is, of course, directed towards developing a data base for the use of educational researchers, planners and decision-makers as well as students and graduates.

The authors of the study are aware of the different methodological approaches that could be adopted to accomplish the tasks. Since detailed discussion of these approaches is available elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> the discussion here is limited to the methodology that has been adopted in the study.

The approach followed in this study was to trace the causes of an event, a behaviour or a perception, going backwards step by step over time with the participation of important population groups concerned with the event, behaviour or perception related to education and employment. Identification of the priority issues is made on the basis of secondary analysis of the published information and research as well as participation of the concerned sectors of the society. For the latter part, a seminar was organised in Colombo by the Marga Institute, which was attended by representatives of government and non-government agencies including the employers. For the former part, surveys were organised using questionnaires designed specially for answering the relevant questions relating education with employment. Four questionnaires were designed :

1. students,
2. graduates,
3. academic staff, and
4. employers.

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1. B. C. Sanyal, *Higher Education and Employment : Methodological Aspects of the IIEP Experience*, Paris, IIEP Occasional Paper, 1981.

The list of variables on which information was needed, the detailed items of information and the source of such information are given in Table 1.1.

Items on the student questionnaire were grouped under seven-teen heads as follows :

1. personal characteristics,
2. community characteristics,
3. childhood home characteristics,
4. early educational characteristics,
5. early education desired,
6. early occupational characteristics,
7. educational career decision,
8. higher education characteristics,
9. financing higher education,
10. current employment context,
11. opinions and attitudes about current education,
12. preferred arrangements for education,
13. opinions about criteria for selection in jobs,
14. opinions about satisfying characteristics of a job,
15. attitude towards self-employment,
16. current occupational expectations,
17. current educational expectations.

Items on the employed graduate questionnaire are grouped under the following thirteen dimensions :

1. personal characteristics,
2. community characteristics,
3. childhood home characteristics,
4. early educational characteristics,
5. early employment characteristics,
6. educational career decision,
7. educational characteristics,

8. preferred educational arrangements,
9. early occupational expectations,
10. current occupational characteristics,
11. method of obtaining first employment,
12. opinions about matching of the education received with the needs of the job.
13. opinions about satisfying characteristics of a job.

Items on unemployed graduates are grouped under the following twelve dimensions :

1. personal characteristics,
2. community characteristics,
3. childhood home characteristics,
4. early educational characteristics,
5. educational career decision,
6. educational characteristics,
7. preferred educational arrangements,
8. employment history since graduation,
9. opinions about recruitment methods,
10. occupational expectations,
11. reasons for unemployment,
12. means of livelihood.

Items on employers questionnaire can be grouped under the following seven dimensions :

1. organisational characteristics,
2. employee characteristics,
3. recruitment and promotion methods,
4. correspondence between academic and job performance
5. selection criteria,
6. in-service training and vacation employment opportunities,
7. opinions about alternative arrangements for education.



Items on academic staff can be grouped under the following five dimensions :

1. academic and employment characteristics of the staff,
2. his/her opinion about the objectives and functions of the university,
3. opinions about alternative structures and content of university education,
4. opinions about methods of making university education more relevant to the student community,
5. opinions about the role of the academic staff in making university education more relevant to the society.

All the questionnaires are given in the Appendix. With some exceptions each of the above dimensions is represented in the questionnaire by several items. In some cases, each dimension is broken down into several groups; for example, 'educational career decision' in the student survey is broken down into six sub-groups:

1. reasons for pursuing higher education (Q. 21),
2. importance of career guidance sources (Q. 22),
3. factors affecting choice of university (Q. 23.4),
4. reasons for choosing the course as first preference (Q. 25.1),
5. reasons for changing the first preference (Q. 25.2), and
6. benefits expected from university education (Q. 31.1).

The sub-dimensions are represented by a total of 24 closed items and at least eight open items to be given by the student if relevant. Some of the items are of intrinsic interest in a study of university education and employment, for example, educational career decision variables are of this category.

Some variables are interesting not in themselves for such an analysis but because of their effects on the variables of intrinsic interest. For example, childhood home characteristic variables are hypothesized to have effects on the 'career path' of a student. Before the method of analysis is decided, it is important to identify which variables are of intrinsic interest and which other variables influence them. In the analysis that is given in chapters 7 to 10,

this conceptual framework is borne in mind. The questionnaires were subjected to a pre-test to make the necessary refinements before adoption for the final survey.

It should be noted that final year student population has only been considered for the student survey because of their immediate concern with the employment problem. In choosing the graduate population, only those who graduated during the six years, 1974-1979, have constituted the relevant population because the older the graduate, the less the influence on him/her of the educational institution. On-the-job training and experience dominates the occupational career more for the older graduates.

It should also be noted that many questions have been left open for the respondents to have freedom in giving their ideas. This is particularly so for the academic staff. Although laborious, content analysis has been done for these items of the questionnaire. In cases where response rate has been low, caution has been exercised in interpreting the results, particularly for the employers and the academic staff (see Table 1.1).

## 1.4 The Survey Methodology

### 1.4.1 Sampling Framework

A systematic sampling framework was adopted for selecting samples within the two groups under study, namely the final year students (referred to as students from now on), and the graduates. Besides ensuring the randomness of the sample this had a distinctive advantage in meeting the situation, where the required information had to be extracted from records maintained in a university without causing much disturbance to the university staff. A purposive sample was used for the selection of academic staff and the employers.

The details of the selection of the samples in the four groups are given below:—

- (a) *Students*—Each university maintains a register of students by faculty and course of study for every year since their entry. To select the sample of students from the final year student population of 1979/80, it was necessary to

trace the year of their entry into the university for locating them since the duration of their courses of study differed from course to course. Once the year of entry for each course was established the register for that batch of students was traced with the help of administrative staff of university. Having traced the registers the investigators were asked to select a random number between 1-4 and start by including the students in the sample to be chosen bearing the serial number in the register the same as the selected random number. Thereafter every fourth student in their serial ordering in the register was chosen for inclusion in the sample. In the case of courses which had fewer than 4 students it was decided to include only one student. This exercise resulted in obtaining a sample size of  $1/4$  of the student population while maintaining the proportional representation in terms of a consolidated list of courses and faculties.

- (b) *Graduates*—In the case of graduates the sample was drawn from the consolidated list of graduates for the years 1974-79 (faculty and course specific). Unlike the student population for which the sampling fraction was  $1/4$  it was decided that the sampling fraction for the graduates be  $1/8$ th. Here again a systematic sampling framework was adopted for the selection of the sample, just as for the students, the only difference being that the first unit in the sample was chosen at random from the first eight graduates in the list and subsequently every eighth graduate in his serial-order placing, counted from the 1st number chosen, was included in the sample. As in the case of the student population a consolidated list of courses and faculties was used here too.
- (c) *University Staff*—Here the academic staff list for all universities for the year 1979/80 was obtained and an approximately 25 percent sample selected for this study with a higher weightage being given to senior academic staff members. Strict randomness of the sample was not a



practical possibility because of the fact that many members in the staff list were away on leave for the year under consideration and to that extent the population turned out to be ill-defined.

- (d) *Employers*—The sample was selected on a purposive basis for the reason that neither the list of employers in the Ferguson's Directory and the Telephone Directory gave any kind of indications regarding the employment of graduates in the listed firms and the size of the firms. It was however generally known that public sector establishments absorb a higher proportion of graduates than the private sector firms. In view of the basic aim of representativeness of employers it was necessary to give a higher weightage to the public sector establishments.

#### 1.4.2 Administering of Questionnaires

The administering of questionnaires for the sample of students was done through the respective universities with the help of the university authorities. For the sample of graduates the questionnaires were mailed to their home addresses as furnished by the universities concerned. The staff and employers questionnaires too were handled in a similar manner.

#### 1.4.3 Response rates

Tables 1.2 to 1.6 give the population and sample sizes of the students and graduates to whom the questionnaires were administered and the corresponding response rates for each of the 5 Universities. The overall rate of response to the students' questionnaire was 59.24 percent. The corresponding overall rates for graduates was 56.67 percent, with the year specific response rates ranging from 44.76 percent for the 1974 sample to 71.53 percent for the 1979 sample.

The proportional representation referred to earlier in the sampling methodology was distorted markedly for the universities as a result of non-response. However the representation of the courses in the sample for each of the universities was more or less fairly maintained.



In the subsequent chapters reference to sample size would necessarily mean the response number and not the true sample to which the questionnaire was administered. At the time of deciding on the size of the sample in regard to each questionnaire provision was made for only a 50 percent response rate, based on the past experience of similar IIEP studies. Sample sizes for employers (36) and academic staff (68) being small, the findings have been used with great caution.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

A preliminary version of the study was subjected to a critical review by the national researchers, planners and decision-makers as well as by international researchers, on the problem of education and employment. The present study has been substantially revised on the basis of the suggestions made in this workshop. Even then the study is not free from basic limitations which go for a research-based study, partly on questionnaire surveys. The data selected on attitudes and expectations by means of questionnaires should always be interpreted with caution.

**APPENDIX**  
**TABLE 1.1 LIST OF VARIABLES AND TYPES OF INFORMATION AND STATISTICS COLLECTED**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Required Information/Statistics</i>	<i>Sources</i>
1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK OF THE COUNTRY	1. Estimates of reserves of natural resources.	1. Geological surveys, agricultural surveys, economic surveys : government and non-government agencies.
i. Economic potential of different regions.	2. Physical characteristics of the regions.	2. Geographical surveys : government and non-government agencies.
	3. History of the economic and social development of the country.	3. Historical studies in the country : government and non-government agencies.
ii. Economic sectors, their growth and degree of balance with the resource potential, bottle-necks for development. The role of the rural sector in national development.	1. The economic structure of the modern sector: the industrial origin of GDP and level of saving, wage employment, the role of the subsistence sector, income per capita.	1. Economic surveys, reports from national and government agencies, international agencies and private agencies, national, economic and social development plans.
	2. Their relevance with the natural resource potential : degree of exploitation of the natural resources and local processing : implications for types of skills needed.	2. Same as above and other studies on relating skills with techniques needed for exploitation and development of natural resources including agricultural resources.
iii. Population characteristics by regions, social groups and sex.	1. Regional distribution of population by social groups, sex and age.	1. Census, sample surveys.
	2. Growth of population : implications for educational policy.	2. Same as above, and studies relating education with population.
	3. Allocation of capital expenditure per head, by region.	3. Economic surveys and government reports, estimates of public expenditure of the government.
	4. Formal employment as percentage of total population.	4. Census, sample surveys.
	5. Attitudes and value systems of the people of different regions.	5. Historical and social studies on the country, government and non-government.

- iv. Characteristics of the labour force: employment situation.
1. Labour force in the formal sector by sex, region, occupation level and income participation rates by sex and age.
  2. Same information by different industries of the modern sector.
  3. Estimates of labour force in the informal sector and their earnings.
  4. Estimates of productivity by sector.
  5. Unemployment in the formal sector and the role of the informal sector.
  6. Shortage or surplus of skills in the modern sector.
- v. Types of skills needed for the development of the economy.
1. Stock of qualified manpower by nationality, educational level, occupation and sector serving.
  2. National policy guidelines in respect of localisation, economic growth and other attitudinal changes (national service schemes, etc.) of the people and social aspects of the country.
  3. Alternative estimates of needs for highly qualified manpower by educational level, occupation and sector to be served.
1. Economic report, census, sample government and non-government.
  2. Same as in (1).
  3. Census, sample surveys of the rural sector, if any.
  4. Economic survey, census of manufacturing industries conducted by central statistics agency or by any other agency.
  5. Employment exchange offices, sample surveys of employed graduates or waiting period of the graduates for getting a job, census figures, manpower surveys, central statistical office or any other source.
  6. Same as the above and also a survey of the employers.
1. Manpower report, census statistics, survey of employers.
  2. Party documents, if any, National Plans.
  3. Manpower reports, survey of employers with alternative assumptions based on the economic uncertainty in the future.



## 2. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>i. Past development of education in general and higher education in particular, its rationale and inconsistencies, if any, in the pattern of development as related to the socio-economic framework of the country.</p> | <p>1. Statistics on enrolments by type and level of education—for the past and present—with special reference to higher education.</p> <p>2. Enrolment by sex and region.</p> <p>3. Growth of enrolment particularly for higher level of education.</p> <p>4. Growth of physical facilities and other facilities namely teachers, budget, etc.</p> <p>5. Estimates of flow rates by grade, sex and level of education.</p>  | <p>1 — 5 Ministry of Education statistics, individual educational institutions, educational research units.</p> |
| <p>ii. Existing organisational structure : Its problems, if any, in respect of meeting the objectives.</p>   | <p>1. The facilities for education available at present in the formal system particularly for the higher level of education.</p> <p>2. Linkage between the higher education system and the second-level education system.</p> <p>3. Role of private and public sector agencies in the control of education in general and higher education in particular, in respect of budgeting, financing, curriculum development, etc.</p>  | <p>1 — 3 Same as above.</p>   |
| <p>iii. Quantitative development of higher education as related to the socio-economic framework of the country and the national policy guidelines.</p>   | <p>1. Stock of enrolment by type of higher education, by institution, sex and region of home.</p> <p>2. The existing admission policy for different types of higher education.</p> <p>3. Stock of graduates by specialisation, institution and sex.</p> <p>4. Past trend of growth in enrolment and necessary facilities.</p> <p>5. The capacity of the institution to expand or control.</p> <p>6. Alternative estimates of graduates to meet the needs of the economy at least quantitatively.</p> <p>7. Job-oriented programmes and their utility.</p> | <p>1 — 6 Same as above.</p> <p>7. University officers.</p>  |

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Required Information/Statistics</i>	<i>Source</i>
3. ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS IN RESPECT OF HIGHER EDUCATION		
i. Students' socio-economic background.	Sex, age, religion, caste, marital status, region of home, guardian's occupation and education, current employment status.	Student survey : See for example Question Nos. 4 to 8, 10.
ii. Educational status.	Secondary school attended, type of certificate, year of graduation, desired education career, year of study, reasons for undertaking higher education, reasons for change in the field of study—if any, sources of finance, adequacy of the secondary education, choice of present faculty, degree of satisfaction with present educational career, availability of career information, preferred educational arrangement.	Question Nos. 1, 2 to 1, 5, 11 to 13, 15 to 18, 21, 22, 34 to 36, 42, 43.
iii. Expectations about higher education and employment.	Present employment, if any: estimated earnings if not in educational institution at present, reasons for continuing in the field of study if intending to be employed in a field other than the present field of study, dependence of the choice of career on success in present studies, expected employment sector, conditions for accepting a job in rural areas, importance of factors in the choice of an employment, expected annual earnings at different levels of working life, waiting period to obtain a job, motivating factors for self-employment and perceived measures for reducing the problem of unemployment.	Question Nos. 19, 20, 23 to 25, 30 to 33, 37 to 41, 44.

## Variables

## Required Information/Statistics

## Sources

## 4. ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYED GRADUATES

- i. Socio-economic background. Age, sex, religion/caste, region of home. Graduate survey: see for example: Question Nos. 3 to 7, 9 to 12.
- ii. Educational background and expectations about the education system. Reasons for pursuing higher education, reasons for change in field of study, if any, source of finance for higher education, diplomas obtained, specialization and present occupation, degree of relevance of educational background with the job, preferred educational arrangements. Question Nos. 13 to 21, 25 to 35.
- iii. Employment status. Methods of obtaining first employment, waiting period to get first employment, nature of present employment, changes in jobs, if any, reasons for change, importance of different factors to make a job satisfactory, perceived reasons for employment, possible remedies, motivating factors for self-employment. Question Nos. 22 to 24, 37 to 47.

## 5. ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF UNEMPLOYED AND SELF-EMPLOYED GRADUATES

- i. Socio-economic background. Age, sex, religion/caste, home address, guardian's education and occupation. Unemployed graduate survey, see for example: Question Nos. 3 to 7, 9 to 12.
- ii. Education background and expectations about the education system. Reasons for pursuit of higher education in general and the field of study in particular, sources of career information and types of courses followed and level of education. Question Nos. 13 to 21, 25 to 35.



<i>Variables</i>	<i>Required Information/Statistics</i>	<i>Sources</i>
iii. Employment factors.	Nature of past employment, if any, duration of un-employment, reasons for seeking a job, attempts to obtain an employment, types of preferred employment, reasons for remaining unemployed and possible remedies, and motivating factors for self-employment.	Question Nos. 48 to 61.
<b>6 ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS</b>		
i. Background	Date of establishment, type of control, size, type of economic activity performed and skills needed.	Employers survey : see for example : Question Nos 1 to 6, 25.
ii. Employment characteristics	Methods of recruitment, criteria for selection, preferred arrangements for placement services, and factors of job satisfaction.	Question Nos. 7 to 16.
iii. Relation between the higher education sector and the labour market.	Degree of correlation between academic performance and job performance, organisational mechanism of in-service training—if any, provision for accepting student employees, preferred educational arrangements, perceived measures for reducing unemployment of graduates.	Question Nos. 17 to 24.

Variables	Required Information/Statistics	Sources
7. ATTITUDES AND EXPECTATIONS OF ACADEMIC STAFF		
i. Background.	Age, sex, institution serving, and specialisation.	Academic staff survey, see for example, Question Nos. 1 to 7, Part I.
ii. Expectations about the educational system.	Assessment of the programmes' objectives and of the education system.	Question Nos. 1, 2, 3, Part II Question Nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, Part III Question Nos. 1, 3, 4, 6 to 8, Part IV Question Nos. 1, 2, Part V.
iii. Perception about the relation between the higher education sector and the labour market.	Perceptions of the operational mechanism between higher education and the labour market admissions and selection criteria for the education system, and the role of the university in meeting societal needs.	Question No. 2, Part IV Question No. 2, 3, Part V

TABLE 1.2

**POPULATION SIZE AND THE CORRESPONDING SAMPLE SIZE OF THE FINAL YEAR STUDENTS BY UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND COURSE**

Name of University	Name of Faculty	Total No.	Sample size	Name of Courses	Total No.	Sample size
COLOMBO	Arts	297	74..	1. General — Arts	46	12
			..	2. Special — Arts Courses	88	22
	Science	168	..	3. Development Studies	112	28
			..	4. Public Finance & Taxation	51	12
KELANIYA	Law	51	42..	1. General — Science	122	31
			..	2. Special — Science Courses	46	11
	Education	140	13..	Law	51	13
			..	Education	140	35
	Arts	603	40..	Medical	161	40
			..	1. General — Arts	214	53
Science	100	152..	2. Special — Arts Courses	389	99	
		..	1. General — Science	92	23	
SRI JAYEWARDENEPURA	Arts	422	25..	1. General — Science	08	02
			..	2. Special — Science	182	46
	Management Studies	239	105..	1. General — Arts (Combined)	240	59
			..	2. Special — Arts Courses	11	03
Science	145	60..	1. General	228	57	
		..	2. Special	135	34	
..	..	..	36..	1. General — Science	10	02
..	..	..	..	2. Special-Science	..	..



Table 1.2 (contd.)

<i>Name of University</i>	<i>Name of Faculty</i>	<i>Total No</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Name of Course</i>	<i>Total No.</i>	<i>Sample size</i>
MORATUWA	.. Engineering	149	37	Engineering Courses	149	37
PERADENIYA	.. Arts	546	137	1. General—Arts	285	71
				2. Combined — Arts	08	02
				3. Special — Arts Courses	253	64
	.. Science	179	44	1. General — Science	113	28
				2. Special — Science Courses	66	16
	.. Medicine	166	42	Medical Courses	166	42
	.. Engineering	145	36	Engineering Courses	145	28
	.. Agriculture	111	28	Agriculture	111	28

TABLE 1.3

**POPULATION SIZE AND THE CORRESPONDING SAMPLE SIZE OF THE GRADUATES PASSING OUT  
IN THE YEARS 1974 THROUGH 1979 BY UNIVERSITY, FACULTY AND COURSE**

Name of University	Name of Faculty	Total No.	Sample size	Name of Course	Total No.	Sample size		
COLOMBO	Arts	1,036	129	1. General—Arts	109	14		
				2. Special — Arts Courses	927	115		
	Education	1,265	158	Education	1,265	158		
				Law	262	Law	262	31
						1. General — Science	893	86
	Science	932	121	2. Special — Science Courses	239	35		
Medicine				795	100			
SRI JAYWARDENEPURA	Arts	4,290	539	1. General — Arts	386	47		
				2. Special — Arts Courses	945	118		
	Management Studies	1,024	127	a. Business Administration	443	55		
				b. Public Administration	257	32		
				c. Estate Management & Valuation	93	11		
				d. Commerce	231	29		
	Science	224	28	1. General — Science	186	23		
				2. Special — Science Courses	38	05		
			2,579	320		2,579	320	

TABLE 1.3 (contd)

Name of University	Name of Faculty	Total No.	Sample size	Name of Course	Total No.	Sample size
KELANIYA	Arts	2,360	294	1. General — Arts	1,392	174
				a. Arts Degree		
	Science	351	45	b. Library Science	45	05
				2. Special — Arts Courses		
Engineering	581	74	1. General — Science	320	40	
			2. Special — Science Courses			
		2,711	339		1,437	179
MORATUWA	Engineering	581	74	Engineering Courses	581	74
PERADENIYA	Arts	3,726	463	1. General — Arts	2,278	283
				2. Combined Arts		
	Science	1,095	133	3. Special — Arts Courses	1,334	166
Engineering	Agriculture	471	59	1. General — Science	718	88
				2. Special — Science Courses		
	Medicine	751	94	Agriculture	377	45
				a. M. B. B. S		
				b. Dental		
Engineering	853	107	c. Veterinary	471	59	
			Engineering			
		6,896	856		6,896	856



TABLE 1.4

**POPULATION SIZE AND SAMPLE SIZE OF THE GRADUATE  
POPULATION BY UNIVERSITY**

<i>Name of University</i>	<i>Total Size of Population</i>	<i>Total of Sample</i>
1. Colombo .. .. .	4,290	539
2. Sri Jayawardenepura .. .. .	2,579	320
3. Kelaniya .. .. .	2,711	339
4. Moratuwa .. .. .	581	74
5. Peradeniya .. .. .	6,896	856
	<u>17,057</u>	<u>2,128</u>

TABLE 1.5

**RESPONSE RATES TO THE STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE BY UNIVERSITY**

<i>Name of University</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Total Sample Size</i>	<i>Total Received Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Colombo .. .. .	817	203	114	56.2
Sri Jayawardenepura .. .. .	806	201	78	38.8
Kelaniya .. .. .	703	177	117	66.1
Moratuwa .. .. .	149	37	07	18.9
Paradeniya .. .. .	1,147	288	221	76.7
<b>Total ..</b>	<b>3,622</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>59.3</b>

TABLE 1.6

## RESPONSE RATES TO THE GRADUATES' QUESTIONNAIRE BY YEAR OF GRADUATION AND UNIVERSITY

	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
	T.S.S. T.R.N. %	T.S.S. T.R.N. %	T.S.S. T.R.N. %	T.S.S. T.R.N. %	T.S.S. T.R.N. %	T.S.S. T.R.N. %
Colombo ..	48 9 18.6	50 16 32.0	65 23 35.4	161 109 67.7	91 46 50.6	124 85 68.6
Sri Jayewardene- pura	73 35 48.0	41 24 58.5	21 8 38.1	72 42 58.3	58 36 62.1	55 50 90.9
Kelaniya ..	60 35 68.3	41 20 48.7	52 33 63.5	50 31 62.0	69 48 69.6	67 51 76.1
Moratuwa ..	1 1 100.0	12 4 33.3	13 5 38.5	17 6 35.3	17 10 58.8	14 11 78.6
Peradeniya ..	133 61 45.9	160 79 49.4	141 67 47.5	148 87 53.8	130 82 63.1	144 92 63.9
<b>TOTAL ..</b>	<b>315 141 44.8</b>	<b>304 143 47.0</b>	<b>292 136 46.6</b>	<b>448 275 61.4</b>	<b>365 222 60.8</b>	<b>404 289 71.5</b>

(a) T.S.S.— Total Sample Size

(b) T.R.N.— Total Received Number

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

#### 2.1 Introduction

This introductory overview of socio-economic changes in Sri Lanka during the last three decades focuses on the developments which are of special relevance for the issues examined in the main study. For this purpose three components of development are reviewed. First, an attempt is made to survey the far-reaching demographic changes which rapidly increased the size of the population, particularly the cohorts in the young age group, and consequently resulted in a massive expansion of the workforce with all its implications for employment. Second, the chapter surveys the developments in the social sectors which enabled Sri Lanka to achieve a level of social well-being which far surpassed what has been achieved in countries at comparable levels of income and development, and which promoted high participation in the educational system. Third, the chapter briefly discusses the economic performance and its impact on the growth of the modern sector which provided the major share of the market for university graduates.

The analysis attempts to throw light on the social and economic disequilibria which grew as a result of these changes, creating a special set of problems which had important consequences for the educational system at the university level. Some of the areas of socio-economic change which are selected for special attention are those which resulted in the rapid expansion of the young workforce and the steady rise in the educational levels of this workforce. The chapter also briefly discusses the



increasing pressure exerted by the student population seeking entrance to the tertiary level on the one hand, and the capacity of the system to cope with this pressure as well as to match the supply of high-level manpower with the demand for it, on the other.

## 2.2 Demographic changes

The total population in Sri Lanka as enumerated in the Census of 1946 was 6.657 million. At the 1981 Census it had increased to 14.7 million. The demographic changes which had taken place in the country in the beginning of this period were of an unprecedented character. In a short span of five years between 1946 and 1950, the death rate had declined from 19.8 to 12.6; along with it infant mortality dropped from 140 to 82 and maternal mortality from 16.5 to 5.6. These developments were described by the WHO as "an unparalleled achievement in world demography". With crude birth rates continuing at levels which prevailed before the decline in mortality, there was a rapid surge in the rate of natural increase in population ranging from 1.4 to 1.9 in the early 1940s to 3.6 and 3.0 in the late Forties.

Population continued to grow at an average of about 2.5 percent per annum during the period 1950 to 1965. Mortality rates continued to fall at a slower pace after the dramatic decline in the second half of the Forties, with a concurrent but slow decline in the birth rate which fell from 39 in 1950 to 33 in 1965. Life expectancy which had been in the region of 43 in the early Forties had risen to approximately 65 for males and 64 for females in the second half of the Sixties; in the mid Seventies it was estimated at 67 for males and 69 for females, the female life expectancy overtaking that of the males. By 1980 the crude birth rate had fallen to 27.6 per thousand, infant mortality rate to 37, and population growth net of migration to 1.7 percent. The demographic indicators seemed to suggest that at a relatively early stage of development with a rural population which still comprised approximately 75 percent of the total population, Sri Lanka was entering the demographic "transition", resulting in the simultaneous fall of birth rates and death rates and a slow decline in the rate of population growth.

These demographic changes had important consequences for the absolute size of different age groups, and for the share of each group in the total population. The rapid increases in the total size of the population resulted in a doubling of the population between 1946 and 1973. As described in the section which follows, these demographic changes were promoted and accelerated by the free health and free education systems and the rest of the extensive social welfare programme to which the country became firmly committed in the period immediately preceding Independence in 1948. The demographic changes in turn resulted in a massive expansion of the dependent population particularly in the 0-14 age group which began to exert increasing pressure on the social welfare programmes and the limited resource base of the country which supported it.

The mounting pressure of the population on land posed another set of problems, to which succeeding governments responded with policies of planned internal migration from the congested South-West and Centre to the sparsely populated Dry Zone in the North-Central and South-Eastern parts of the country. These policies resulted in a spatial distribution of population which relieved the pressure in the South-Western and Central regions of the Island which contained approximately 74 percent of the total population in 1946. Their share had fallen to 67 percent in 1971. During the three and a half decades that have followed there has been a significant resettlement of the sparsely populated North-Western, North-Central and Eastern parts of the country, which increased its share of the population from approximately 14 percent to about 20 percent. These policies therefore contributed to a pattern of demographic change which prevented any major rural-to-urban shift in the population. In addition to the land policies, policies which guided the location of industry in the public sector, together with the relatively slow growth of the urban industrial sector, combined to produce a demographic and economic structure which promoted a rural-urban balance of a somewhat unusual character for a developing country.

Contrary to popular belief, the young age groups while they rapidly increased in size, did not increase their share in the total. The share of the 0-14 age group in the total population in 1901



was 42.24; it had declined to 39.32 in 1971. The share of the 15–24 age group had remained relatively constant during this period with 20.84 of the total in 1901 and 20.51 in 1971. In contrast, the age group over 50 had increased its share from 7.45 in 1901 to 12.43 in 1971. The most significant change in the age structure had its source in the rising levels of life expectancy and the prolongation of life of the older age groups. We noted earlier that life expectancy had risen to 67 for males and 69 for females in the mid Seventies. If we take the population who can be economically active as those in the age group 15–65, the share of the dependent population increased as the age specific death rate for the over 65 age group continued to decline. This demographic development combined with high birth rates continued to increase the dependency ratio of the population from approximately 68 in 1946 to 76 in 1971 with its inevitable consequences for the productive capacity of the national system and the allocation of resources between consumption and investment.

At the same time, the demographic changes affected the size and age structure of the economically active population. The total workforce had risen from 2.993 million in 1953 to 4.369 million in 1971, an increase which was less than that for the population as a whole. The share of the age group 25–49 had declined from 29.47 of the population in 1901 and 30.97 of the population in 1953, to 27.73 in 1971. In contrast, the young age group 15–24 had increased its share from 25 percent to 31 percent. Of this age group the 20–24 year old component had increased its share from 15.4 percent to 19.6 percent. This generation born in the late Forties and Fifties had benefited from the social welfare programme of free health and free education; they were consequently able to achieve higher rates of survival and higher levels of education and began to enter the workforce in increasing numbers in the Sixties and Seventies. The numbers in the workforce who were in the age group between 20–24 had increased from 428,000 in 1953 to 840,000 in 1971. The rate of participation in the workforce had also increased significantly for this age group, rising from approximately 55 percent to about 67 percent. The major portion of this increment was contributed by the participation of the female population—a factor which will be discussed later in this chapter. The increasing proportion of the

dependent population was in turn contributing to the processes which were depressing the rates of savings, investment, and growth of output and employment, as a result of which a massive backlog of unemployment was accumulating. Of the 840,000 who were in the workforce in the age group 20–24, nearly 300,000 or 35 percent of the workforce was unemployed. According to the 1971 estimates, 62 percent of the unemployed were in the age group 15–24 years of age, and included all educational levels extending from the primary to the tertiary.

### 2.3 Social progress and human development

The combination of policies underlying the pattern of development in Sri Lanka during the last three decades contained many of the elements which have now become part of the conventional wisdom on poverty-oriented strategies and the satisfaction of basic needs. Even before Sri Lanka gained full Independence, the base for a major set of public initiatives in the field of social development had already been laid. In the early Thirties the colonial rulers introduced a limited form of responsible government based on adult franchise. The national legislature was enlarged to provide for representation on a countrywide basis. Although a nationally representative political system gradually evolved during this period, the final authority for the management of the government budget and the formulation of national policies remained with the colonial rulers. Within the constraints imposed by the political framework, the elected representatives directed their attention to the felt needs of their constituencies - better access through improved transportation and communication, educational facilities, health services and distribution of state land to the rural poor. In these conditions, a welfare-oriented ideology began to take firm root in Sri Lankan politics.

By the time Sri Lanka achieved Independence, the government programmes which were to become the main components of the social welfare programme in the period after Independence had already been put in place. There was a steady expansion of free government health services; educational facilities were being developed to provide for the rapidly increasing participation of children in the school system. In 1945, the government decided



to provide universal free education up to the university level. A food distribution system with subsidised food rations was introduced during the Second World War to serve the entire population. Substantial investments were being made to increase food production to meet domestic needs particularly rice, the staple food of the population. Government legislation during this period preserved the vast extent of arable land which was uncultivated or under forest for programmes of land settlements which were to benefit the rural poor. These efforts combined to bring about a significant improvement in the social indicators for the population as a whole. Infant mortality which was 175 per thousand live births in 1930 had dropped to 141 in 1946. Maternal mortality had declined from 21.4 to 16.1. The crude death rate for the whole population had fallen during this period from 25.4 to 19.8. The levels of literacy continued to rise during this period from approximately 45 percent to 57 percent.

During the period after Independence the main elements of the social welfare package which had evolved in the period immediately preceding Independence were elaborated and developed into a comprehensive and nationwide programme. More than one-third of the government budget was allocated for this programme. The system of mass free education led to the establishment of educational facilities spanning the entire Island. The educational structure provided opportunities for a large proportion of the school-going population to move from the primary to the secondary stage. A smaller proportion entered the university level. A fairly generous system of bursaries enabled the best students from low-income groups to move into the educational institutions in the principal towns and thereafter enter the universities. The dispersion of schools was generally planned to make educational facilities at the primary level available within a radius of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The number of schools increased from 5945 in 1946 to approximately 9434 in 1963, total school enrolment from 944,000 to 2,482,613, and participation of the school age population from 57 percent to 72 percent.

After the steep decline in mortality rates and rise in life expectancy in the second half of the Forties, health indicators continued to improve, but at a slower pace. The crude death rate which had dropped from 19.8 in 1946 to 12.4 in 1950, declined further to

8.6 in 1960 and thereafter continued at about the same levels, fluctuating marginally between 8.8 and 8.0 till 1965. Similarly, infant mortality which had dropped from 141 in 1946 to 82 in 1950, dropped at a slower rate to 53 in 1965. There was a substantial increase in medical facilities during this period; the number of hospital beds doubled from approximately 16,000 in 1946 to about 33,000 in 1965, while the total population had increased by approximately 68 percent. The ratio of governmental medical personnel to the total population had also increased significantly during this period - doctors from 1:11,000 to 1:7,400, apothecaries from 1:11,000 to 1:9,000, nurses from 1:6,000 to 1:2,500.

Per capita food consumption and levels of nutrition also show fairly significant improvement during this period. The data available for analysis is not very reliable, but if we use the consumption data for different income groups in the consumer finance surveys of 1953 and 1963, the average calorie intake for the population as a whole and the calorie intake for the bottom 40 percent had risen appreciably. Government policies assured a nation-wide distribution of essential foodstuffs at prices, either subsidised or with the minimum mark-up. This was achieved through a trading system which relied on State imports and wholesale marketing, as well as a scheme of retail distribution through a widely dispersed network of cooperative stores. This bundle of foods included rice, dhal, dried fish, and powdered and tinned milk. Even during periods of acute foreign exchange scarcity, priority was assigned to supplies of the essential food items. It was a system which maintained a fairly stable structure of prices over the Fifties and Sixties. The consumer price index rose only 12 points during the entire period 1952-1965. The core welfare programme outlined was supported by several other poverty-oriented programmes. These included a nation-wide village expansion programme which provided state land and subsidised housing to disadvantaged rural families and a programme of agricultural settlements which transferred population from the densely inhabited South-West and Central regions to the sparsely populated North-Central and Eastern parts.

These developments combined with other socio-political and economic forces to promote a pattern of income distribution which was equity-oriented and significantly reduced income inequalities.



The distribution of income underwent major adjustments during the 20-year period 1953 to 1973 for which relatively firm data are available. The share of income of the highest 10% of spending units in the country which had been 40.6 percent of the total in 1953 had been reduced to 28.03 percent in 1973. The share of the lowest 10 percent had risen from 1.9 percent to 2.79 percent during the same period. The bottom half of society had increased its proportion of income from 20.9 percent to 26.7 percent. Therefore even with a relatively low increase of per capita income, strategies which were both redistributive and which also directed a larger proportion of the increment in national income to the poorer segments of the population succeeded in eliminating some of the worst manifestations of poverty.

The developments that have been described were accompanied by far-reaching changes of a qualitative character in the world of the child and adolescent. The Forties and Fifties saw the formal institutionalised world of schooling extending its frontier to include increasingly larger proportions of the child population, and replacing the informal structures of work and learning which integrated children to society in the traditional social order. A modern formal system of learning was being imposed on predominantly traditional agrarian communities with a low level of productivity and technological capability. It was a process which resulted in sharp discontinuities between the homes from which the majority of the children came and the world of new learning into which they entered. The new knowledge which was to equip them for the modern world and the value system which accompanied it was far removed from the immediate socio-economic environment in which they moved, the interpretations of reality which their own community offered, the values and beliefs which regulated their own lives and the lives of those around them. The massive forces of change which government programmes were releasing were drastically altering the ways in which the traditional societies had organised the experience of the young. They were resulting in discontinuities and disruptions in the subjective experience of the young which could not but have had a profound impact on the relationship between generations and the processes which incorporate the young into adult society. The policy-making during this period showed little

sensitivity to these problems. There is no doubt that they contributed to the alienation of the new generation and the growing instability and the violence which erupted in the early Seventies.

The educational system together with other developments was rapidly changing the motivations and aspirations of the growing generations. It was creating a new climate of social mobility which was beginning to cut across social stratifications of the prevailing social order. Children of both sexes and different social layers and castes were mixing together in the world of learning. Free education had introduced a small but significant element of meritocracy into the system which was offering prospects for children from the low-income strata to compete for occupations with higher income and social status. The social welfare programme was also having a significant impact on the pattern of employment and the occupational structure. The rapid expansion of government activities and the growth of the state bureaucracy were creating job opportunities for both males and females in the education system, in health services and various other government activities. The expectations of the young generation were therefore being directed almost exclusively to the government sector with the security and prestige it provided.

The free education system had been specially beneficial to the female children. A more selective fee levying system would have been weighted against the females, given the traditional priorities assigned to the careers and the employment opportunities for males. In a situation in which parents were faced with no restrictive choices regarding the expenditure on the education of their children, the participation of females increased rapidly at all educational levels. It rose from 43 percent in 1946 to 63 percent in 1963. Out of the 2.482 million children enjoying primary and secondary schooling, 1.132 million were females. The major proportion of schools was co-educational. The co-educational system with almost equal proportions of male and female children created an environment in which males and females competed on equal terms. These changes would have undoubtedly had a far-reaching impact in modifying the traditional values and perceptions regarding the role of women.



The increasing participation of the female population in the educational system from primary to university level had its repercussions on the rate of female participation in the workforce. The workforce participation of females in the age group 20-24 increased from 28.7 in 1953 to 29.5 in 1963 and then rose rapidly to 43.1 in 1971, and an estimated 50.0 in 1976. Many of the employment opportunities which were being created in the public sector were readily acceptable to females - e.g. teachers, midwives, nurses, doctors, sub-postmistresses. The female population nevertheless had a much higher proportion of the unemployed in the age group 15-24. This was true for all educational levels including the university graduate level.

The pace and quality of the socio-economic improvements during this period were however limited by some of the demographic consequences of the initial advances themselves. The natural increase in population during this period exerted continuing pressure on available resources, and on government commitments on the welfare programme. Most of the increases in the allocation of resources therefore had to be employed to finance the expansion of services for meeting the increasing demand due to growth of population. This quantitative expansion left little room for any major improvement in the quality of the services, and this squeeze came to be felt increasingly in the Sixties. As the new age cohorts of progressively greater size began to make demands on the system, resources had to be spread thin. While for example non-science education expanded fast, the development of the science stream came up against serious resource constraints. The government expenditure per capita on social services had more than doubled during the Fifties but was levelling off in the Sixties. From 1959 to 1964 it had risen only from about Rs. 72 per head to approximately Rs. 82.

During the latter half of the Sixties and in the early Seventies, the inherent limitations of the system were beginning to manifest themselves, and its incapacity to cope with certain deep-seated problems of a structural nature was becoming increasingly evident. First, in the field of health, a hard core of problems was not yielding to the strategies that were being implemented. After a rapid drop in infant mortality in the initial phase, the rate of decline

below 50 per thousand was proving to be much slower. The age-specific death rate for the age group 1-4 at approximately 6.2 in 1975 was still excessive for a country which was able to increase average life expectancy to approximately 67. The evidence available also pointed to a high level of under-nourishment for the young age group. Despite the nation-wide extension of the network of health institutions for child care, the success of the system in reaching the pre-school age group was as yet limited. Where medical technology was capable of achieving results in the short term and could be applied directly to clearly identified problems of morbidity and prevention of diseases as in the case of curative services and immunisation, the system performed fairly effectively and produced visible results. But where it had to deal with more persistent problems which had their origin in poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, inadequate knowledge and understanding of health protection and care, the capacity of the system seemed to be as yet very limited.

Second, in the school-going population, despite the availability of free schooling facilities, nearly 15 percent of the children of school-going age did not enter school at all and on an average another 30 percent of the children in the age group 5-14 were outside the school system, having dropped out of it at various stages.

Third, and most important of all, the young generation which had been the beneficiaries of this system and moved through it satisfactorily found that they could not get readily integrated into the productive workforce and find useful roles in adult society. The rate of unemployment rocketed to over 20 percent during this period with the preponderant majority of the unemployed being in the age group 15-24. The high level of unemployment originated from a combination of causes. Clearly, as we would see later, the economy itself had been unable to generate employment at a rate adequate to meet the demand of the growing workforce. At the same time however the educational system had promoted job expectations directed at middle-grade non-manual employment - expectations which were at variance with the prevailing occupational structure and available job opportunities. Finally, the system had not given adequate attention to the development of



technical and vocational skills, as well as attitudes to work which could have better equipped the school-leavers for employment, including self-employment.

Fourth, the educational system which expanded rapidly at the primary and secondary stage was not able to expand proportionately at the tertiary level. The facilities at the university and the tertiary level could not accommodate the massive demand for higher education generated through the primary and secondary mass education system. A very large proportion of students who would have been considered eligible for higher education had to be excluded in the effort to match university output to the demand for highly qualified manpower. The intense pressure to move up the education ladder and the highly competitive and selective process of admission to the tertiary level was already imposing an enormous strain on the young generation. To this was added the experience of reaching a dead-end with no prospect of employment in the near future.

## 2.4 The economic performance

The other chapter in the story reveals the important negative features which accompanied some of the more positive developments. The fundamental disequilibrium in the country's economy was one which was created by the growing imbalance between population and productive capacity. The population in the country had risen from 7.6 million in 1950 to 13.6 million in 1975 - an increase of approximately 79 percent. During this period, the gross domestic product had increased from approximately Rs. 4,464 million to Rs. 11,114 million at constant prices which in turn was an increase of approximately 148.9 percent. During this period per capita incomes had grown at a rate of about 1.6 percent. If these incomes are adjusted for the decline in the purchasing power of exports as a result of the deteriorating terms of exchange in the country's external transactions, the performance would be even more disappointing. Real per capita income defined in this manner was probably growing at only 1.1 percent during this period.

In the demographic situation in Sri Lanka the slow growth of the economy had repercussions which were much more critical than are reflected in the slow rise of per capita real income. The

growth of Sri Lanka's population resulted in a proportionately massive expansion of the workforce in the nineteen-sixties as the new generation began entering the labour market. Population had grown at an annual rate of 2.5 percent between 1958 and 1971. The workforce had grown at approximately 2.1 percent. The economy had been able to generate new employment only at an average annual rate of 1.1 percent. Between 1963 and 1971 the total workforce increased by approximately 1 million additional participants almost all of whom were new entrants to the workforce in the age group 15-29. This addition to the workforce represented an increase of approximately 29 percent over an 8-year period or an annual rate of growth of 3.2 percent. The total number who succeeded in finding employment during this period was in the region of 430,000. The ensuing outcome was a massive backlog of unemployment which grew to an estimated 24 percent in 1973 - i.e. over 1 million unemployed, most of whom were in the 15-24 age group.

Slow economic growth also meant a low rate of savings and a meagre volume of capital accumulation. Domestic savings hovered around 12 percent, the marginal rate of savings recorded hardly any increases; capital formation was in the region of 12-14 percent for most of the period prior to 1965, rising to about 18 percent with the large inputs of foreign aid in the second half of the Sixties and thereafter. The new capacity that was created as a result of this rate of investment fell far short of what was needed to provide the income-earning opportunities for the expanding workforce. During this period there was no planned effort which was consciously directed at coping with the problem of growing unemployment. Employment creation was seen largely as a by-product of the growth of the economy. Until the early Seventies there was little evidence of a strategy which directed the choice of technology and the pattern of investment towards the objective of rapid employment creation.

The changes in the sectoral composition of G.D.P. during this period did not reflect any dynamic process of structural change in the economy. The manufacturing sector increased its share at a relatively slow pace from about 5 percent in the early nineteen-fifties to about 14 percent in the mid Seventies. The workforce in agriculture in the 1971 Census still accounted for 50.4 percent



of the total employed workforce compared to 52.0 percent at the 1953 Census. Manufacturing accounted for 13.4 percent in 1973 as against 12.1 in 1953. Of the total increment of about 630,000 jobs during this entire period, only about 120,000 jobs which were created were in industry. From these figures it could be deduced that the workforce in the modern urban sector was growing very slowly. This was accompanied by a correspondingly slow growth of the technical, professional and administrative superstructure which was the critical component for the expansion of the market for highly educated manpower.

A common argument in regard to Sri Lanka's economic performance is that the economic stagnation was a direct consequence of the diversion of resources to social welfare programmes and the development of a relatively high-cost economic and social infrastructure for peasant agriculture. It is difficult either to substantiate or refute this argument. However, in the argument which predicates a conflict between growth and welfare, there is a basic assumption of economic stagnation which deserves closer scrutiny. The fact is that in the Fifties and Sixties when welfare programmes were most vigorously pursued, growth rates were maintained at an average of 4.5 percent. This performance is only marginally below international targets and can by no means be regarded as a poor achievement per se. What was evident however is that the process of development itself with its emphasis on social well-being generated a new set of problems which seemed to demand faster economic expansion and higher rates of growth for their solution. The contradictions that had arisen were themselves symptoms of development which demanded quicker movement of the economy. It is in the period 1971-76 that the economy took a sharp downward turn and rates of growth averaged between 2 percent and 3 percent. The decline occurred just at the time when the economy was in critical need of higher rates of growth than in the Sixties. But the down-turn itself had little to do with a misallocation of resources or excessive expenditure on welfare. Disruptive internal developments and a sequence of international crises which included the devaluation of the dollar, the world food shortage, and the energy crisis, all combined to depress rates of economic growth. These conditions were compounded by a cycle of unfavourable weather and internal economic policies which further aggravated the problems.

In the case of Sri Lanka, an analysis of the behaviour of the domestic economy and the proportions of consumption and savings do not tell us the whole story regarding the growth of the economy. In fact, such an analysis can be very misleading. The behaviour of the external sector on which Sri Lanka's economy is so heavily dependent is crucial to the country's economic performance. Sri Lanka's effort at combining fairer income distribution with growth took place in an external environment which persistently reduced the real national income of the country. The country's export economy which was relatively prosperous and strong at the time the country became independent, continued to struggle against a persistently deteriorating international market. Taking 1978 as 100, the country's terms of trade declined from 208 in 1950 to 185 in 1960 and 106 in 1970, to 58 in 1975. After a brief upward swing in 1977 and 1978, it again declined to 58 in 1980. In this situation import demand continued to rise, resulting in large adverse trade balances and massive balance of payments deficits. The country began to face severe foreign exchange constraints from the beginning of the Sixties. In the effort to accelerate economic growth and break through the foreign exchange constraint, Sri Lanka was able to mobilise a considerable volume of development assistance from the mid Sixties onwards. As a result, her external debt in 1975 had risen to Rs. 3,705 million or 82 percent of total export receipts for that year. In the deteriorating external situation, Sri Lanka had little or no bargaining power to effect changes or protect her interests. The criticism that could be made is that she was slow to make any effective internal adjustments to the situation. Her main response was to divert her resources and efforts to import-substitution in agriculture and industry. Little or no effort was made to promote the diversification of her export structure both in agriculture and industry. It is only in the Seventies that significant new elements have begun to enter her external sector and lead it in the direction of greater diversification. Tourism, shipping, the trade in gems and export in manufactures illustrate this trend.

The severe balance of payments problems during this period resulted in a strictly regulated economy. The cut-back on consumption was most severe in the case of imported consumer goods which were regarded as 'non-essential' or 'luxury items'.



The economic regime during this period tended to lower the living standards of the middle classes and undermine the incentive system for professional and highly educated manpower. These conditions contributed to the outflow of professional and other high level skills which assumed alarmingly large proportions from the early Seventies onwards. Data collected for the period 1971–1974 indicate that for certain professions such as doctors and engineers the annual outflow accounted for a large share of the annual output and depleted the stock of skills in the senior and experienced categories which were most in need.

The changes in the structure of the economy and the expansion of the modern urban sector were not rapid enough nor sufficiently extensive in relation to the growth of the workforce, particularly the increase in the supply of highly educated manpower. By the beginning of the Seventies there was a considerable backlog of unemployment among university graduates. Unemployment was higher among the graduates from the non-science disciplines while prospects of employment for the science and engineering disciplines were also becoming bleak as the growth of the economy slowed down significantly in the first half of the Seventies. We saw that the policies of the government during this period reduced the incentives and lowered the living standards of the elite groups to which the products of the university aspired to enter. Consequently the outflow of highly educated manpower from Sri Lanka to foreign countries during this period helped to reduce the prospects of unemployment among certain categories of graduates and professionally qualified cadres, even creating critical shortages of scarce skills. Meanwhile, however, the demand for higher education generated at the secondary educational level combined to expand as large age cohorts continued to enter the system. The capacity at the tertiary level could not expand to respond to this demand as the demand for highly educated manpower within the economy did not appear to justify such an expansion. It is worthwhile examining whether a more liberal policy package which attempted to expand tertiary-level education, first to supply both domestic needs as well as the pull of the international market, and second, to orient the educational system at the tertiary level to a wider range of professional needs within the country, could not have reduced the imbalances, eased the tensions and provided a



more positive environment for higher education. It has to be pointed out that the model of tertiary education was essentially one which initiated the Western model with its urban industrial bias. There was no conscious effort to orient the tertiary system to the process of development in which the transformation of the rural economy was the crucial task and to absorb a large part of the tertiary output in that task.

## **2.5 Socio-political problems – Youth violence and ethnic conflict**

The social and political changes that followed Independence brought in their wake new problems of social discord and political disunity. The growing politicization of the masses and the processes of democratisation that were set in motion produced a heightened consciousness of tradition and indigenous culture. The government which was elected to power in 1956 was committed to pursue policies which reflected these aspirations. Sinhala was adopted as the official language. These developments along with their positive aspects resulted in the reassertion of the power and role of the majority community which took forms that were often aggressive and discriminatory against the country's important minority of Tamils. Ugly outbreaks of communal violence further intensified the sense of insecurity among this minority group leading progressively to a demand for federal autonomy and eventually to a call for a separate State. Alongside this minority problem which posed a threat to the political unity of the country, unemployment among the youth continued to escalate, reaching intolerable proportions in the beginning of the Seventies. The frustrations of the youth broke out in widespread violence in 1971 in an attempt at the overthrow of the government. These manifestations of social unrest and racial tensions reveal the uglier features of the benign welfare society which was described earlier.

Some of the root causes of both the communal problems and the explosive nature of youth discontent were to be found in the shortcomings in the management of the economy. The economy was not expanding fast enough to sustain the new expectations that were generated by the social welfare policies, particularly the aspirations of the new generation that grew up and benefited from

these policies. In a slow growing economy, redistribution policies had to be implemented on a very limited resource base. They could not be spread widely enough, nor were they adequate to deal with the new demands that were rising. The competition for scarce economic opportunities in the modern sector was particularly severe. These were conditions which encouraged discrimination against minorities.

First, the government policies which gave Sinhala the principal place in the administration restricted the employment opportunities of the minorities, particularly the Tamil minority for whom the government sector had always provided an important avenue of employment. Second, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the massive increase in the demand for higher education could not be accommodated at the tertiary level both within the available capacity as well as in relation to the realistic prospects of employment for highly qualified manpower. These constraints resulted in restrictive policies relating to the admissions to tertiary-level institutions, the discriminatory effects of which appear to have fallen most severely on the student population of the Tamil minority. Finally, the neglect of the English language in the educational system as a result of the language policies pursued by government during this period reduced the employability of the student population as a whole, except for the small English-educated minority in the modern sector who maintained their proficiency in the English language. In the case of the university graduates in particular, the employment opportunities in the modern sector, as well as opportunities for further professional training, were seriously curtailed owing to lack of proficiency in English.

## **2.6 The developments after 1977**

The overview of the socio-economic changes which has been attempted in this chapter would not be complete without a brief discussion of the developments that have taken place after 1977. It is not possible however to attempt any comprehensive evaluation of the trends that have emerged after the decisive change of direction initiated by the new government which came into power in 1977. What is possible within the limited scope of this chapter



is to survey the main trends and to examine their implications in relation to the crucial problems which surfaced in the late Sixties and Seventies which have already been discussed in the preceding sections of this chapter.

The new policy package which was implemented in 1977 was aimed at the liberalisation of the economy to enable the market system to operate more freely and efficiently and thereby produce a structure of prices and incentives which promote growth, employment and production for export. The measures adopted included a substantial relaxation of exchange controls. The dual exchange rate was unified at a level which led to a significant devaluation of the rupee to the extent of about 50 percent, and the rupee was allowed to float against a basket of convertible currencies. Past government policies which protected the consumer from price increases in the international market through subsidies and administered prices, were modified or reversed to allow the international prices to take effect. The food subsidy was confined to households with incomes below Rs. 300 per mensem, reducing the beneficiaries to approximately half the population. A wide range of other subsidies on petroleum, transport and milk were reduced or eliminated. A major objective of government policy was to step up the level of investment and achieve an annual rate of growth of approximately 5.7 percent for the period 1978–1984 and to reduce unemployment from an estimated 24 percent in 1973 to about 10.8 percent by 1985.

For the purpose of the study, we could first examine how the economy responded to the new strategy and what impact it had on the growth of the modern sector which creates the demand for high-level manpower with which the study is concerned. The government's development effort has concentrated on a selected number of projects and programmes. These included an export-oriented free trade zone in manufacturing which planned to attract a sizeable flow of foreign investments and generate employment for the urban workforce; the Mahaweli Development Scheme, the largest multipurpose river diversion project undertaken in the country which absorbed approximately 32 percent of the total in the public sector investment programme; and a major urban development and housing programme. For the financing of the programme the government succeeded in mobilising external



resources at a significantly higher level than in the past. The new policy package enabled it to obtain substantial support for its balance of payments from the IMF, to attract a sizeable volume of foreign investments, and to benefit from a greatly enhanced flow of development assistance from donor countries and multilateral agencies. By 1980, nearly 40 percent of imports was being financed out of foreign development grants, concessional loans, and commercial borrowing.

Investment reached unprecedented levels in the period 1978–1980. It grew from about 14 percent of G.D.P. in 1976 to 26 percent in 1979 and a record 36 percent in 1980. The economy surged forward registering impressive rates of growth ranging from 8.2 percent in 1978 to 5.5 percent in 1980. Unemployment declined from about 23 percent of the workforce in the mid Seventies to 14 percent. However, it would not be correct to conclude from these development indicators that the economy has been able to move out of crisis conditions or that its development effort now rests on secure foundations. The fundamental imbalances which had persisted during the Sixties and Seventies in regard to the country's external and domestic resources have emerged in greater magnitude and intensity at the higher levels of investment and rates of growth which the country has been attempting to sustain. The liberalised economy while promoting growth and investment was also producing adverse trade balances and balance of payments deficits of massive proportions. A temporary improvement in the terms of trade in 1976–78 was followed by a sharp down-turn which exacerbated the situation. As a result the reliance on foreign aid and foreign borrowing has become greater than at any other period in the past and has probably reached its upper limits. The task of implementing the development strategy and sustaining the initial momentum which the economy was able to generate has therefore become increasingly problematic. Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of the economy has resulted in a major spurt of growth in employment in the modern urban sector. This includes modern service sectors such as banking, import-export trade, manufacturing, large-scale construction, tourism and the hotel industry. These activities have increased the employment opportunities for middle and high-level manpower and have created critical shortages in certain categories of skills such as

engineering, accountancy, medicine, and teaching both at secondary and tertiary levels. The outflow of skills has also continued. But at the same time the liberalised economy, the relaxation of controls in regard to imports as well as travel, certain facilities for retaining foreign exchange earnings in convertible form, and the new economic opportunities with high income potential have created conditions which can produce a small reverse flow of Sri Lankan expatriates. The environment is therefore one which is favourable for mobility in both directions. It provides the scope for more effective policies, including policies to increase the supply of skills having both local and international demand, which could better cope with the brain drain, benefiting from it as well as managing it. One group however which has been bypassed or has not equally benefited from all this increase of economic activity is the educated group, including university graduates largely in the non-science and non-technical disciplines who have little or no proficiency in English. This is because most of the new activities which could have absorbed at least part of this available manpower have important transactions with foreigners or foreign countries, and therefore employers prefer to recruit high-level manpower with the required language proficiency.

Next we need to examine how the new policies affected the social welfare package, the extent to which they imply a major reversal of past social welfare priorities or seriously weaken the foundations on which the country's past social achievements had been based. Although the main thrust of government policy seemed strongly critical of past welfare-oriented subsidy-based strategies, the main core of the welfare package has been maintained intact. There has been no change in the government commitment to provide free health and educational services to the population as a whole. In the field of education certain measures in fact increased the government commitment. School text-books were provided free to school children. Government assistance was granted to meet the salaries of teachers in private non-fee levying schools. University education was expanded by establishing three new universities in three districts in the North, East and South. The free midday meal to school children continued without modification. The programme for the free supply of



nutritional supplements to expectant and lactating mothers and to infants suffering from malnutrition was expanded and strengthened until it catered to close upon 500,000 beneficiaries.

The most important change in the welfare package was the change in the food subsidy. The first modification introduced a scheme which limited the subsidised ration to the low-income groups on a cut-off point of Rs. 300 per month as family income. This scheme was replaced by a food stamp scheme. Both schemes covered approximately 50 percent of the population. The income criterion of Rs. 300 per household was evidently not strictly enforced, and there appears to have been a large degree of understatement of incomes for the purpose of qualifying for the scheme. Income distribution data available for 1978/79 indicate that probably not more than 15 percent of spending units could have been below the income limit of Rs. 300 per month. On the other hand, the rapid inflation that had taken place made the income limit of Rs. 300 inadequate if the genuinely disadvantaged groups were all to be included as beneficiaries of the scheme.

The effect which the changes after 1977 have had on the well-being of the population as a whole would have to be based on the impact of recent policies on income distribution and the levels of consumption in the lower income groups. On the one hand, aggregate national data show that the economy has grown in real terms at an annual average of 6.8 percent during the period 1978-1980. Per capita income would have risen by about 5 percent or increased by approximately 15.76 percent for the three-year period. But at the same time the data from recent socio-economic surveys indicate that income distribution has become more unequal than in the early Seventies. Whereas the lower half of the total number of income receivers received 22.15 of the total income in 1973, it received 18.25 in 1978. Given these shifts in income distribution, it would still appear that each of the last five deciles of the population shared in the growth of real income during this period. If, however, we use a monthly income of Rs. 480 at 1979 prices as the cut-off point for the satisfaction of basic needs of an average household, then probably 25 percent of the population appear to be still subsisting below this level according to 1978/79 data.



In this broad analysis we need to include the conclusions that could be drawn from the improvement in some of the key social indicators. Crude death rates have for the first time fallen below 7 and stood at 6.4 in 1980. Infant mortality is estimated to have again rapidly declined from 42 in 1977 to 37 in 1980. The crude birth rate has again dropped from 27.9 in 1977 to 27.6 in 1980. This improvement in social indicators may derive partly from the changes in the conditions of the estate population. Here the increases in income and government measures to include this segment of the population in the national services and programmes may have contributed to the lowering of infant mortality. But while the available data indicates that there has been no major reversal of the trends relating to indicators for social well-being, this conclusion must be provisional as it only applies to a short period of 3 years. Although it is true that the main core of the welfare package including income support for the poorest families in relation to their food expenditure has been retained by the government, there have been repeated policy statements which indicate that the government is considering the feasibility of reducing the massive burden it now carries in regard to the expenditures on social welfare. If there is a major cutback on welfare programmes before the lowest income deciles have been able to increase their earning capacity and to rise above the poverty line, the low-income groups are likely to suffer a significant decline in living standards.

A problem of increasing intensity is the high rate of inflation that followed on the policy changes initiated by the government which had been regarded as a source of increasing hardship to the lower income groups. The rate of inflation measured by the consumer price index averaged 16 per annum for the period 1977-80. According to the wholesale price index it was in the region of 19 percent. In both cases it had accelerated appreciably in 1979 and 1980. The different estimates of inflation for 1980 range from 23 percent to 38 percent. There has since been some abatement in 1981 when the rate of inflation is estimated at approximately 20 percent. It is difficult to determine how inflation has affected different socio-economic groups and income strata without more reliable wage indices and data on income distribution. The outcome of inflation for low-income groups has been of a mixed character. There has clearly been an upward pressure in real

wages for a number of categories, particularly labour in the construction sector. A number of factors such as the outflow of skilled and semi-skilled labour to the Middle East and the inauguration of the massive construction programme in the public sector have contributed to the process. The self-employed sector which accounts for a substantial proportion of the low-income groups is not likely to have been adversely affected by inflation, particularly in commodity-producing sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and small industries. This would also be true of a large part of the service such as trade and transportation. One sector on which the adverse impact of inflation seems to have been most severe is the government sector which contains nearly 500,000 employees, most of whom however would be included in the middle and lower-middle income groups. With the exception of minor employees, these categories have suffered a decline in real wages which has probably depressed them below the 1952 levels. Outside the government sector, the low-income group for whom food stamps constituted a significant supplement, also would have been badly affected. The food stamp scheme, unlike the rationing scheme, does not at present protect the beneficiary against inflation. According to the data of a recent survey, it would appear that the value of food stamps as a proportion of household income ranged between 27 percent to 63 percent depending on the level of income. The impact of rapid inflation would be very severe on the most disadvantaged groups dependent on food stamps, as a relatively significant proportion of the income would consist of the fixed value of food stamps.

The effects of inflation on the incomes of high-level manpower appear to have been of a mixed character. The self-employed as well as fixed income earners in this category who were in the private sector appear to have fared better than their counterparts in the public sector. Given the rising demand for the high-level manpower and the pull of the international market, these groups very probably gained from the inflationary conditions in which their real incomes increased. The new tax structure on personal incomes also brought them some relief. In the public sector the situation was not as favourable. The real wage indices for teachers and administrative and technical grades recorded a sharp drop ranging from 15 percent to 20 percent



compared to 1970 wage levels. As the computation is based on the Colombo Consumer Cost of Living index which underestimates the rise in prices, the decline is very probably greater. The incomes policies of government have attempted to compensate partially for the drop by exempting all public officers from tax on their remuneration from public office. Special allowances to professional grades and other privileges such as the right to engage in private practice and consultancy services under certain conditions, were other inducements to create favourable conditions for retention of highly qualified personnel. But all these ad hoc measures do not as yet add up to an effective or consistent incomes policy to deal with the income-related problems of high-level manpower.

We observed that unemployment and with it youth unemployment have dropped from 24 percent in 1973 to about 15 percent in 1980. At the same time the wage structure has undergone major adjustments in regard to the relative wages for different occupations. Increases in the wages for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled work in manual and operative grades have far outpaced those of white-collar jobs particularly in the minor and clerical grades. These shifts in wages have had their effect on the traditional hierarchy of status and income which governed the occupational structure. This has helped to alter the job expectations of the young and induced them to seek employment opportunities in a wide range of economic activities including the construction sector, the hotel industry, various forms of self-employment, as well as employment opportunities outside Sri Lanka. These changes are likely to have their pervasive effect on the attitudes to learning and work in the young age group as a whole. The quickening of the economy, the opportunities which came in the wake of liberalisation and the expansion of economic activity in general are certain to alter the horizon of expectations of the young.



## CHAPTER 3

# THE FORMAL SCHOOL EDUCATION SYSTEM OF SRI LANKA

### 3.1 Introduction

The main objective of this chapter, as mentioned in chapter 1, is to identify the outstanding trends and inconsistencies in the formal school education system of the country, which have a bearing on university education and the employment of graduates. For this purpose an attempt will be made to provide a macro-view of the system, with appropriate historical perspectives, where necessary. Thus the chapter will trace the main trends of development in the system, which transformed it from the elitist-oriented system in the Colonial times, to its present mass-participation pattern. It will then proceed to identify, in sufficient detail, the inconsistencies and disparities of the system, which not only have hindered the system from achieving its mass-participation objectives in general, but also appear to have had serious backwash effects in meeting the desirable objectives of a wider and a more representative participation in university education, in particular.

This chapter would, in its totality provide a back-drop to the discussion of a fundamental issue, relevant to this study, and to which reference will be made in the ensuing chapters. If expectations, aspirations, perceptions and attitudes of university students and graduates in respect of university education and subsequent employment, could be the outcomes of the socio-economic and cultural milieu to which they belong, in what manner could the formal schooling that they have gone through, influence the internalisation of these attributes? To what extent is it possible to

trace the root causes of the problems of securing a university education and satisfactory employment thereafter, to the trends, patterns, inconsistencies and disparities that could be identified in the formal school system itself? Needless to say that this issue is so vast and complex that no simple and a straight-forward answer may be possible. Given the scope and constraints of this chapter, the most that the discussion that follows could hope to achieve is to give some useful insights to the problem.

### 3.2 The beginning of the present school system

Sri Lanka possesses an unbroken documented dynastic history of over 25 centuries, and the foundations for an indigenous system of education were laid during the 3rd century B.C., with the introduction of Buddhism to the country. However, the history of the school system as organised and administered today is relatively short. Sri Lanka's modern school system is partly a legacy of what was introduced by the British.

During the century and half of British rule in Sri Lanka, education became a subject of responsibility of not only the government but also of a number of competing religious groups, where the Christian minority occupied a position of pre-eminence. Thus, during this period the country was exposed to a mixture of policies, some of which were progressive and socially integrative, while others were harmful and socially disruptive.

So that, by 1939, the school system that had evolved throughout the years of British rule was marked by a number of socially discriminative dualities.

In the words of an eminent Educationist,

“the combined effect of these dualities was that educational provision was unplanned, unevenly distributed, wasteful of human and financial resources, and that, above all access to a quality education was by and large denied to the mass of the rural population and the urban poor”<sup>1</sup>

1. Jayasuriya, J. E. *Education in the Third World-Some Reflections*, Indian Institute of Education, Pune, Somaiya Publications, 1981 (p. 85).

The Colonial Government introduced the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931, which entrusted the responsibility for certain subjects of government, including "Education", to the State Council. The introduction of universal adult franchise in 1931, set the stage for major changes in education.

The major educational developments, particularly since 1939, owed more to the nationalist forces of this country, rather than to Colonial educational policies. It was in 1939 that the State Council passed the *The Education Ordinance No. 31*, which transferred policy and regulation making rights and functions, hitherto exercised by the Board of Education, nominated by the Governor, to the Executive Committee. Furthermore, this Ordinance attempted to set right some of the deficiencies of the educational system, about which expression of dissatisfaction had begun to be forcefully articulated by nationalist groups who had by now begun to agitate for changes in the existing inequitable system of education, referred to above. *The Education Ordinance No. 31* of 1939 in fact, became the operative law for the present system of education, and was subsequently amended in 1947, 1951, 1953 and 1958.

### 3.3 The democratization process of education.<sup>1</sup>

The agitation for the democratization of a socially discriminatory educational system, in the hope of affording greater opportunities, particularly, for the socially under-privileged masses, to meet the educational needs of their children, gained momentum during the 1940s. This agitation generally appeared to be inspired by lofty ideals of egalitarianism and concern for providing equality of educational opportunities for all. Adult franchise undoubtedly, gave an impetus for this agitation. Initially, the leadership came predominantly from those sections of the English educated elite that were influenced by the egalitarian, socialist and nationalist ideologies of the times, and the other levels of society joined in this agitation, by and by, as public awareness of educational needs and problems became more and more widespread and pronounced.

<sup>1</sup> For details see 'Democratization of Education in Sri Lanka' Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, Aug, 1978 (mimeo).



The beginnings of the process of democratization of education were made during the mid 1940s, and thereafter several important measures were taken during the ensuing decades, which have qualitatively contributed to attempts in this direction. Some of these important measures are identified in the ensuing sections.

### 3.3.1 The Free Education Scheme-1945

One of the discriminative dualities that prevailed as at 1943 was that school-fees were payable in respect of those children who attended English or bilingual schools, whether they were managed by the government or private or denominational organisations, whereas, education was imparted free to those children attending Vernacular (i.e. Sinhala or Tamil medium) schools. Thus, it was really the medium of instruction adopted by a particular school, which determined whether children attending such schools should pay fees or not, for the education they received. In 1939, there were 4701 free schools with 675,281 pupils and 410 fee-levying schools with 98,898 pupils.<sup>1</sup> The Kannangara Committee, which was set up by the State Council to investigate the existing educational system and suggest suitable reforms, observed that it was really the fee-levying schools which provided better courses of study leading to lucrative employment opportunities and under the circumstances, only the well-to-do could, in fact, afford such an education. This Committee, therefore, recommended that education should be made free, in order to make equality of opportunity in education a reality.

In terms of this recommendation a Free Education Scheme was formulated. The regulations embodying the Free Education Scheme were approved by the Board of Ministers and the State Council in 1945. Even though the policy of free education from the Kindergarten to the University was accepted in principle, from the view point of quality of education, it took many more years to make it a reality.

### 3.3.2 The change to the National Languages (Sinhala and Tamil) as the media of instruction

This was the second recommendation made by the Kannangara Committee in its attempt to bring about equality of opportunity

1. Administration Report (Director of Education) 1939.

in access to education. Though the adoption of the principle of free education as a guiding principle of national policy gave much hope for the masses, what it in fact amounted to then was the granting of free education to the English schools. The abolition of school fees in English schools did not benefit the mass of children who already received free primary education in Vernacular schools, and who dropped out of the system before the age of 12. It also did not encourage an influx of additional children to the secondary school except those whose parents could afford to maintain their children there, particularly for the reason that only about 7% of the population was literate in English. Nevertheless, English held a position of pre-eminence and dominance in the educational and the administrative set up of the country. Under these circumstances, it appeared that the logical sequel to the realisation of the aims of free education was to adopt the national languages as the media of instruction throughout the educational structure. Thus, the State Council decided in 1945 that Sinhala and Tamil should be used as the media of instruction in the primary school for Sinhalese and Tamil children respectively.

It is generally accepted that this change over to the national language media coupled with free education, enabled a more representative group of children from the under-privileged strata to receive a reasonably good education, and also to enter the portals of higher education, especially in the fields of science and technology.

By the year 1970, the language policy in education was taken to its logical conclusion, by making it possible to follow a large number of university courses (except in the Faculties of Medicine and Engineering) through the national languages. This has enabled a fair section of the rural population to enter the mainstream of public life of the country and participate actively in national affairs. In this respect, the change in the medium of instruction from English to the national languages was a major and an effective step towards the democratization of education.

### **3.3.3 The abolition of the Denominational School System**

The issues of denominationalism in education, and who should control education also came up for much discussion and acrimonious debate during the 1940s and 1950s, particularly after



the acceptance of the policy of free education and medium of instruction as mentioned above. In fact, the Kannangara Committee itself had given much thought to these problems and made certain observations which seemed to have had much influence on the policy-makers of the ensuing years.

On the whole it was widely thought that rationalisation of the school system was not possible with multiplicity of bodies in control of the schools.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, in spite of some of the apparently plausible arguments for the retention of a dual system advanced by interested groups, public opinion against the state financed private and denominational school system began to gather momentum, particularly during the late 1950s. This agitation culminated in the government passing a Bill in 1960 to take over private and denominational schools and run them as government schools. A few denominational schools opted to function outside the State system, and are now private schools. With this far-reaching step taken by the government in assuming control of the school system, much hope and confidence was generated among the mass of the people that a state-controlled school system would contribute immensely towards the achievement of the objectives of a democratic and an egalitarian system of education.

### **3.3.4 Qualitative improvement of education through curricular reforms**

- (i) The concept of democratization of education in Sri Lanka has manifested itself both in the expansion and development of the structure, and in attempts at the qualitative improvement of the content of education. The school curriculum of the early 1940s, quite faithfully reflected the social stratification of the intents and purposes of the colonial rulers. The Vernacular schools intended for the masses counted for nothing and provided a basic education in the 3 R's and little besides. The English medium schools based their curriculum on the models of the public and government schools in England. Thus, from a qualitative point of view, there was an inferior system for

1. For details see Jayasuriya, J.E. op. cit. p. 89



the poor and the less privileged and a superior system for the elite class. Even after Independence and the introduction of free education and other progressive structural measures, discrimination against the rural and the underprivileged groups existed in the form of early "streaming" of children into courses of studies, e.g. Science, Arts and Commerce. Of these streams, Science offered better employment prospects than others, and in spite of the heavy demand for Science education, only a small proportion of children received the benefit of Science education due to the shortage of adequately equipped schools and Science teachers. By and large, schools equipped to teach Science at secondary school level were located in the main towns and the more developed districts. Hence, curricular streaming worked against equality of educational opportunities between different geographical areas and social classes.

The rigorous terminal examinations, such as the Senior School Certificate (S.S.C.) and General Certificate of Education- Ordinary level (G.C.E. O/Level), modelled on British examples, also played a dominant role in worsening this discrimination.

Education reforms, aimed at the qualitative improvement of the content of education were the outcome of a slow process of national resurgence. The expansion of educational facilities and the revival of the national languages were largely responsible for broad-basing public opinion on the realisation that the educational fare that was provided under a stereo-type curriculum failed to meet the needs and aspirations of the people.

- (ii) It was widely recognised, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, that the basic shortcomings of the country's educational system was that the heavily academic type of curricula were framed to cater to the needs of that small minority of the output of the school system, who having obtained academic certificates compete for the very small number of white-collar jobs available in a Third World

economy.<sup>1</sup> Successive governments have made concerted efforts to identify the nature of these shortcomings and work out satisfactory solutions to these problems.

In this respect the decade 1970–1980 is significantly important because of the radical changes that were made not only in the formal school system but even in the universities. The following sections will attempt to provide a brief outline of the attempts made in the direction of bringing about a qualitative improvement in school education, as would be considered relevant to this study, because, for instance, some of the curricular changes made during this period in the secondary level of education have certainly had a considerable influence and impact on some of the curricular changes and developments that took place at university level<sup>2</sup>.

### 3.3.4.1 The Educational Reforms of 1972

In one of its documents (1972)<sup>3</sup>, the Ministry of Education itself admitted that —

“.....the country was burdened with a set of frustrated and disillusioned youth. The education system was blamed for this situation”.

It went on to claim that —

“the educational reforms of 1972 aim at creating an education system geared to the needs of an independent, sovereign nation”.

Thus, the Government as a whole, and the Ministry of Education in particular, gave priority to the task of arresting an ever-deepening educational crisis of mal-adjustment and imbalances brought about by a number of disparities between the educational system and the environment. For this purpose, a drastic revision

1. See: (i) *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations (A programme for Action for Ceylon)* — A Report of an Inter-Agency Team organised by the ILO, Geneva, 1971.

(ii) *The Five Year Plan—(1972–1976)* Ministry of Planning, Sri Lanka, 1972.

2. See Chapter 5.

3. *Education in Sri Lanka : New Horizons*, Ministry of Education, Colombo, 1972.

of education's organisation, content, procedures, goals and spirit was considered imperative. More dynamic concepts of the qualitative aspects of educational developments, such as that which views the quality and excellence of education in its *relevance* and *fitness* to the changing needs of the children and society, were given great emphasis.

One noteworthy aspect of the educational reforms ushered in 1972 is the claim that they were conceived within the broader framework of a national development plan as spelt out in the Five-Year Plan (1972-1976), taking into account the needs of the individual as well as those of the national development strategies. These reforms brought about radical changes in both the structure and the content of education at the primary and secondary levels of education.

**(i) The curricular reforms at the primary school-level (Grades 1-5) :**

According to the 1972 structure of the education system, the Primary School Programme took 5 years. The age of admission was raised to 6 years. From Grades 1-4 automatic or "normal" progression was adopted. Only when really necessary were children permitted to repeat Grade 5.

The 1972 educational reformers argued that the root cause of the problems of a heavy dropout rate occurring at the open-access stage of schooling and the prevalence of a considerable proportion of children of the eligible age not entering school at all,<sup>1</sup> was the poor quality of primary school education, which resulted primarily from the attitudes and behaviour of the teacher and the conventional class-room structure which made school meaningless and unstimulating for most children.

The new programme attempted to change the conventional and stereotyped class-room situation and thereby to create a greater rapport between the teacher and the learner. Teachers were given the freedom to experiment with the curriculum. They were made to realise that no single teaching procedure or class structure was the best; and that a variety of teaching-learning methods should be used to make learning a pleasurable experience.

1. See under Section 3.4 of this chapter for details.



The conception of a class-room was transformed into one where the learner (or children) came first, where they were the "doers" and the teachers only the helpers; and where learning took place often through the interaction of the children themselves. The slate-and-pencil learning materials were replaced by three dimensional objects and children were expected to learn by working with them.

The children were also given the opportunity for group work so that they may learn through practical experience to gradually change their egocentric behaviour pattern which is characteristic at this stage.

Finally, continuous assessment of their work replaced the periodic onslaughts of formal testing.

Certain supportive activities were organised to ensure the success of the programme. These included the publishing of certain supportive documents, such as teacher handbooks and pupil texts, action research programmes and the in-service training of primary school teachers. In spite of this concerted effort there seemed to be a few shortcomings. Certain studies<sup>1</sup> attributed the prevailing high level of dropouts to the first grade reader, while the 1977 Schools Census indicated that a fairly high level of repetition in the primary grades still continued.

## (ii) Curricular reforms in the junior secondary school-level (Grades 6-9)<sup>2</sup>

Prior to 1972, children followed a common curriculum from Grades 6-8 (middle school) and were streamed into three curricular streams-Arts, Science and Commerce in Grades 9 and 10 referred to above. Since the middle school did not lead to anything

1. Kariyawasam, Dr. T. - A report on 'A study of early school dropouts in the secondary schools of under-privileged areas in the City of Colombo (Sri Lanka)', National Council of YMCA, Sri Lanka, 1977.

2. For more details, see:

- (a) Ariyadasa, K. D. - *In-Service Training of Teachers in Sri Lanka*, UNESCO, 1976.
- (b) Ranaweera, A. M. - *Integrated Science in the Junior Secondary School*, UNESCO, 1976.
- (c) Diyasena, W. - *Prevocational Education in Sri Lanka*, UNESCO, 1976.

as "important" as a public examination, it received very little attention. The curriculum was an amalgam of subject disciplines, destined to give a "general" education but which did not equip the many who terminated their education at this level with any "useful" knowledge.

At this level too the differences in educational provision was accentuated. Of 6,000 schools teaching the middle grades, less than 1,000 taught general science. At the higher levels, the percentage of students in the science stream varied from 10 percent to 55 percent<sup>1</sup>. A number of schools had no science facilities at all.

The 1972 reforms attempted to reduce this disparity by giving every child the equal opportunity of being introduced to scientific and other knowledge. It also aimed at providing a more "meaningful" education for children studying in the junior secondary grades, and in minimising the privileges of children attending schools with superior facilities by introducing a type of curriculum that required little or no sophisticated teaching material; was less academic and more related to the immediate environment of the average child. It was expected that this would not only make the content of education more meaningful to children, but also that it would equip school-leavers from this level with the knowledge and skills that were useful in the world outside school.

The reforms involved both curriculum innovation and curriculum renewal. New subject areas were introduced (particularly prevocational studies). Also new content was infused into old subject areas, and where knowledge was compartmentalised, a unified or integrated approach was considered suitable.

This new scheme required children to follow a common comprehensive curriculum from Grades 6 to 9. The curriculum included 10 subjects, viz : first language (either Sinhala or Tamil), second language (English), Religion, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health and Physical Education, "Aesthetic Studies" or Fine Arts, (such as Art, Music and Dancing,) and Prevocational Studies (two studies).

According to the educational reformers, the logistics of this common comprehensive package rested on the aim that at the

1. *Non-formal Education in Sri Lanka*, Marga Institute, Colombo, 1974.

termination of this programme, the learner would be equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are basic and fundamental to the concept of general education in a modern developing society.

The programme culminated in the National Certificate of General Education (NCGE) Examination on all subjects at the end of Grade 9, which is the end of the Junior Secondary School. The earlier concentration of resources mainly on the upper segments of the school system was changed by bringing in the first public examination (and also the first "selection" hurdle) to cover the work of the 4-year Junior Secondary School. However, certain measures were taken in order to re-orient the examination process so that it would meet the demands of the new system and not distort its objectives. The examination took into account continual assessment of children by teachers in Social Studies and in Pre-vocational Studies and provided practical examinations in Physical Education in addition to using the conventional pen and paper examination techniques. In order also to accord parity of status to Pre-vocational Studies, the minimum requirements at the NCGE for admission to the Senior Secondary Grades included a pass in Pre-vocational Studies.

### (iii) **Curricular reforms at the higher secondary school (Grades 10 & 11)**

Changes were made at the senior secondary level too in order to correspond with those changes made at the senior secondary level. The traditional type G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Curriculum was replaced with a new programme which consisted of five compulsory *core subjects*, namely—

1. First language
2. Second language
3. The Cultural Heritage and the Socio-economic Environment of Sri Lanka
3. Elements of Statistics and Management and
5. Principles of Socialism.

The *optional subjects* were organised under *six alternative streams*, namely—



1. Science
2. Commerce and Business Studies
3. Social Science
4. Languages, Humanities and "Aesthetic Studies" (Fine Arts and Performing Arts)
5. Agricultural Science/Home Economics, and
6. Technical Sciences.

This streaming was done keeping in mind the entrance requirements to the university and other tertiary institutes, middle-level employment avenues and opportunities for self-employment. Another compulsory component of this curriculum was called *Project-work*, which was introduced with a view to including training in problem solving, in multi-disciplinary approaches to community problems, in data gathering and their use in arriving at decisions. This was basically a community-based educational programme, and hence it was expected to involve the school as a catalyst in community development, or as a conduit for channelling services to the community.

The terminal examination at this level was called the Higher National Certificate of Education (HNCE) Examination, and it was intended that selections to the university would be based on the performance at this examination.

The majority who completed the NCGE were however not expected to enter the Senior Secondary Programme, but according to the proposed educational plan, had the option of entering a network of junior technical, polytechnical and "aesthetic" educational institutions and national service camps. However, even as late as 1976, these institutions and national camps had not come into operation, because the first batch of students who completed the four-year programme and failed to go into the Senior Secondary Stage were permitted to repeat the NCGE Examination once more.

### 3.3.4.2 Curricular Reforms of 1977

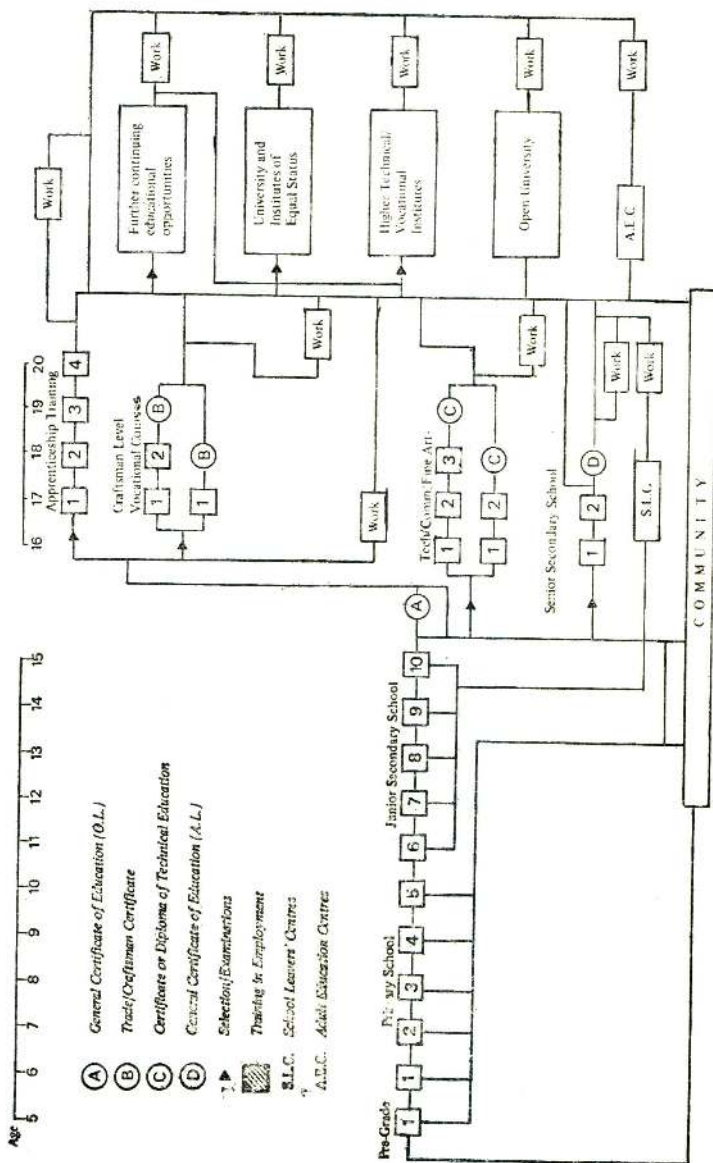
The programme at the secondary school level was short lived. In fact, what was designed under the HNCE Programme was hardly given a chance for trial. The Government that was elected

into office in July 1977 effected certain structural changes in the formal school system, which brought the HNCE Programme to an abrupt end. The NCGE and HNCE Examinations were abolished and the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) and (Advanced Level) Examinations were reinstated. The school entry age was lowered to 5 years from 6 years (as was the case prior to 1972) and the school system was re-structured into a 6 + 3 + 2 + 2 system (see diagram 1).

Thus, it could be said that the 1972 reforms particularly at the junior and senior secondary levels, did not achieve the level of success expected, largely due to shortcomings in the process of implementation. The whole NCGE programme (and even some of the components of the HNCE programme) required a totally new orientation of, and commitment from, pupils, parents, officials, heads of schools, the public and teachers in particular. The failure to re-orient teachers and their inability to play the novel and exacting role required of them in spite of a fairly extensive in-service teacher education programme, was certainly one of the major causes for the failure of the scheme.

However, the curricular changes brought about in 1977, did not drastically affect the broad design and the basis of the primary and the junior secondary curricula of 1972. The revised curriculum of 1977 of the middle (Grades 6 — 8) and lower-secondary (Grades 9 — 10) levels has retained some essential features and subjects of the NCGE, with a few changes in the options and the content. For instance, the NCGE scheme did away with curricular streaming into Arts, Science and Commerce and this had not been brought back in the new GCE (O/Level) scheme. This has led to the need to retain Integrated Science and Social Studies and prevented the re-introduction of the old subjects - Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History and Civics into the new GCE (O/Level) scheme. But unlike in the NCGE Examinations, where all 10 subjects were compulsory, none of the subjects (other than the first language and Mathematics) is compulsory at the new GCE (O/Level) Examination. Furthermore, pre-vocational studies have been heavily modified and re-named Technical subjects, retaining only about 11 of the 82 craft subjects that were there in the pre-vocational curriculum. Children sitting

DIAGRAM 1



FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF SRI LANKA — 1977



the new GCE (O/Level) Examination are tested on the course-work completed in Grades 9 and 10 only, in contrast to the NCGE Examination, which attempted to examine work completed in the 4 year period. The contents of the NCGE syllabuses which were meant for a four-year period, have been revised to suit the present 3 + 2 structure. Performance at the GCE (O/Level) Examination would determine whether a student would enter the Senior Secondary level of Education (i.e. Grades 11 and 12) leading to the GCE (A/Level) Examination, which is now the entrance examination to universities. The curriculum of the GCE (A/Level) has two broad streams, namely Arts and Science, each stream consisting of a fair array of subjects. Selection of subjects by pupils is done on the basis of specifications provided by the universities, in accordance with their own admission criteria and educational programmes.

### 3.3.4.3 Education Proposals for Reform—1981.<sup>1</sup>

In 1981, the Minister of Education presented a White Paper on Education, containing certain reform proposals, with the view to bring about structural changes in the system of education. The White Paper proposals have since been intensively discussed and debated both in the legislature and at public fora. Though the reform proposals have not yet been implemented on a national scale, it would not be irrelevant to briefly refer to some of these proposals that are expected to have a bearing on the qualitative improvement of the secondary school curricula and the university entrance examinations, about which we are concerned with in this section.

Under the reform proposals, the new system of education will consist of three distinct segments, viz. the school system (to provide general education), the university system and the tertiary education system (i.e. the non-university vocational, technical and professional sectors of education). The school system will be re-structured to consist of five years of primary schooling in Grades 1 to 5, three years of junior secondary schooling in Grades 6 to 8

1. See *Education Proposals for Reform-General, University and Tertiary (Vocational, Technical and Professional)* – Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Employment, 1981.

and three years of senior secondary schooling in Grades 9 to 11. A national certification examination, called the General Certificate of Education Examination will be held at the end of Grade 11, and this will be terminal in character for the majority of pupils.

The basic design of the curriculum of the Junior Secondary School (Grades 6 to 8) will remain almost intact, maintaining the subject groupings introduced in 1972 and 1977, except in the case of two curricular areas, viz. "civic training" which will be introduced with the objective of emphasising national integration and "life skills," which will replace the technical subjects at this stage of education. A clear definition of "life skills" is not available in the White Paper, but the main objectives spelt out in respect of this subject area indicates that "life skills" may tend to bear a greater affinity to the concept of "pre-vocational studies," introduced in 1972, rather than to "technical education" of 1977, which replaced "pre-vocational studies."

The proposed Senior Secondary (Grades 9 to 11) Curriculum (consisting of 9 main subjects) too does not differ very much from the present GCE (O/Level) curriculum design except, again, in the provision for "civic training." The emphasis continues to be on imparting a "general education," through a common package curriculum, and hence there will be no streaming at this stage too. However, "life skills" now would change back to "technical subjects," containing a suitable array of optional subjects, such as Woodwork, Metalwork, Agriculture, Home-Science etc. perhaps very much similar to the existing curricula in "technical subjects." Nevertheless, it could be speculated that considerable revisions or modifications in the present syllabus-specifications in all subjects would be effected, prior to the national scale implementation of this proposal, in view of the fact that the proposed programme would be a three-year course, as against the existing two-year GCE (O/Level) course. It is also envisaged that of the package of 9 subjects, pupils will be tested only in 5, at the national level examination (i.e. GCE Exam.) and the rest would be tested at district or smaller administrative levels.

A more fundamental change from the existing structure would occur if the proposal in respect of the post-general education segment is accepted for implementation. It has been proposed that



a "collegiate level" (Grades 12 to 13) education programmes should be set up in schools, which would prepare pupils for the universities and other academically-oriented higher education institutes. After completion of the general education programme, those who acquire the requisite qualifications will proceed to the collegiate level, where they will receive education in a specialised field. The proposed collegiate-level curriculum will have two streams, viz. Arts and Science.

The curriculum will consist of two parts. Part I will have a common core of 4 subjects, almost identical to the core-curriculum of the HNCE programme (of the 1972 Reforms) which really never got off the ground due to the changes that occurred in 1977. Part II will consist of the subject groupings under the Arts and Science streams, and pupils will be required to select 3 subjects from the lists of subjects provided. The collegiate level courses will lead to the University Entrance Examination, open only to school pupils who have completed Grade 13. The mode of examination will include improved techniques of written tests and continuous assessment.

Thus, in the continuing pursuit to achieve a greater degree of improvement in the quality of education at the formal school level, the framers of the Reform Proposals of 1981 appear to have done some hard re-thinking, particularly on the curricular designs introduced by the reforms of 1972 and 1977. In this respect, indications are that some of the former innovative programmes, which have been found educationally acceptable and valid (though pre-maturely jettisoned in 1977) may stand another chance of being re-introduced, with due modifications, in the national school system.

### **3.4 The present school system : A brief analysis of its structural features and some major problems.<sup>1</sup>**

The afore-mentioned democratization processes have resulted in a massive expansion in the formal school education system of the country, and also brought about certain problems for which successive governments have been attempting to find solutions. The following sections will deal with these aspects briefly.

1. Also see *The Needs of Children in Sri Lanka* - Marga Institute - (A study undertaken for UNICEF), 1980, (memo).



Sri Lanka has a very large and widespread network of schools, to be exact 9,117 State schools<sup>1</sup>, 37 private schools (excludes private tutorials), 358 estate schools (not vested in Government at the time of Schools Census - 1 March, 1980) and 282 Pirivena schools, a total of 9,794 at the 1980 annual school census to serve its population of about 14.7 million living in an area of 25,332 square miles (64,652 sq. kilometres). This works out to an average of one school per 1501 of population and area-wise a school for every 2.6 square miles (6.6 sq. kilometres). This can be adjudged a liberal provision of schooling facilities by any standard. The system contains about 3.3 million pupils and over 140,000 teachers. State expenditure on Education uses up about 14 percent of the annual budget of the government or nearly 3 percent of the G.N.P (1980) The literacy rate is about 87 percent which is one of the highest in Asia. However some features in their utilization by the people go to indicate that everything is not well in this massive system. A sizeable proportion of the population still does not come into school at all. The 1971 Population Census has identified that the 'No Schooling' category was about 14.4 percent of the 10-14 age group and 15 percent of the 20-24 age group. The age specific participation rate recorded in the Annual School Censuses has never exceeded 86 percent and this has been for the ages 8 years and 9 years. Over-age admissions to schools is not quite uncommon. In 1979 as much as 18.8 percent of the pupils entering school in the Lower Kindergarten were over-age, being over six years. Of this, 2 percent was over eight years of age. Dropouts from schools and repetition of grades, both occurring right from Grade I onwards are other disturbing features of the school system.

According to the data collected through the School Census (1974), for every 100 students who entered Grade I, 53 passed Grade 5, 46 passed Grade 9 and sat for the GCE (O/Level) Examination and 14 studied in the GCE (A/Level) Grade, out of whom less than 2 entered the university. The School Census for 1979 indicates that out of every 100 students who entered Grade I, 73

1. This number had increased to 9521 by 1981, largely due to the take-over of Estate Schools by the government. (See Table 33). *Statistical Pocket Book of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka*, 1982 - Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo, Sri Lanka.

passed Grade 5, 51 passed Grade 9 and sat the GCE (O/level) Examination and 24 studied in the GCE (A/Level) Grade, out of whom 2 entered the university and received a higher education.

In the ensuing paragraphs an attempt will be made to see whether these shortcomings in the utilisation of schooling concentrate in any particular segments of the population and if so who they are and also to identify the features of the system that may be contributing to the persistence of these shortcomings particularly for the decade 1970-1980. An examination of these factors should be able to give a broad indication of the manner and the extent to which children belonging to different social strata are affected in their progress from the formal school system to higher education, particularly to the university level.

### 3.4.1 The School System

Prior to 1972, the school structure was as follows :<sup>1</sup>

1. Primary Level — Grades 1-5
2. Middle School — Grades 6-8
3. Secondary — First Cycle Grades 9-10
4. Secondary — Second Cycle Grades 11-12

At the end of Grade 8, children were streamed into three groups — Arts, Science and Commerce. At Grade 10, they faced their first academic hurdle — the General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level) Examination. Success at this examination determined their entry to Grades 11 and 12 which prepared them for the next selective test, the GCE (A/Level) Examination. This was also a selection examination for admission to the university.

As has been already referred to, the educational reforms of 1972 which raised the age of admission to school from 5 years to 6 years, reduced the number of years spent at the second level and changed the school structure to the following :

1. Primary Level — Grades 1-5
2. Junior Secondary Level — Grades 6-9 (NCGE)
3. Senior Secondary Level — Grades 10-11 (HNCE)

1. Almost the entirety of the sample populations dealt under Chapters 7 and 8 in this study, would have gone through this school system.

The NCGE (National Certificate of General Education) Examination was held at the end of Grade 9 and functioned as the instrument of selection for the higher level – i.e., the Senior Secondary level (Grades 10 and 11) where the Higher National Certificate of Education (HNCE) Examination was to have served as the selection instrument to the university level.

The period 1972 to 1975 marked the transition period from the old system to the new. The final GCE (O/Level) Examination (for school candidates) was held in 1975 together with the first NCGE Examination. The new system however, met with many problems and criticisms from its very commencement and in 1977 the newly elected Government heavily modified the reforms bringing back many of the features that were there prior to 1972. Age of admission to school was lowered again to 5 years and the span of formal school reverted from 11 years to 13 years. In fact one extra Kindergarten year was added at the bottom – thus making a total of 13 grades in school. In the present scheme thus we have a 6 + 3 + 2 + 2 school structure, which is almost the same as what we had prior to 1972, except that at the beginning of the primary level, an additional Kindergarten grade was added.<sup>1</sup>

The structure of the education system roughly corresponds to a similarly structured occupational hierarchy. Employment in the 'modern sector' and especially in the professional and white-collar occupations carry higher economic and social value. The chances of obtaining white-collar employment increases with added years of schooling (see Table 3.1).

This table shows that 95 percent of those with GCE (A/Level) and higher qualifications and 70 percent of the GCE (O/Level) qualified have white-collar jobs. In contrast, those with only primary schooling and those with no schooling at all are concentrated in the agricultural occupations. Here employment is either at the level of unskilled labour with low wages without much assurance of continued availability of employment or at the level of self-employed tenant-farmers on small land holdings, yielding low incomes.

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1. See Diagram 1



TABLE 3.1  
**DISTRIBUTION OF THOSE EMPLOYED BY OCCUPATION  
 AND EDUCATION ATTAINMENT—1971**

	White-collar occupations		Agricultural occupations		Other occupations	
	Number ('000)	%	Number ('000)	%	Number ('000)	%
Total	654.6	18.1	1790.0	49.4	1173.9	32.5
No schooling	2.4	4.1	41.4	69.3	15.9	26.6
Grades I — V	116.0	8.0	853.8	59.1	474.5	32.9
Grades VI — VIII	274.8	26.3	333.3	31.8	436.8	41.9
GCE (O/L)	120.6	69.1	14.6	8.4	39.0	22.4
GCE (A/L)	65.3	94.6	1.1	1.7	2.6	3.7
Degree	30.1	94.5	0.4	1.2	1.3	4.3
Unspecified	45.3	5.7	546.3	68.7	203.9	25.6

Source : *The Population of Sri Lanka*, Department of Census & Statistics Colombo, 1974 (Table 5.16).

This apparent broad correspondence between the educational structure and occupational hierarchy goes to indicate the importance of education in determining the life chances of children.<sup>1</sup> Data from the 1971 Census also shows that most children (except perhaps those of plantation workers), receive a primary education. However, the importance of primary education for determining their adult roles and their mobility up the occupational hierarchy is negligible. In this context, the degree of access to the higher levels of the educational pyramid for children belonging to different social groups, geographical regions etc, becomes crucial. In recent years the unemployment situation has added yet another dimension to the problem. It has created a status structure *within* the education system and *science* education now offers the best opportunity for remunerative and prestigious employment. Access to the higher levels of education in general and science education in particular has become more and more competitive. Only about 60% of those who enter school in any one year continue up to GCE (O/Level) grades and only about 20% of this proceed to the GCE (A/Level) grade. Recent surveys of university students show that while children from diverse backgrounds have access to the Arts Faculties, it is children from the more advanced social groups that enter the Science Faculties. Furthermore we

1. See *Needs of Children in Sri Lanka*, — Marga Institute, 1980.

find that school attendance is heavily dependent on the income of the household, as is revealed by Table 3.2. This table gives the number of pupils as a percentage of the total in the age groups in each of family income slabs.

TABLE 3.2  
PARTICIPATION RATES BY INCOME GROUP

	Income slab (monthly income of household) Rupees	Age			
		5—9	10—14	15—19	20—24
Below	100	61.9	64.7	29.1	6.3
	100—199	68.9	73.9	28.9	2.2
	200—399	73.8	81.3	36.1	6.5
	400—599	79.6	85.7	48.7	6.3
	600—799	85.6	85.6	57.5	16.6
	800—999	76.3	83.8	55.3	22.2
	1,000 & over	85.8	81.3	61.5	19.9
	All groups	73.8	79.3	38.8	6.8

Source : Socio-economic Survey 1969—70

An examination of this table shows that only about 62 percent of those children whose household monthly income is Rs. 100 or less, participate in the school system, while the participation rate for the income slab of Rs. 1,000 or more, is as high as 86 percent. The gap gets widened as the children reach higher levels of education, because, for the age group 15—19 only 36 percent of the children of those families who get a monthly income of less than Rs. 400 (and this group comprises almost 80 percent of the population) participate, while the corresponding figures for the income slab of Rs. 1,000 and over, is nearly 62 percent. This table thus confirms that poverty is one of the main contributory factors in making children either to leave school early or to keep away from it altogether.

All this indicates that, in spite of numerous educational reforms, educational policy-makers have as yet not been successful in overcoming the obstacles that make it difficult for children from certain areas and from certain families to make the best of the education system. An attempt will be made to examine this particular situation in terms of the provision of educational facilities, participation rates, dropout rates etc.

### 3.4.2 Access to schooling facilities

Access to schooling can be considered as being of two dimensions. Firstly, the distance of the school from the child's residence and secondly, the question of the quality of schooling. As would be seen later these two are closely inter-related.

The density of population in Sri Lanka varies widely across the districts, as shown in Table 3.3. This table gives district-wise, the density of population for 1978, the number of schools per 10 sq. miles and the number of schools per 10,000 school age population for 1977. If at all there has been any change from the picture as shown in this table, over the 1970-1980 period, it has

TABLE 3.3  
NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS PER 10 SQ. MILES  
AS PER 10,000 POPULATION—1977

<i>Districts</i>	<i>Population density per sq. mile (1978) (a)</i>	<i>No. of Schools per 10 sq. miles (1977)</i>	<i>No. of Schools per 10,000 school-age population (b)</i>
SRI LANKA .. .. .	568	3	35
1. Colombo .. .. .	3,753	13	20
2. Kalutara .. .. .	1,303	7	32
3. Kandy .. .. .	1,405	7	32
4. Matale .. .. .	461	4	43
5. Nuwara Eliya .. .. .	970	6	37
6. Galle .. .. .	1,259	8	34
7. Matara .. .. .	1,369	9	32
8. Hambantota .. .. .	389	3	36
9. Jaffna .. .. .	829	6	36
10. Mannar .. .. .	45	1	62
11. Vavuniya .. .. .	77	1	90
12. Batticaloa .. .. .	315	2	49
13. Amparai .. .. .	274	2	38
14. Trincomalee .. .. .	220	2	43
15. Kurunegala .. .. .	630	4	38
16. Puttalam .. .. .	379	4	42
17. Anuradhapura .. .. .	166	2	54
18. Polonnaruwa .. .. .	143	1	35
19. Badulla .. .. .	612	3	41
20. Moneragala .. .. .	82	1	52
21. Ratnapura .. .. .	591	4	42
22. Kegalle .. .. .	1,116	9	43

(a) Provisional

(b) The figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Source : School Census — 1977 & Statistical Pocket Book, Department of Census & Statistics (1979).



been a very marginal and not a drastic one. As one would expect this table shows that the thinly populated districts such as Vavuniya, Mannar, Moneragala, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura, Trincomalee, Amparai and Batticaloa have the thinnest spread of schools, i.e. least number of schools per 10 sq. miles while thickly populated districts like Colombo, Matara, Kandy, Kalutara, Galle, etc. have many more schools per 10 sq. miles. The number of schools per 10 sq. miles would give an indication of the distance a child has to travel from home to school. Thus it would be seen that, physically access-wise, in the thinly populated districts, pupils have to travel longer distances to school. However, the fact that the State has stretched its resources substantially in the thinly populated districts in order to bring schooling as close as possible to the child is brought out by the data in the other column, namely the number of schools per 10,000 age population. Here it would be seen that while the thinly populated districts like Vavuniya and Mannar have as many as 90 and 62 schools respectively for every 10,000 of school age population, Colombo, Galle, Matara, etc. have 20 or 30 schools for the same population. This means that in thinly populated areas the provision of schooling in the basis of population is two to three times what it is in the thickly populated areas. Available data also indicates that in order to provide schools within easy access in the thinly populated districts a large proportion of small schools have to be maintained. Thus of the total number of schools the proportion with less than 50 students on roll for the thinly populated districts are as follows :

		Percent
Vavuniya	..	.. 41
Mannar	..	.. 29
Anuradhapura	..	.. 22
Batticaloa	..	.. 22
Polonnaruwa	..	.. 16

In the thickly populated districts it is quite low :

		Percent
Colombo	..	.. 01
Kalutara	..	.. 06
Matara	..	.. 05

Larger schools, with over 500 pupils on roll are very few in the thinly populated districts. Table 3.4 gives the district breakdown of government schools classified by the span of grades found in them. From this too it would be seen that the districts with the lowest proportion of schools with grades up to 10 and above are the thinly populated districts of Vavuniya, Mannar, Kalmunai, Trincomalee while the thickly populated districts have many more of them.

Table 3.5 gives the Education District-wise distribution of schools in terms of grading recently introduced by the Ministry of Education. The grades in descending order of importance and the basis of the grading are :

- Grade 1 A* — G.C.E. Advanced Level Science classes and hostel facilities.
- Grade 1 B* — G.C.E. Advanced Level Science classes and no hostel facilities.
- Grade 1 C* — G.C.E. Advanced Level Arts or Commerce classes.
- Grade 2* — Schools having Grade 6 and above up to Grade 10.
- Grade 3* — Primary Schools — Schools having classes from Grade 1 to 5.

TABLE 3.4

## GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS CLASSIFIED BY SPAN OF GRADE—1977

<i>District</i>		<i>Grades 1—5 only</i>	<i>Grades 1—9 only</i>	<i>Upto Grade 10 only</i>	<i>Upto Grade 12</i>
SRI LANKA		3,332	3,807	343	1,191
1.	Colombo	276	464	106	190
2.	Kalutara	101	250	6	72
3.	Kandy	216	271	30	120
4.	Matale	102	123	5	40
5.	Nuwara Eliya	88	125	13	41
6.	Galle	210	182	21	95
7.	Matara	131	197	15	69
8.	Hambantota	64	138	37	37
9.	Jaffna	311	193	11	53
10.	Mannar	59	34	7	7
11.	Vavuniya	118	56	5	5
12.	Batticaloa	174	48	1	16
13.	Amparai	126	86	5	18
14.	Trincomalee	92	67	2	14
15.	Kurunegala	240	340	18	111
16.	Puttalam	172	259	20	27
17.	Anuradhapura	290	155	9	46
18.	Polonnaruwa	53	63	3	16
19.	Badulla	67	170	6	47
20.	Moneragala	58	89	—	22
21.	Ratnapura	178	230	17	65
22.	Kegalle	206	267	6	80

Source : School Census—1977.



This data also shows that the thinly populated districts have to make do with a smaller number of schools in the higher grades, such as GCE (O/Level) and GCE (A/Level).

Table 3.6 gives a detailed picture of the district-wise distribution of the GCE (A/Level) course offerings — (classified according to Science, Arts and Commerce courses) as available in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Here again we see that the educationally privileged districts such as Colombo (including Homagama, Gampaha and Minuwangoda), Kandy, (East and West combined), Jaffna, Galle, etc. are better placed as far as the availability of Science courses are concerned, whereas districts such as Moneragala, Anuradhapura, Vavuniya, etc. are poorly off in this respect. With regard to the availability of Arts and Commerce courses, the situation is much better throughout the Island, yet one cannot be complacent about the situation in e.g. Vavuniya, regarding Commerce courses. On the whole it appears from this table that GCE (A/Level) courses are available in about 2,900 schools which is about 32 percent of the total number of schools in the country.<sup>2</sup>

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1. It should be noted that certain Education Regions were sub-divided in about 1979 to form separate districts — hence the difference between the number of Education Districts as given in Tables pertaining to 1977 (and before) and the Tables pertaining to 1979 and after.
  2. However, see also Table 31 of Statistical Pocket Book of D.S.R. of Sri Lanka (1982). According to this table the total number of government schools having G.C.E. (A/L) Classes (Arts/Science/Commerce) was 1470 in 1979 (16 percent) and 1718 in 1980 (19 percent.) The apparent discrepancy in table 3.6 may be due to the fact that these schools having more than one stream could have been counted more than once.

TABLE 3.5  
**CLASSIFICATION OF SCHOOLS—1979 (GOVT. ESTATE, PRIVATE, PIRIVENA AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS)**

	Gr. 1			Gr. 1	Gr. 2	Gr. 3	Total No. of Govt. sch.	Sin. sch.	Tam. sch.	Mus- lim sch.	Rural sch.	Urban sch.	Priv. sch. (app.)	Est. sch.	Piri- vena	Tuto- ries
	A	B	C	C												
1. Colombo South	6	29	31	124	60	250	201	31	18	—	250	18	—	—	18	5
2. Homagama	1	6	34	106	53	200	193	6	1	—	28	18	—	—	7	5
3. Gampaha	2	20	61	158	108	349	330	5	14	278	71	1	—	—	21	15
4. Minuwangoda	3	13	36	120	75	247	231	11	5	191	56	3	—	—	6	14
5. Kalutara	4	19	53	234	155	465	405	40	20	381	84	2	—	—	19	14
6. Kandy East	6	6	19	135	145	346	333	33	39	317	29	1	—	—	2	2
7. Kandy West	6	12	55	133	133	362	278	55	29	317	45	3	—	—	28	24
8. Matale	4	4	37	123	116	284	250	14	20	263	21	1	—	—	5	1
9. Nuwara Eliya	3	13	43	130	138	327	235	79	13	301	26	—	—	—	127	7
10. Galle	7	25	77	193	213	515	496	6	13	432	83	—	—	—	34	3
11. Matara	6	13	60	191	148	418	401	3	14	377	41	1	—	—	32	3
12. Tangalle	1	5	39	166	73	284	278	—	6	260	24	6	—	—	7	—
13. Jaffna	17	33	16	195	296	557	7	544	24	91	6	—	—	—	—	—
14. Mannar	1	4	9	31	52	97	3	70	24	195	18	—	—	—	—	—
15. Vavuniya	6	6	59	142	213	213	22	178	13	210	31	—	—	—	—	—
16. Batticaloa	2	9	13	46	171	241	9	201	31	210	31	—	—	—	—	—
17. Amparai	1	1	12	56	18	88	87	1	—	80	17	1	—	—	1	—
18. Kalmunai	1	9	15	30	109	154	9	62	83	137	17	—	—	—	—	—
19. Trincomalee	1	10	13	65	101	190	57	75	58	152	38	—	—	—	—	—
20. Kurunegala	5	10	62	185	120	382	352	5	25	356	26	—	—	—	21	4
21. Kuliyaipitiya	2	7	40	139	95	283	255	—	28	278	5	—	—	—	10	4
22. Nikaweratiya	1	4	24	130	68	227	212	1	14	222	5	—	—	—	2	—
23. Puttalam	1	5	7	64	61	137	90	17	30	127	10	—	—	—	—	—
24. Chillaw	1	10	16	97	48	172	155	8	9	149	23	—	—	—	3	—
25. Anuradhapura	2	7	48	207	234	498	442	2	54	471	27	—	—	—	4	—
26. Polonnaruwa	1	3	11	76	50	141	121	5	15	138	3	—	—	—	4	—
27. Bandarawela	2	11	43	173	106	335	266	63	6	299	36	1	—	—	64	12
28. Moneragala	1	2	22	96	53	174	167	2	5	171	3	—	—	—	5	1
29. Ratnapura	4	9	63	248	221	545	485	56	4	496	49	—	—	—	20	18
30. Kegalle	3	15	66	261	226	571	517	17	37	527	44	—	—	—	19	—
	94	323	1,053	3,994	3,588	9,052	6,828	1,590	634	7,825	1,727	39	246	289	55	55

Source : Statistics Branch, Ministry of Education, Colombo 2.

It would be interesting to examine the number of schools with special facilities such as electricity, pipe-borne water, science laboratories and teachers' quarters, etc. Here, we notice that in the thinly populated districts of the country, while access to schooling from the point of distance from the child's residence to the school has been provided as best as possible, this has been achieved at the cost of quality of education and access to the higher grades and better schooling facilities. Another important feature which we notice is the disparity in relation to the distribution of physical facilities such as classroom space and laboratory space per pupil within and among educational districts. The average classroom space provided per pupil in Sri Lanka is 12.7 square feet. The Ministry of Education on the advice of the UNESCO Asian Regional Institute of School Building Research, considers that the reasonable norm for schools in Sri Lanka is 10 sq. feet per pupil. In this respect it is evident from available data that with the exception of Ratnapura which has only 9.4 square feet of classroom space per pupil, all the other districts meet the required norm, though Moneragala and Colombo South only just.

As much as the quality of education imparted depends on the physical facilities available in the schools, it is also dependent on the quality of the teaching staff in the schools. There are different grades of teachers in the teaching cadre—see Table 3.7. University graduates are usually recruited to teach at the secondary level. For others, the minimum qualifications for entry to the teaching service is the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) Certificate. However, at present the large majority do have the GCE (A/Level) qualifications. These recruits are expected to be trained at one of the Teacher Colleges, after a short spell of teaching experience. Teacher Colleges are of two types: the General Teachers' Colleges that train teachers mainly for the primary level and the Specialist Teachers' Colleges, which train teachers for the secondary level in specialised subject areas, such as Science, Mathematics, English, Aesthetic Studies (Fine Arts), Handicrafts, Home-Science, etc. In the past, when the number of places available in the Teachers' Colleges was inadequate to take in all teachers for institutional training, provision was made for some to obtain an "untrained Teachers' Certificate", by passing a written examination. This category continues to be called "Certificated Teachers."



TABLE 3.6 GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO G.C.E. ADVANCED LEVEL COURSES AVAILABLE

Serial No. and Education District	Total No. of Schools		Science		Arts		Commerce		Total No. of Schools (1A, 1B, 1C.)	
	No. of Schools	%	No. of Schools	%	No. of Schools	%	No. of Schools	%	No. of Schools	%
1. Colombo	251	17.9	45	17.9	59	23.5	62	24.7	166	66.1
2. Homagama	200	5.0	10	5.0	35	17.5	34	17.0	79	39.5
3. Gampaha	345	7.2	25	7.2	81	23.5	55	16.0	161	46.5
4. Miruwangoda	249	8.0	20	8.0	37	14.9	40	16.0	97	38.9
5. Kalutara	462	25	25	5.4	82	17.7	42	9.1	149	32.2
6. Kandy (East)	396	12	39	3.9	61	19.9	33	10.8	106	34.6
7. Kandy (West)	400	25	25	6.2	90	22.5	52	13.0	167	41.7
8. Matale	287	09	09	3.1	60	20.9	18	6.2	87	30.3
9. Nuwara Eliya	326	17	17	5.2	57	17.5	36	11.3	110	33.7
10. Galle	511	32	32	6.3	94	18.4	75	14.6	201	39.3
11. Matara	418	22	22	5.3	79	18.9	46	11.0	147	35.2
12. Tangalle	279	08	08	2.9	58	20.8	24	8.6	90	32.3
13. Jaffna	559	51	51	9.1	54	9.7	50	8.9	155	27.7
14. Mannar	97	06	06	6.2	10	10.3	09	9.3	25	25.8
15. Vavuniya	213	07	07	3.3	13	6.1	04	1.9	24	11.3
16. Batticaloa	246	10	10	4.1	16	6.5	13	5.3	39	15.9
17. Amparai	102	05	05	4.9	17	16.7	09	8.8	31	30.4
18. Kalmunai	156	13	13	8.3	10	6.4	14	9.0	37	23.7
19. Trincomalee	195	13	13	6.7	29	14.9	09	4.6	51	26.2
20. Kurunegala	386	17	17	4.4	96	24.9	39	10.1	152	39.4
21. Kuliyaipitiya	285	09	09	3.2	60	21.0	31	10.8	100	35.0
22. Nikaweratiya	245	06	06	2.4	39	15.9	13	5.3	58	23.6
23. Puttalam	142	06	06	4.2	13	9.2	06	4.2	25	17.6
24. Chilaw	171	11	11	6.4	27	15.8	20	11.7	59	33.9
25. Anuradhapura	507	09	09	1.8	65	12.8	27	5.3	101	19.9
26. Polonnaruwa	146	05	05	3.4	29	19.9	12	8.2	46	31.5
27. Bandarawela	342	15	15	4.4	56	16.4	35	10.2	106	31.0
28. Moneragala	175	03	03	1.7	29	16.6	10	5.7	42	24.0
29. Ratnapura	546	17	17	3.1	76	13.9	39	7.1	132	24.0
30. Kegalle	569	22	22	3.9	92	16.2	44	7.7	158	27.8
Total	9,117	475	475	5.2	1,524	16.7	901	9.9	2,900	31.8

-Note—(1) Advanced Level courses are confined to 1A, 1B and 1C schools only.

(2) Some schools have more than one Advanced Level course.

Source : Adapted by Marga Institute from School Census — 1980 (Ministry of Education).

TABLE 3.7  
TEACHERS CLASSIFIED BY QUALIFICATIONS

	1978	1979	1980
Graduates-Science/Maths .. .. .	1,936	2,321	2,239
Graduates-Arts/Commerce .. .. .	17,710	18,218	18,467
University Diploma Holders Maths/Science/Others ..	299	327	187
Other Diplomas .. .. .	4,186*	3,548	2,539
Special Trained .. .. .	18,624	21,208	22,814
Other Trained .. .. .	50,982	51,499	50,939
All other Teachers .. .. .	25,853	36,128*	39,723
Teachers in Training Colleges .. .. .	5,170	4,149	6,909
Total .. .. .	124,760	137,398	143,817

\* Inclusive of Certificated Teachers.

Source : Statistical Pocket Book of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 1981.  
Department of Census and Statistics (Ministry of Plan Implementation)

During the early 1970s, the revised curriculum in post-primary grades brought in new teaching content such as Integrated Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Pre-Vocational studies, etc. which made very heavy demands on the existing teacher force for its successful implementation. Especially because Science and Mathematics were introduced on an island-wide scale (nearly 6,000 Junior Secondary Schools), a large number of GCE (A/Level) qualified young people with no pedagogical training were recruited to teach these subjects. A fair number of teachers for some of the other subjects were also recruited in the ensuing years.

Not only the new recruits, but even the long experienced serving teachers faced numerous problems due to the major changes made in the new curricula of the Primary and the Junior Secondary levels. In order to overcome this difficulty, the Ministry of Education launched a massive in-service education programme for teachers of both levels in order to help these teachers.

Though massive and ambitious this programme appeared to be, it failed to make a significant impact among teachers, especially in those areas it was actually designed to serve, namely the remote and the disadvantaged districts. This shows that however well-intentioned and comprehensive educational programmes may be, certain inherent shortcomings in the system and the country as a

whole, can have a rather frustrating effect. Among these shortcomings are the prevalence of almost unbridgeable communication gaps (at the various points from the Ministry to the classroom teacher) and the lack of an equitable assimilability among teachers, educational administrators and even parents in the country. For example, it is very likely that teachers and parents of the better schools in the better urban districts, with greater assimilable capacities, make the best use of the Ministry's in-service education programmes, while those of the more backward areas lagged behind even without the basic information on the changes. A sample survey on teacher attendance at in-service sessions (done by the Curriculum Development Centre) showed that attendance was very low when sessions were conducted during week-ends and public holidays, or even during week-day afternoons. So that it became necessary to conduct most of these sessions during the working hours of the week days. This practice again affected the smaller schools in the rural areas adversely, because as there were no relief teachers to act for the subjects teachers who were expected to attend in-service sessions, either the principals were ill-disposed to releasing his teachers during working hours for in-service training, or at instances when they were released, generally the teachers could not find extra time to cover the backlog of work that resulted from their absence from school. Furthermore, in geographically vast districts such as Moneragala, Master teachers found it difficult to meet all the teachers at their centres even once in a year.

In regard to the distribution of teachers, on the whole, we see that the minimum teacher-requirements for most districts have now been sufficiently met. But the problem with regard to the qualitative improvement of these teachers would persist for some time, as indicated above.

### 3.4.3 Utilization of schooling facilities

Some measure of the utilisation of the schooling facilities provided in the different districts of the country by the people could be had by examining *non entry* and *late entry to school*, *repetition of grades* and *drop-outs* from schools. Of these the first and the last are more significant than the other two. Late entry may well be the response of a household to schooling as it deems fit. Its implications perhaps are not that important.



Repetition is dependent on the motivation of the pupil to the learning experiences provided by the school and this in turn is as much a function of what the school does as of the socio-cultural and economic background found in the home. Repetition in the early grades can be very harmful to the child and it has been found that at this stage it is one of the principal causes leading to dropping out from school. Hence the importance of making the first entry to school of the young child as smooth as possible and the learning experiences in the first few grades as interesting as possible. This would be particularly so for children from poor homes for whom the break from home to school can be quite disturbing.

### 3.4.3.1 Non-entry to school

Unfortunately the Annual School Census by its very nature is unable to obtain data on children who do not come into school at all. The 1971 Population Census gives the following percentage figures in the educational attainment level 'No Schooling' for the different age groups.

TABLE 3.8

**PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION WITH 'NO SCHOOLING' BY AGE AND SEX—1971**

<i>Age</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
15 — 19	13.9	12.2	15.6
20 — 24	15.0	11.5	18.3
25 — 29	18.0	12.5	23.4
30 — 34	20.3	13.8	27.1
35 — 39	28.1	17.8	38.6
40 — 44	27.6	17.0	39.6
45 — 49	32.3	20.2	47.0
50 — 54	34.6	21.0	50.2
55 — 59	39.6	25.7	56.0
60 — 64	42.9	28.5	61.1
65 — 69	45.3	30.9	62.8
70 — 74	50.7	35.4	70.3
75 & over	60.3	43.8	77.6
Total	25.9	20.3	31.8

Source : 1971 Population Census.

It would be seen that over the years the population not coming into school has fallen rapidly and even more striking is the reduction in the disparity between the two sexes in this regard. However, a hard core of 10-15 percent of the total population still fails to enter school. In 1971 there were 343,400 in the 5+ year age group. The total that entered the school system at grade 1 in 1971 was only 298,000<sup>1</sup>—thus 13 percent failed to come into school. In 1979 the the 5+ year group was 343,000 and the number that entered the Lower Kindergarten was 305,000, i.e. 11 percent failed to come into school. According to another study, the number that entered the Lower Kindergarten grade in 1979, was 313,042, which still indicates that 8.8 percent of this age group did not seek entry to school.<sup>2</sup>

Data that would help identify the location of this 'No Schooling' population is difficult to get at. The following data from the 1973 Consumer Finance Survey about the distribution of this category in the 3 sectors — Rural, Urban and Estate and the 5 Zones is relevant.

TABLE 3.9

## PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION IN THE 'NO SCHOOLING' EDUCATION STATUS

Sector	% with No-schooling
Urban .. .. .	26.6
Rural .. .. .	31.0
Estate .. .. .	51.7
Zone 1 (Colombo, Kalutera, Galle and Matara, excluding the housing units in the Colombo Municipality) .. .. .	26.2
Zone 2 (Hambantota, Moneragala, Amparai, Piconnarawa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam) .. .. .	33.3
Zone 3 (Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Trincomalee and Batticaloa) .. .. .	32.8
Zone 4 (Kandy, Metala, Nuwara Eliya, Badulla, Ratnapura, Kegalle and Kurunegala) .. .. .	36.7
Zone 5 (Colombo Municipality) .. .. .	28.2
All Island .. .. .	32.2

Source : Consumer Finance Survey—1973. Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

1. This population consists not only of 5 year-olds; however provided the age composition of this population entering school at Grade 1 remains steady from year to year, the above calculation would be valid.
2. Haputantri, S. "A Report on a Survey of non-school-going children and students who drop out of school at an early stage in Sri Lanka, 1979" (a survey sponsored by the UNICEF, (Sri Lanka) and carried out by the Statistics Branch of the Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka.

By ethnic groups the breakdown is as follows:

TABLE 3.10

<i>Ethnic Group</i>				<i>% with No-schooling</i>
Kandyan Sinhalese ..	..	..	..	33.6
Low Country Sinhalese ..	..	..	..	30.9
Ceylon Tamils ..	..	..	..	33.5
Indian Tamils ..	..	..	..	51.5
Moors ..	..	..	..	37.4
Malays ..	..	..	..	22.4
Burghers ..	..	..	..	14.4
Others ..	..	..	..	25.0
All Communities ..	..	..	..	32.2

Source : Consumer Finance Survey — 1973, Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

It has to be noted that the above figures include the population in the pre-school age group too. This explains as high an all-island percentage as 32.2 for the 'no-schooling' category.

Of the three sectors Urban, Rural and Estate the last has the heaviest concentration of this category. This is also borne out by the high figure of 36.7 for Zone 4 in which most of the estates are situated. However, the fact remains that even in the urban sector the percentage is not insignificant even after making a correction for the inclusion of the pre-school age group. (This would be about 12 percent of the total population). Zone 5 which constitutes the Colombo Municipality too has a fair proportion belonging to this category.

By ethnic group, as one would expect, the largest proportion is among the Indian Tamils followed by Moors. The lowest is among Burghers and Malays, the two exclusively urban ethnic groups.

The reasons that led to a higher incidence of 'no-schooling' among the Indian Tamil workers on estates than among the rest of the population are well known. Estate schools are a very badly neglected lot with unbelievably poor facilities. Furthermore, until very recently this segment of the population as non-citizens were not in a position to entertain aspirations for better employment prospects for their children through schooling. During the last



few years the position in regard to both these factors has taken for the better for all estate schools are being taken over to be run as State schools and the disabilities that the Indian Tamil workers suffered as a result of being non-citizens are being eliminated. The table shows that the ethnic group with the second highest rate of no schooling is the Moors. These too as a group have been rather backward in going in for more and more schooling for their children particularly for the girls. Non-entry to school while being more prevalent in these two ethnic groups appears to be there among Kandyan Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils and even Low Country Sinhalese although to a lesser extent. Many micro level surveys have revealed its existence even in the City of Colombo itself among slum and city dwellers. For instance the survey of the informal sector undertaken by Marga Institute in 1976-77 revealed that in this population as much as 18 percent was either illiterate or literate but with no formal education. Poverty, parental apathy that so often goes with extreme poverty and the failure of the school to provide for the special needs of these under-privileged children may be factors that contribute to the persistence of this phenomenon in spite of the widespread network of schools penetrating into the deepest interior. This is a problem that warrants special attention.

### 3.4.3.2 Late entry to schools

Ministry of Education sources show that about a fifth of new enrolments to Grade 1 are children over-age at the time of admission to school (this was six years for the year 1977). It would be seen that this percentage is highest in the Education Districts of Kalmunai, Nuwara Eliya, Bandarawela, Moneragala, Vavuniya and Batticaloa and lowest in Jaffna, Homagama, Colombo North (Gampaha), Ratnapura, Kalutara, Galle and Matara. A noteworthy feature is that the District of Colombo South which contains the Colombo City has a relatively high percentage (24 percent). This may well be due to the presence of slum and shanty dwellers in Colombo and its suburbs. The districts with the highest rates are those with a preponderance of Moors, Indian Tamil plantation workers and the Districts of Vavuniya and Moneragala, where as was mentioned earlier the vicious circle of

sparse population, small schools and poor quality schooling operates. In contrast the districts with the lowest percentages are the districts where schooling is very well established, namely, Jaffna, and the South Western part of the country.

### 3.4.3.3 Repetition of grades

An examination of the statistics available at the Ministry of Education for the year 1977 shows that the all island rates which are as high as 15 percent in Grade 1 falls steadily to 9 percent in Grade 5 and 4.5 percent in Grade 8. It appears that in the lower grades there is a much larger differential as between the districts than in the higher grades. The same set of districts, namely, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Trincomalee, Nuwara Eliya, Bandarawela and Moneragala register higher repetition rates in the lower grades while Colombo South, Homagama, Colombo North, Kalutara, Jaffna and Galle show distinctly lower rates. It is interesting to note that in the upper grades, namely, Grades 7 and 8, district-wise differentials are much lower. Sri Lanka has a long standing tradition of annual promotion tests at the end of the school year in each of the grades. There are many countries in which promotion grade to grade is 'automatic', particularly in the primary grades. In Sri Lanka repetition of grades or failure at the promotion test begins right from Grade 1. According to the 1979 School Census the all-island repetition rate for Grade 1 is as high as 18.1 percent. District-wise it varies from 34 percent in Chilaw, 29 percent in Trincomalee, 28 percent in Kalmunai, 25 percent in Nuwara Eliya to 10 percent in Colombo. The psychological damage that 'failure' at the end of the year does to the child at this tender age can be very heavy. Many studies have shown the close relationship between this 'failure' and early dropping out from school.

From an educational planner's perspective repetition of grades would in any case be a waste of resources for he would argue that differentials in the attainments of the pupils of a class would just be unavoidable and the most productive way of utilising whatever extra resources are available would be to deploy them to reduce these differentials to the minimum rather than using them for repeating grades with the low performers. However the working of this phenomenon so widely prevalent in our school system on

the one hand in promoting the maintenance of good educational standards and on the other in working as a disincentive to continued schooling particularly with children from disadvantaged homes would be a very fruitful area for research.

### 3.4.3.4 Dropouts

Table 3.11 gives the percentage figures for the dropouts by grade and district in the year 1976-77. The phenomenon of dropping out from school commences from the very early grades. By Grade 3 it is quite large in absolute numbers and remains so right through. Available data shows that over 57,000 children dropout within the primary grades (i.e. a dropout ratio of about 3.8). In 1978-79 the number that dropped out in the primary grades (1-5) was 45,184 (i.e. a dropout ratio of about 2.7)<sup>1</sup>.

TABLE 3.11  
DROPOUT RATES 1976/77

	Grade II	Grade III	Grade IV	Grade V	Grade VI	Grade VII	Grade VIII
1. Colombo South ..	—	3.7	4.7	5.3	5.9	5.7	7.7
2. Homagama ..	1.9	4.5	5.0	7.5	5.6	5.5	6.9
3. Colombo North ..	1.2	3.0	5.9	9.8	5.7	5.1	10.5
4. Kalutara ..	1.1	3.7	5.6	9.2	7.7	6.3	8.6
5. Kandy ..	2.4	4.4	6.2	7.9	6.6	6.1	9.3
6. Matale ..	2.3	8.3	8.8	11.6	7.3	6.2	—
7. Nuwara Eliya ..	0.4	2.3	5.5	1.5	8.9	6.1	7.9
8. Galle ..	3.5	5.4	6.0	9.8	5.3	5.6	7.0
9. Matara ..	1.9	4.4	8.4	7.2	7.6	5.8	6.8
10. Tangalle ..	3.3	4.4	9.4	10.3	9.3	8.9	9.8
11. Jaffna ..	0.9	4.6	6.8	11.7	6.6	3.6	12.4
12. Mannar ..	4.1	6.3	11.0	20.5	9.4	9.8	10.9
13. Vavuniya ..	1.7	9.8	10.4	20.6	5.4	9.8	9.1
14. Batticaloa ..	7.8	10.9	19.2	20.5	12.6	7.1	16.7
15. Amparai ..	0.3	8.4	5.6	8.5	10.4	10.1	8.4
16. Trincomalee ..	6.5	9.1	12.2	12.9	12.9	12.5	12.2
17. Kalmunai ..	1.2	4.6	9.1	11.8	15.2	9.3	15.3
18. Kurunegala ..	1.7	5.2	7.6	11.1	7.6	7.2	4.1
19. Chilaw ..	1.8	8.3	12.2	15.5	10.2	9.3	11.7
20. Anuradhapura ..	1.2	8.0	6.6	12.3	8.6	4.8	9.4
21. Polonnaruwa ..	3.7	5.1	9.7	14.9	8.8	8.0	11.7
22. Bandarawela ..	2.6	5.3	7.6	3.4	7.5	6.1	14.2
23. Moneragala ..	5.3	9.2	7.0	18.7	11.2	9.5	13.4
24. Ratnapura ..	1.2	4.8	6.2	9.3	8.3	6.6	8.6
25. Kegalle ..	1.8	2.7	4.7	8.4	6.4	5.2	7.5
SRI LANKA ..	2.0	5.2	7.2	9.9	7.3	6.2	8.9

Source : Compiled by the Marga Institute from data obtained from the Schools Census 1976 & 1977.

1 Haputantri, S. op. cit.



An examination of the relevant data shows that more or less the same set of districts, namely, Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Kalmunai, Chilaw, Polonnaruwa and Moneragala are the ones with the higher rates of dropouts while Colombo South, Homagama, Colombo North, Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Jaffna and Kegalle register lower rates.

According to a recent study (1979) done on the basis of a sample survey, it appears that the dropout rate is on the decline, to a considerable extent.<sup>1</sup> Regrettably, provisional figures available (for 1980) unpublished at the Ministry of Education do not seem to support the view that this satisfactory trend would continue so as to ensure an uninterrupted and a complete primary education at least, for all children entering school, during this decade. Teachers and parents of small schools in predominantly rural and agricultural districts have, at various occasions, expressed the opinion that the present school holiday pattern need be altered to accommodate this problem. But, in spite of the fact that such alterations are permitted by the Ministry of Education, no heads of schools have availed themselves of this concession. In addition, the curriculum or content of knowledge imparted does not give the child in the small schools in the rural areas a chance to achieve his best. The curriculum depends largely on the availability of textbooks, stationery and other facilities which neither the small schools nor their pupils possess.

A recent investigation on dropouts in the disadvantaged schools in the City of Colombo<sup>2</sup> has revealed that there is a close relationship between dropping out of school and repeating. About 95 percent of the dropouts investigated have repeated their grade twice or three times during the school career. Among the reasons cited for dropping out, are the children's inability to live up to the expectations of their teachers, constant failure and low class positions, disinterest in reading and a dislike for school. Dropping out was also found to be the function of the home background and social class of parents, and the lack of motivative factors in the home, such as a parental interest in children's

1. Haputantri, S. op. cit.

2. Kariyawasam, Dr. (Mrs.) T. *A Report on a Study of Early School Dropouts in the Secondary Schools of under-privileged areas in the City of Colombo (Sri Lanka)*, National Council of YMCA, Sri Lanka, 1977.

schooling. A fairly high proportion of the dropouts are Muslims which could be accounted for partly by the fact that girls especially those in the poorer Muslim families are not allowed to continue their education after puberty. Irregular attendance could also be another factor affecting early school leaving. In the rural areas where children are helping hands to the parents in their agricultural work, poor attendance invariably coincides with various economic and cultural practices in the village.

Early dropouts from schools is a subject that has been studied in many other developing countries. It is unfortunate that in Sri Lanka no thorough study on this important issue has so far been undertaken. In addition to what has been noted above it would appear that the structure of the school system itself contributes towards early dropouts. It is as though the primary grades are seen by poor parents as an adequate level of schooling for in many of the remote and backward districts such as Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Moneragala, Polonnaruwa unusually high dropout rates are registered in Grade 5. This is noticeable even in Jaffna where in the other grades dropout rates are quite low. This is in spite of the fact that in Sri Lanka primary schools where only the first five grades are allowed, obtain only in the larger urban centres and here too in exceptional circumstances. A similar increase in dropout rates can be noticed at Grade 8, another 'breaking point' in the school structure. It would be useful to examine the issue as to whether these two points in the school ladder should be recognised as acceptable dropout points and if so what implications it would have for the curriculum and the organisation of the grades preceding these points and also what arrangements can be made for those dropping out at these points to re-enter the learning process, not necessarily in an institutional format.

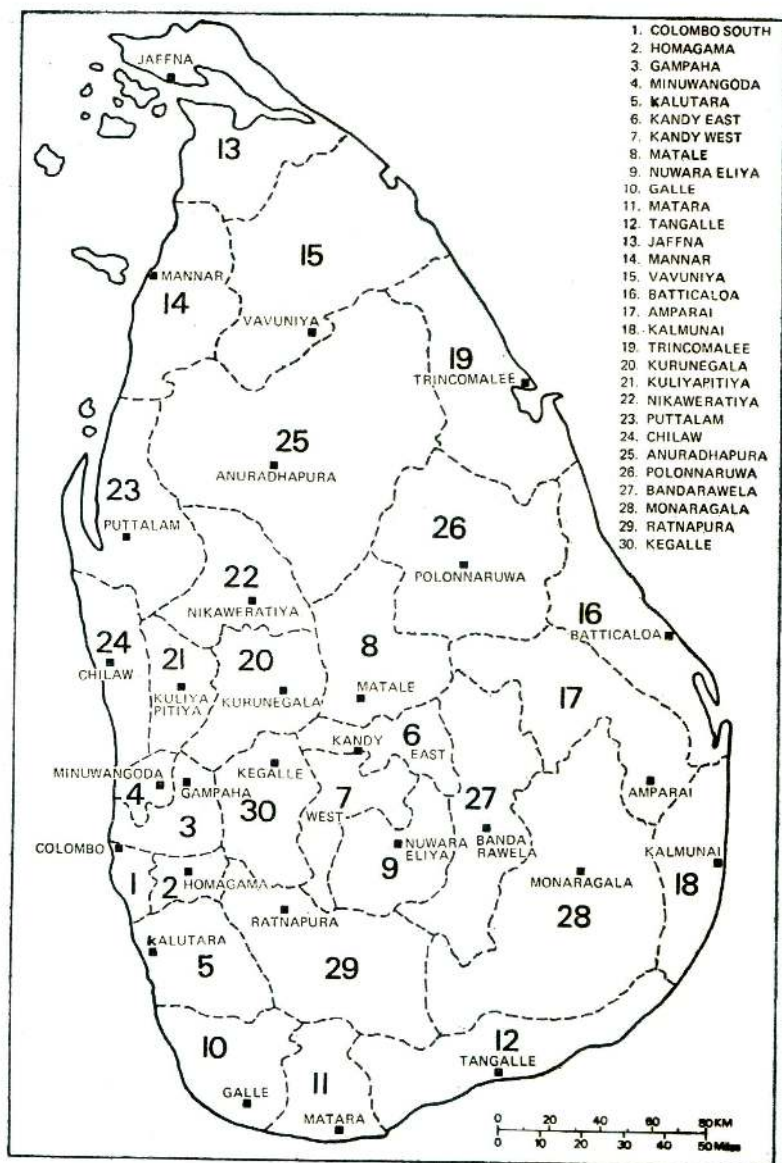
There seems to be a relationship between high rates of repetition and early school-leaving and the level of provision of facilities in the different districts. It is apparent that the physical provision of access to schooling by itself will not necessarily reduce the high rates of repetition and early school dropouts that are present in the remote districts.



When considering the two aspects of *utilisation and provision of educational facilities*, we see that broadly the following categories of districts can be identified :

1. *Districts in which participation rates are relatively high but where the facilities are insufficient to meet the demand.*—These include Colombo, Matara, Hambantota, Tangalle and Polonnaruwa where classroom and laboratory space per pupil is comparatively low. Puttalam (Chilaw) and Anuradhapura have average classroom facilities but are relatively disadvantaged with respect to laboratory space and teachers; Kegalle which has a low laboratory space per secondary pupil ratio; and Mannar which, in spite of the fact that it seems to compare favourably with the other districts in terms of facilities, has one of the highest pupil teacher ratios for the island (25.2).
2. *Districts in which participation rates are below average but which do not have sufficient facilities to cope with even the existing enrolments.*—The worst off in this category are Badulla and Moneragala which have neither classroom and laboratory facilities nor teachers at an adequate level. Batticaloa and Trincomalee have less than average classroom space per pupil and high pupil-teacher ratios, but the extremely low level of enrolments in the higher rungs of the educational ladder has resulted in above average laboratory space per pupil ratios and in low secondary pupils per science teacher ratios. Kandy and Ratnapura, on the other hand, are well staffed but display inadequacy in the physical facilities.
3. *Districts in which participation rates are below average but which seem to have adequate facilities to cope with the present level of enrolment.*—Increased participation in these districts would mean pressure on the facilities. These districts are Nuwara Eliya, Vavuniya and Kurunegala, (which only has a low laboratory space/ secondary pupil ratio) and Matale. (See Map on page 104 for Educational Districts of Sri Lanka).





EDUCATIONAL DISTRICTS OF SRI LANKA (1979)

### 3.4.4 Disparities by Sex

Available data<sup>1</sup> shows that about 63.7 percent of the female school age (5-14 years) population are enrolled in school. This accounts for about 1.2 million girls in school in 1977 or 48.7 percent of the total school enrolments in that year<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that in the school system the number of boys is slightly more than the number of girls. However, it appears that in the primary grades, 47.7 percent of the total enrolment is girls while in the Junior Secondary level (i.e. Grade 6-10) it is 49.6 percent and in Grades 11 and 12, 55.4 percent are girls. Girls out-numbering boys in the higher grades is a phenomenon that seems to be common to most of the districts. The major exceptions are Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Kalmunai, Jaffna and Moneragala. As we suggested earlier, some of these districts (with the exception of Jaffna) are districts with a relatively large Muslim population. Though traditional attitudes to female participation in the school system and in the labour force are changing, conservative Muslim families at lower socio-economic levels still take their daughters away from school after puberty, thus constraining their participation in the secondary educational levels. It is possible that though education is considered really important for both boys and girls, a similar situation prevails among the more traditional Tamil Hindu families in the Jaffna district. However, the percentage of female students in Jaffna is higher than in Mannar, Vavuniya, Batticaloa or Kalmunai. One of the main reasons for girls staying longer in school could be that there are fewer employment opportunities for young girls than for boys in most areas.

### 3.4.5 Disparities by ethnic groups

There is little to show the differences in educational provision and participation by ethnic groups. Of the 9,052 government schools in Sri Lanka (1979), 6,828 schools or 75.4 percent of the total are Sinhalese schools. 1,590 schools (17.6 percent) are Tamil schools concentrated mainly in Jaffna, Batticaloa and

1. Source : School Census 1977—Ministry of Education.

2. According to the school census 1980 — the total student population in Government schools was 3,280,787 of whom 1,665,156 were males (50.75%) and 1,615,631 were females (49.25%). These statistics include students in the GCE (A/Level) grades also.

Vavuniya, and 634 schools (7.0 percent) are Muslim schools.<sup>1</sup> Table 3.12 shows the distribution of pupils according to ethnic group (as at 1976). It shows that while the Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils and Muslims are over-represented in the student population, the other groups – i.e. in Indian Tamils, Malays, Burghers and other races – are under-represented. The Indian Tamils with a population percentage of 9.3 and a school-going population percentage of only 1.0 is far behind all other groups. The unpublished data available in the Ministry for the year 1979–80 seem to indicate that no significant change in this pattern has occurred. However, it is likely that the situation in regard to the Indian Tamils (estate sector) may improve, since the government has now taken responsibility for the education of children of this sector too.

TABLE 3.12  
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS BY  
ETHNIC GROUP—1976

<i>Ethnic Group</i>	<i>% distribution of school enrolments (a)</i>	<i>% distribution of the population (b)</i>
Sinhalese .. ..	78.9	72.0
Ceylon Tamils .. ..	12.2	11.2
Indian Tamils .. ..	1.0	9.3
Muslims .. ..	7.4	6.7
Malays .. ..	0.2	0.3
Burghers .. ..	0.2	0.4
Others .. ..	0.0	0.1
Total .. ..	100.0	100.0

Source : (a) Schools Census 1976

(b) Census of Population 1971

### 3.4.6 Household expenditure on education

Table 3.13 shows that expenditure incurred by the household on education varies from 4 cents per child in the two-month income slab Rs. 51–100 in the rural sector to Rs. 160 in the highest slab in the estate sector, this last category including a large amount of money on school fees. This can be explained by the fact that these units are those in which the head of the household

1. Schools Census 1977— Ministry of Education (also see Table 3.5)



TABLE 3.13  
**AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER HEAD FOR TWO MONTHS ON EDUCATION BY INCOME GROUP AND SECTOR (RUPEES)**

Item	Income of spending unit for two months										Over all 3000 averages
	0-50	51-100	101-200	201-400	401-800	801-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	Over all 3000 averages		
<b>Urban</b>											
School fees ..	..	..	0.07	0.15	0.23	0.93	2.14	3.56	5.14	0.74	
School books ..	..	..	0.96	0.66	1.22	3.08	4.35	3.77	5.98	2.04	
Tuition, boarding fees and pocket money ..	3.33	..	0.16	0.06	0.22	0.82	2.54	1.31	8.04	0.71	
Stationery & equipment ..	..	..	0.04	0.11	0.20	0.61	1.34	1.33	0.95	0.41	
Others ..	..	..	..	..	0.02	0.01	..	0.24	..	0.02	
Sub total ..	3.33	..	1.23	0.98	1.89	5.45	10.37	10.21	20.11	3.92	
<b>Rural</b>											
School fees ..	..	..	0.03	0.04	0.15	0.43	0.55	1.13	1.86	0.20	
School books ..	..	..	0.34	0.63	1.32	2.32	3.04	4.35	3.75	1.40	
Tuition, boarding fees and pocket money ..	..	..	0.04	0.06	0.11	0.60	0.95	6.08	4.25	0.30	
Stationery & equipment ..	..	0.01	0.10	0.14	0.33	0.63	1.05	1.73	1.27	0.37	
Others ..	..	0.03	..	..	0.01	0.06	0.01	1.70	0.02	0.04	
Sub total ..	..	0.04	0.51	0.87	1.92	4.04	5.60	14.99	11.15	2.31	
<b>Estate</b>											
School fees ..	..	..	..	..	0.04	0.24	..	2.68	136.00	0.48	
School books ..	..	..	..	..	0.34	0.81	1.75	8.16	13.75	0.48	
Tuition, boarding fees and pocket money ..	..	..	..	0.06	0.15	0.71	0.81	32.52	10.00	0.49	
Stationery & equipment ..	..	..	..	0.03	0.08	0.28	1.31	0.68	1.25	0.12	
Others ..	..	..	..	..	..	0.06	..	..	..	0.01	
Sub total ..	..	..	..	0.24	0.61	2.10	3.87	44.04	160.00	1.58	

Source : Survey of Sri Lanka's Consumer Finance 1973 — Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

is usually a superintendent in charge of an estate and who is in the habit of sending his children to private schools in Kandy and Colombo. In the urban and rural sector, the highest income group spend mostly on tuition and boarding fees and on school books. It can be surmised that in the urban sector a large proportion is spent on private tuition while among the high income groups in the rural sector the need to send children to the more prestigious town schools necessitates expenditure on boarding fees. Of all the items of expenditure listed in the above table those with the widest spread and also the greatest impact on the quality of education would perhaps be first, school books and second, stationery and equipment. In these items it would be seen that the variations from the low income to the high income groups are very large indeed. For school books it goes from 0.34 cents to Rs. 4.35 in the rural sector, and 0.66 cents to Rs. 5.98 in the urban sector. For stationery and equipment the figures are 0.01 cent to Rs. 1.75 and .04 cents to Rs. 1.34. The lack of income to purchase sufficient books coupled with the usual annual scarcity at the commencement of the school year is probably a reason for a fair proportion of non-attendance and dropouts especially after the primary level. While the poor aspirations, inability to read and write, the cost of sending children to school, the existence of unemployment among secondary educated youth and the need to add one more earning member to contribute to the family productive activities created some degree of scepticism about the economic gains of a secondary education.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect, it should be noted that in addition to the already existing pupil welfare schemes (though on a limited scale) such as the provision of free mid-day meals, school health programmes and school dental services, the present government has taken an important step in providing free text books to all pupils studying in Grades 1 to 10 (commencing from 1980). This step would undoubtedly be beneficial to the economically less privileged groups in the population.

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1. See *Analytical Description of Poverty in Sri Lanka* — Marga Institute (Doc. M/40), May 1978

### 3.4.7 Education of the Indian Tamil plantation workers' children

Earlier it was seen that the 'no-schooling' category was heaviest among the Indian plantation workers community. In 1900, the attitude towards education of the children of Indian plantation workers was that a little too much education and unaccustomed luxury would unfit these children for their calling or for anything else.<sup>1</sup> According to the Consumer Finance Survey of 1973, 51.7 percent of the estate population have never been to school, and 44.1 percent are illiterate. The figures for the non-estate sector are 26.6 percent with no schooling and 23.6 percent illiterate in the urban sector, and 31 percent with no schooling and 28.3 percent illiterate in the rural sector. The most illiterate among the estate population are the women, 58.5 percent of whom have never been to school. This shows that despite three quarters of a century of social reform, education in the estates has not improved much since 1900.

According to Ministry of Education sources, there were 720 estate schools in Sri Lanka in 1975, of which the majority were concentrated in the educational districts of Nuwara Eliya (286 schools), Bandarawela (117 schools) and Kandy (108 schools). An estate school teaches only the primary grades and consists usually of one room with a poorly qualified teaching staff of one or two persons.<sup>2</sup> In 1971 only 38 estate schools satisfied the minimum requirements of the law in regard to building and land<sup>3</sup> which specifies a floor space of 10 square feet and bench and desk accommodation for each child on the school register.<sup>4</sup> In spite of the fact that the law also specifies that a competent teacher or teachers must be employed, 90.8 percent of the teaching staff have no training.

Of those certificated, a certain number have only Grade 8 qualifications but have earned service certificates by virtue of their long service. The pupil-teacher ratios are very high and in most

1. Gnanamuttu G.A. *Education and the Indian Plantation worker in Sri Lanka*, H.W. Cave Colombo, 1977.
2. *The Need for the Integration of Newly Nationalised Tamil citizens of Sri Lanka*, Marga Institute (Doc. M/53), 1978.
3. Selvalingam R. *The integration of estate schools — and of educational discrimination*. Nation 5.11.71.
4. Gnanamuttu G.A. — op. cit.



districts, being 53 for the estate sector as a whole. About 20 percent of the children attending estate schools leave after the first year and few to other schools for secondary education, since poverty compels the family to put their children over 14 years into employment on the estate<sup>1</sup>. Availability of employment on the estates, however poorly paid, may be another disincentive for continued schooling. Some, mostly girls, drop out of school even before they are old enough for employment in order to help look after young siblings, do household chores, take food to their parents, etc.<sup>2</sup> For children who do go on for secondary education there is a dearth of facilities in the Tamil medium. Participation however is constrained mainly by poverty and among other things by the distance needed to travel. In addition non-citizens are not allowed the privilege of free university education nor are they entitled to bursaries, scholarships or bank loans.<sup>3</sup> This means that most Indian Tamil children entering the university are those who have the means to pay fees or who are helped entirely or in part by one of the plantation trade unions or by funds provided by the Indian High Commission.<sup>4</sup> All this goes to show that while education has proved to be an instrument of social mobility in other parts of Sri Lanka, its impact on improving the life chances of the Indian Tamil plantation workers' children has been minimal. While it is true that these were the conditions that obtained in the very recent past, it may be mentioned that firm policy decisions have been taken and action is being pursued to rectify this position. All estate schools are being taken over by the State to be run as normal State Schools. As already stated, at the time of the 1979 School Census there remained only 246 estate schools still to be taken over by the State. These have been taken over by the government since then.

3.5 This chapter has dealt with the qualitative and quantitative development of school education in Sri Lanka, since the

1. Marga Institute — op. cit.

2. See the case studies of two Estate Communities — Palmerston and Ederapolle (Marga Institute) (mimeo).

3. This has since been amended.

4. "The Indian High Commission has had for some years a Ceylon Estate Workers Education Trust, which awards 12 scholarships a year to deserving students from the plantations to enable them to pursue their studies at tertiary level. Each scholarship is worth Rs.125 per month. The Ceylon Workers' Congress and the Democratic Workers' Congress and the National Union of Plantation Workers give bursaries direct to children of their members as well as contributing to this Trust". Gnanamuttu op. cit. Note 158, p. 123.

beginning of modern education in the country. Special attention has been given to the decade 1970–1980, to provide a sufficient background to the ensuing survey analyses on university students and graduates, contained in chapters 7 and 8. Many of the problems that we face in university education, e.g. problems of equity, relevance and employment, have their roots in the formal school system. An examination of the university education system follows in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

# DEVELOPMENT OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA (1942-1980)

### 4.1 Introduction

An attempt will be made in this chapter to give a brief outline of the historical development of universities in Sri Lanka, in order to bring into focus certain issues, such as the control and financing of university education, the provision of curricular programmes in the different universities, university admission policies, student enrolments and graduate output, that are considered central to this study. One of the main objectives of the discussion of these issues is to identify inconsistencies in the provision of university education, particularly during the last two decades, which would have an influence on the employment problem of university graduates, in particular. The historical approach followed in the discussion may help the reader to understand the important features and the peculiarities associated with the evolution of university education in this country and the related problems about which we are concerned in this study.

### 4.2 The beginnings

Before the establishment of the University of Ceylon in 1942, there was provision, from about 1870, for college-level education in Medicine, Law (1874) and Technical subjects (1893). This enabled some of the students to appear for the Matriculation and Intermediate examinations, held locally, by the University of London. Owing to the increasing demand for university education the colonial authorities permitted the same University to conduct



external degree examinations in Arts, Law and Science in 1905, and in Medicine and Surgery in 1910-11. But the persistent demand for a University itself went unheeded. However, the University College, which was recommended by the McLeod Committee on Education in 1911, was at last established in 1921 as an affiliate of the University of London.

The Ceylon University College which existed for 21 years (1921-42), functioned under the Department of Education. It prepared students in Arts and Science for the external examinations of the University of London. In the meantime plans were mooted for a University of Ceylon but were temporarily stalled till a suitable site was agreed upon. A further step in this direction was the appointment of the Riddell Commission of 1927,<sup>1</sup> to report on the establishment of a university.

The Riddell Commission recommended a university with five Faculties of Arts, Science, Law, Medicine and Engineering, and preparing all students for a combined Bachelor of Arts degree, which was to be followed by further study in different specialisations. There were other significant recommendations too. Although following the Riddell Report the government enacted legislation to set up a University, it did not become a reality till 1942.

#### 4.3 University of Ceylon (1942-1972)

The University of Ceylon was established under the Ceylon University Ordinance No. 20 of 1942. It was conceived as an autonomous, unitary and residential institution. The nucleus of the new University was the University College and the Medical College. In 1949 it absorbed a part of the Technical College to form the Faculty of Engineering. Till 1948 the University was located exclusively in Colombo, but thereafter a piecemeal shift to Peradeniya, near Kandy, was put into operation. The intention was to shift the entire University into this new Peradeniya Campus. This however was only partially accomplished, owing to financial, educational and political reasons. As a result from 1947 to 1967

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Commission on the University of Ceylon*, Sessional Paper, IV of 1929, Colombo.

the University of Ceylon was located both in Colombo and Peradeniya. In 1967 the University of Colombo was established in the old University premises.

Between 1942 and 1966 nominal control of University governance was exercised by the Court, while executive power was vested in the Council. Academic matters, on the other hand, were the responsibility of the Faculties and the Senate. The nominal head of the University was the Chancellor, who was also the Head of the State, followed by the Pro-Chancellor, being the Minister of Education, and the Vice-Chancellor, who was the real academic and executive head. At the head of each Faculty was an elected Dean. The ex-officio Secretary of the Court, Council and the Senate, and the chief administrative and accounting officer was the Registrar.

In 1966 the Government introduced sweeping changes to all Universities in Ceylon, whereby elected Vice-Chancellors were replaced by government appointees, Registrars were replaced by Secretaries, and Boards of Regents in place of Courts and Councils. The overall direction and control of university education was vested in a National Council of Higher Education (NCHE).

The University of Ceylon established in 1942 did not, in many ways, correspond to the model that was proposed by the Riddell Commission. However, it commenced with 4 Faculties of Arts, Oriental Studies, Science and Medicine. A Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science was set up in 1947, and that of Engineering in 1949. Initially there were 18 Departments of Study, which steadily increased to reach 43 by 1963, nearly 20 years later. Till 1960 the medium of instruction in the University remained exclusively English. Thereafter Sinhala and Tamil also came to be used in the lecture-rooms.

The University commenced with 942 students, but as the demand grew for more places, it had to stretch itself to admit as many students as possible. In the Fifties and Sixties the demand was mostly for Arts and Humanities, but later it shifted to the Science-based courses. The clamour for higher education in Sinhala was another potent issue which could only be contained

by opening two new Universities (Vidyodaya and Vidyalkankara) in 1959. From 1967 to 1972 the "University of Ceylon" was located only at Peradeniya, and in 1972 it was reduced to the status of a University campus, of a single University of Ceylon (later Sri Lanka), once again located in Colombo.

*Faculties and Undergraduate Programs:*

The Faculties of Arts and Oriental Studies between them had 8 Departments of Study in 1942. Eight more Departments and one sub-department were added during the next 20 years while within the Departments themselves, there was considerable expansion and diversification in the course offerings. In 1967 however Law was shifted to Colombo, and was upgraded into a separate Faculty, two years later.

These two Faculties had provision for a 3-year B.A. General degree, requiring 3 years of full-time study, of a combination of 3 subjects. For a long time the LL.B. degree and B.A. Special degree in Economics, also required only 3 years of full-time study, but for all the other subjects for the B.A. Special degree, 4 years of full-time study was the requirement. In 1972 when the University lost its separate identity, these two Faculties had the following Departments of Study :

- Arts .. .. Archaeology, Economics, Education, English, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy and Psychology, Sinhala, Sociology, Western Classics.
- Oriental Studies .. Arabic, Buddhist Philosophy, Pali and Buddhist Civilization, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Tamil.

The Faculty of Science commenced with 5 Departments of Study and in spite of various proposals for changes, remained substantially the same till 1972. The Faculty offered 2 degree programs, one of 3 years' duration leading to the B.Sc. General degree and the other of 4 years, for the Special degree. All degree programs combined theoretical and practical studies. By 1972, the Faculty had the following Departments of Study :



Botany, Chemistry, Geology,

Mathematics, Physics, Zoology.

The Faculty of Medicine was initially organised into 5 Departments of Study, but had a phenomenal growth during the next 20 years, with 10 more Departments added to its fold. The Faculty prepared students for a 6 year (5 years after 1961) Bachelor's degree in Medicine and Surgery and a 4-year degree in Dental Surgery. All these programs included theoretical and clinical studies. By 1972 the Faculty had the following Departments of Study :

Anatomy, Bacteriology, Biochemistry, Dental Surgery, Forensic Medicine, Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Parasitology, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Psychiatry, Public Health, Surgery.

The Faculty of Engineering began in 1949 with 3 Departments and within the next two decades 3 more Departments were added to it. The only degree program offered by the Faculty was the B.Sc. in Engineering requiring 5 years of theoretical and practical study. In 1972 the Faculty had the following Departments :

Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Engineering Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Production Engineering.

Degree programs in Agriculture and Veterinary Science were started in 1947 and a separate Faculty was conceded in 1953. Initially there were 3 Departments of Study and one more was created in the Sixties. At the beginning the B.Sc. degree in Agriculture required 3 years of study, but later increased to 4 years. B.Sc. in Veterinary Science was throughout a 4-year program. Both these programs required theoretical and practical or clinical studies. By 1972 the Faculty had the following 4 Departments :

Agriculture, Agricultural Economics and Farm Management, Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Science.

### *Post-Graduate Study:*

There was provision in all Faculties for postgraduate study and certification, but Arts and Oriental Studies, Medicine and Science were the only Faculties which attracted sufficient students. A post-graduate Diploma required one year of full-time study, while Masters and Doctoral programs required 2 and 3 years respectively. Part-time study however required an additional year or two. While the Diploma was more exam-oriented, with practical or clinical work, where necessary, Master programs often combined examination and research. Doctoral programs were exclusively by research and thesis. Diploma programs in Education, Librarianship, Medicine and Surgery, Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Tuberculous Diseases, Anaesthesia, Obstetrics and Child Health were available during this time, while in principle, there was no restriction on the areas of study for Masters and Doctoral programs.

#### **4.4 Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Universities (1959-1972)**

These two Universities were established in 1959 under the Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara University Act No. 45 of 1958. They were set up in response to the demand for higher education in Sinhala, and for external examinations. They were expected to be responsive to the religious and cultural heritage of the people, and to foster language, religion and culture. There was special provision for *Bhikkhu* Vice-Chancellors and non-inclusion of women internal students. These two special provisions were abolished in 1966. In 1972 those two Universities also became Campuses of the single University of Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

##### *(i) Vidyodaya University*

It commenced in 1959 with 466 internal students in Arts and Languages and within 10 years the total enrolment exceeded 1,000 students, including those enrolled for Science and Management Studies. Medium of instruction was predominantly Sinhala, while Tamil also came to be used from the Sixties. This University made a conscious effort to introduce an applied bias to most courses of study, including some of the Arts courses. The growth of the University was temporarily arrested from 1971-72, when it was converted into a detention camp for the 1971 insurgent suspects.

At the inception Vidyodaya had 3 Faculties with 12 Departments of Study. But over the years there have been changes within the Faculties themselves, and in the Departments of Study, all of which reflect considerable growth. Degree programs offered by the different Faculties were very similar to those in the University of Ceylon, both in duration and in the subject combinations. Study of Buddhism and English was however compulsory to most students. Arrangements for post-graduate study were also similar to those of the older University.

By 1972 Vidyodaya had the following Faculties and Departments of Study :

Arts	..	Anthropology and Sociology, Archaeology, Business and Public Administration, Economics, Education, Geography, History, Law.
Buddhist Studies	..	Buddhist Culture, Mahayana Buddhism, Philosophy, Theravada Buddhism.
Science	..	Biological Sciences, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics.

(ii) *Vidyalankara University*

Vidyalankara started with 543 students and had a growth rate and growth pattern fairly similar to that of Vidyodaya, except that it had a greater share of staff and student unrest and problems of physical location and facilities. It also had an initial bias for religious and language studies, but as the years passed the emphasis shifted to social and natural sciences. Its development was also retarded by the Insurgency-1971. Both in curriculum design and development, Vidyalankara was perhaps more influenced by Peradeniya than Vidyodaya. Undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs, both in structure and duration, were similar to those in the other universities.



Vidyalankara commenced with 5 Faculties and 17 Departments of Study, most of which underwent some changes and modifications over the years. By 1972 the Faculty and Departmental structure assumed the following form :

Arts	..	Economics, Education, Geography, History, Philosophy.
Buddhism	..	Buddhism, Buddhist Culture.
Languages	..	English, Hindi, Pali, Sanskrit, Sinhala.
Science	..	Botany, Chemistry, Industrial Management, Mathematics, Physics, Zoology.

#### 4.5 Higher Education Act No. 20 of 1966 and the NCHE

This Act passed by the government was to supersede the previous University Acts, and thereby to effect considerable government control over the running of the Universities. The instrument created for this purpose was the National Council of Higher Education. This Act empowered the Minister in charge to send general and specific directives to the NCHE and the Universities. The NCHE was expected to formulate policies on higher education and co-ordinate the work of the Universities. As a result of these innovations there was an appreciable reduction in the autonomy of the Universities.

The NCHE tried with some success to bring about uniformity and consistency in student admissions, recruitment and management of staff, and in the management of finances. A draft 10-year plan of development of higher education was also drawn up. It is also credited with the setting up of the Colombo University (1967), College of Advanced Technology at Katubedde and 5 Junior Universities.

#### 4.6 University of Colombo (1967-72)

This University grew out of the remnants of the old University of Ceylon in Colombo, and the new Departments of Study (mainly Arts) set up in 1963, to take those students who could not be admitted to Peradeniya. The University began with 3

Faculties, and with as many students (5,000) as in Peradeniya, at the time. Later, following the transfer of the Department of Law to Colombo, a Faculty of Law was also established. Another innovation was a Department of Architecture and Town Planning within the Faculty of Science. All degree programs, except that in Social Sciences, corresponded to those in Peradeniya. In Social Sciences, however, there was to be a combined 3 years degree, followed by another optional year of majoring in one area of study. This experiment was short-lived, and the University reverted to the traditional B.A. General and Special degrees.

In 1972, when the University lost its separate identity, it had the following Faculties and Departments of Study :

Humanities	— English, Linguistics, Modern European Languages, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Tamil.
Law	— Law.
Medicine & Surgery	— Anatomy, Bacteriology, Biochemistry, Forensic Medicine, Medicine, Nursing, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Parasitology, Pathology, Pharmacy, Pharmacology, Physiology, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Psychiatry, Surgery.
Natural Sciences	— Architecture and Town Planning, Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Marine Biology, Mathematics, Oceanography, Physics, Zoology.
Social Sciences	— Economics, Geography, History, Home Science, Sociology and Social Welfare.

#### 4.7 University of Sri Lanka (1972-78)

Since the University Act of 1966 and the resultant changes were highly resented both by staff and students, following the

change of government in 1970, new legislation was prepared to effect the desired changes, but it was pre-empted by the outbreak of the Insurgency in 1971, and in the wake of which a completely fresh set of legislation was passed in 1972 (University of Ceylon Act No. 1 of 1972). This reduced all the 4 Universities at the time and the Institute of Advanced Technology at Katubedde into Campuses of a single University of Ceylon (later Sri Lanka).

The single University lasted 7 years during which period extraordinary transitory powers were exercised by the Minister and the Vice-Chancellor. All University bodies were of an advisory nature, and did not enjoy any executive powers. The sum total of these changes was that there were even greater government inroads into university autonomy, causing further alienation of the staff and the students. On the academic front the University itself was preoccupied with a program of rationalisation of Faculties and Courses of study, which, in spite of considerable opposition from the academic circles, was pursued with some vigour. Rationalisation resulted in all Campuses, other than Katubedde, either losing or gaining Faculties and Departments of Study, with Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara being the biggest losers. Owing to increasing dissatisfaction among the academic circles, some modifications were made, first in 1972 and still later in 1973, so that some balance would be restored to the Campuses. On the whole, rationalisation remained unfinished and unpopular.

This period however was marked by further expansion in university education, with 2 new University Campuses, at Katubedde and Jaffna, 3 new undergraduate Institutes of Ayurvedic Medicine, Aesthetic Studies and Workers' Education, and 4 post-graduate Institutes of Agriculture, Buddhist Studies, Demographic Studies and Medicine. A number of new non-graduate and post-graduate Certificate and Diploma programs emerged from these new Institutes. The older Campuses were also encouraged to venture into new fields, or modify the traditional courses, with some applied bias, or "job-orientation" specially through practical training.<sup>1</sup> Some radical but controversial admission policies were also introduced. Another noteworthy innovation was the single Agency for External Examinations and Extension Services.

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1. See Chapter 5.



#### 4.8 UGC and the "Independent" Universities (1979—)

With the change of government in July 1977, plans were laid to dismantle the single University apparatus, and to establish 'independent' Universities. At the same time the NCHE was also restored, but under the guise of a "University Grants Commission" (UGC). A further innovation was a new Ministry of Higher Education. The new dispensation came into effect in 1979. Under the aegis of the UGC, a new Ruhuna University College at Matara and a Dumbara Campus at Polgolla were started in 1979, an Open University established in 1980, and a University College set up in Batticaloa in 1981. UGC had also embarked on a scheme of rationalisation of Faculties and Departments, as part of its plan for the development of higher education in the country. In the meantime the UGC has prepared the following schedule (in summary) for the guidance of the Universities and Colleges:

##### 1. *University of Colombo*

Faculty of Arts	— Commerce and Management Studies, Economics, English, Geography, History and Political Science, Sinhala, Sociology.
Faculty of Education	— Educational Psychology, Humanities Education, Science and Technical Education, Social Science Education.
Faculty of Law	— Law.
Faculty of Medicine	— Anatomy, Bacteriology, Biochemistry, Community Medicine, Dental Surgery, Forensic Medicine, Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Parasitology, Pathology, Pharmacology, Physiology, Psychiatry, Surgery.
Faculty of Science	— Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Zoology.

2. *University of Peradeniya*

- Faculty of Agriculture — Agricultural Biology, Agricultural Chemistry, Agricultural Economics and Farm Management, Agricultural Engineering, Animal Science, Crop Science.
- Faculty of Arts — Arabic and Islamic Civilisation, Archaeology, Classical Languages, Economics, Education, English, Geography, History, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Sinhala, Sociology, Tamil.
- Faculty of Engineering — Chemical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Engineering Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Production Engineering.
- Faculty of Medicine — As in Colombo.
- Faculty of Science — As in Colombo plus Geology.
- Faculty of Veterinary Medicine & Animal Science — Animal Science, Veterinary Pre-clinical Studies, Paraclinical Studies, Clinical Studies.

2a. *Dumbara Campus* (University of Peradeniya)

- Faculty of Arts — As in Peradeniya, less Archaeology.

3. *University of Sri Jayawardenepura* (formerly Vidyodaya)

- Faculty of Applied Science—Biological Science, Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics.
- Faculty of Arts — Economics, Geography, History, Languages and Cultural Studies, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Sinhala, Sociology.

Faculty of Management—Business Administration, Commerce, Public Administration, Studies and Commerce

4. *University of Kelaniya* (formerly Vidyalankara)

Faculty of Humanities — Classical Studies, English, Fine Arts, Linguistics, Modern Languages, Pali and Buddhist Studies, Sanskrit, Sinhala.

Faculty of Social Science—Archaeology, Buddhist and Comparative Philosophy, Commerce, Economics, Geography, History, Library Science, Mass Communication.

Faculty of Science — As in Peradeniya plus Industrial Management.

5. *University of Moratuwa* (formerly Katubedde)

Faculty of Architecture — Architecture, Town and Country Planning, Building Economics.

Faculty of Engineering — Applied Science, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering.

6. *University of Jaffna*

Faculty of Arts — Economics, Education, Fine Arts, Geography, Hindu Civilisation, History, Language and Cultural Studies, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Tamil.

Faculty of Science — As in Colombo, with a combined Department of Mathematics and Statistics.



Faculty of Medicine — Anatomy, Biochemistry, Community Medicine, Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Pathology, Physiology, Surgery.

#### 7. *Ruhuna University College*

Faculty of Agriculture — Agricultural Economics, Agronomy, Animal Science.

Faculty of Arts — Economics, Geography, History, Sociology, Sinhala.

Faculty of Medicine — As in Jaffna.

Faculty of Science — As in Colombo.

#### 4.9 University Finances

Since 1945 University education has been wholly financed by the State, and no fees are payable by students, other than perhaps for registration, repeat examinations, etc. Universities are however empowered to receive gifts, endowments, etc., from the public and local and foreign organisations. Such receipts are very negligible.

Before the setting up of the UGC, the universities received an annual grant, calculated on the basis of estimates of revenue and expenditure, prepared by each university and submitted through the relevant Ministry. Between 1967 and 1972 such estimates were channelled through the NCHE. Till 1975 funds for capital expenditure were voted as a block grant, the unspent balance of which could be accumulated over the years. This was stopped in 1975. Instead such funds are also voted annually, but on the basis of a 5-year plan of development. The government control over university finances is also exercised through Government Audit, which reports to the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament. Since 1975 all recurrent expenditure has been estimated under specific programs and projects, as part of a Program Budget. Eight projects have been identified for this purpose. With effect from 1979 moneys voted for Universities have included the estimated expenditure of the UGC and the Buddhist Institute at Anuradhapura.

Table 4.1 shows the total Government investment on education as well as on university education for the period 1975 to 1981.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of such investment in relation to total estimated Government expenditure each year seems to indicate that the total investment on education is below 10.0 percent, with the lowest recorded for this period being 6.53 percent in 1979 and 6.92 percent in 1980. Similarly the investment on the universities is less than 10.0 percent of the total education budget for 1975 and 1976, but increasing to 16.04 percent in 1980, and dipping to 12.03 percent in 1981. Of the total expenditure, the grant for the universities has been very meagre, being often under 1.0 percent, except for 1980 (1.11 percent). However, the grant itself has been steadily increasing in numerical terms, with the exception of 1976, and more favourably than the percentage increase in the total education expenditure, or even the total government expenditure. After 1978 there has been a marked increase in the annual grant, but this has to be viewed in relation to the rate of inflation at the time, and the substantial devaluation of the local currency. One interesting feature in university finances however is the more favourable capital grant as against recurrent grant, reflecting a steady physical growth in the universities.

The distribution of government funds among the universities reflects many imbalances (Table 4.2). In 1975 Peradeniya University received as much as 37.6 percent of the total recurrent expenditure budget while Colombo University could only claim 23.2 percent. The share of Sri Jayawardanepura and Kelaniya was 10.8 percent and 11.2 percent respectively, and with 12 percent for the Moratuwa University. Jaffna University was at the bottom with 5.2 percent. By 1979 there was some change in this position with Peradeniya moving back to 37.4 percent after receiving slightly less between 1976-1978. Colombo dropped 3.1 points, while Sri Jayawardanepura, Kelaniya and Moratuwa also dropped 1.8, 0.5 and 2.1 respectively. Jaffna, however, was the only exception, having moved up 2.8 points at the expense of the other universities. The recurrent expenditure could also be analysed in terms of student enrolment, for all universities.

1. For a global perspective see *Allocation of Resources to Education throughout the World*, UNESCO, Paris, 1980.

TABLE 4.1  
**INVESTMENT ON UNIVERSITIES IN RELATION TO TOTAL GOVERNMENT  
 EXPENDITURE AND EXPENDITURE ON EDUCATION**

		(Rs. '000)									
		1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981			
		Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
A	..	7,433,531	8,549,467	10,407,555	—	19,614,897	23,387,526	28,251,548			
B	..	729,590	814,222	—	—	1,281,870	1,617,919	2,296,921			
C	..	56,749	53,418	—	—	131,535	259,442	276,275			
B/A	..	9.81%	9.52%	—	—	6.54%	6.92%	8.13%			
C/B	..	7.78%	6.56%	—	—	10.26%	16.04%	12.03%			
C/A	..	0.76%	0.62%	—	—	0.67%	1.11%	0.98%			

A — Total Government Expenditure  
 B — Investment on Education  
 C — Investment on Universities

Source : Government Annual Estimates.



TABLE 4.2  
ESTIMATED RECURRENT EXPENDITURE BY UNIVERSITIES, 1975-1979

	1975		1976		1977		1978		1979	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
Peradeniya	19,115	37.6	20,349	36.9	22,260	36.8	23,843	37.3	33,314*	37.4
Colombo	11,782	23.2	12,604	22.8	13,845	22.9	14,297	22.4	17,800	20.1
Sri Jayawardenepura	5,508	10.8	6,317	11.4	6,555	10.8	6,771	10.6	7,945	9.0
Kelaniya	5,688	11.2	6,201	11.2	6,982	11.5	7,549	11.8	9,485	10.7
Moratuwa	6,057	12.0	6,652	12.0	6,770	11.2	7,223	11.3	8,760	9.9
Jaffna	2,630	5.2	3,147	5.7	4,104	6.8	4,224	6.6	7,140	8.0
Ruhuna	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4,150	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,780</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>55,270</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>60,536</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>63,907</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>88,594</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source : University Programme Budget.

\*Includes Dumbara Campus

As the Table 4.3 shows while the overall picture reflects only a very marginal increase, between universities there appears to be an uneven distribution in the financial investment on students. Some of the disparities could very well be due to the differences in the disciplines and also the initial developmental commitments. However, a breakdown according to different disciplines shows in greater relief the uneven nature of financial provision for students following different courses of study, within the same university itself. This is clearly borne out by a recent study made on behalf of the UGC, according to which it has been revealed that the current expenditure on students in different disciplines ranges between an average of Rs. 1,250 for Arts and Rs. 5,800 for Engineering studies. The figures for the other disciplines are Rs. 3,850 for Agriculture, Rs. 4,100 for Science and Rs. 4,700 for Medicine.

Financial provision has a direct bearing on staff-student ratios,<sup>1</sup> and here again the picture has not been one of consistency or even distribution either between universities or between different disciplines. (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). University of Ceylon (now Peradeniya University) started in 1942 with a favourable staff-student ratio of 1: 16.4, which by 1950 had further improved to 12.8. In 1960, however, the ratio declined slightly to 13.6, but once again taking an extremely favourable turn by 1970, which it has almost held together with the current 8.7. Among the other universities, Jaffna University had a very favourable ratio of 4.4 in 1975, but has since lost ground with 9.7 and 10.2 being recorded for 1976/77 and 1978/79 respectively. Moratuwa, on the other hand, commenced with 5.1 in 1972/73, and has held its own with 5.3 in 1976/77 and 5.0 for 1978/79. However, there was a slight decline by 1980 with the ratio slipping to 6.0 Sri Jayawardanapura and Kelaniya Universities have been steadily losing ground, with the former having recorded 16.5 and 20.6 for 1970 and 1980 respectively. Corresponding ratios for Kelaniya are 12.3 and 14.6. Colombo University, on the other hand, had a comparatively unfavourable ratio of 36.7 in 1967/68, but has steadily improved its position to a more respectable 11.1 for 1970 and 10.5 for 1980.

1. Only in terms of undergraduates and full-time teaching staff, inclusive of Assistant Lecturers and above.

TABLE 4.3  
**RECURRENT GRANT PER STUDENT BY UNIVERSITY 1975-1980 (IN RUPEES)**

		1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
		Rs. Cts.	Rs. Cts.	Rs. Cts.	Rs. Cts.	Rs. Cts.
Peradeniya	..	..	4,309.00	4,982.00	5,127.00	6,717.00
Colombo	..	..	3,286.00	3,886.00	4,353.00	8,718.00
Sri Jayawardenepura	..	..	2,987.00	2,932.00	2,899.00	2,803.00
Kelaniya	..	..	3,317.00	3,151.00	2,968.00	3,450.00
Moratuwa	..	..	8,649.00	9,038.00	8,781.00	10,198.00
Jaffna	..	..	7,517.00	5,160.00	3,596.00	4,688.00
Ruhuna	..	..	—	—	—	23,851.00
All Universities (in Rupees)	..	..	4,285.00	4,568.00	4,595.00	5,814.00

Source : University Programme Budgets.



TABLE 4.4  
DEPARTMENTS, STAFF AND STAFF-STUDENT RATIOS BY  
UNIVERSITY AT 10-YEAR INTERVALS

Year	No. of Departments	No. of Teachers	No. of Students	Staff- Student ratio
<b>PERADENIYA</b>				
1942	18	55	904	16.4
1950	44	157	2,006	12.8
1960	49	268	3,651	13.6
1970/71	49	556	4,134	7.4
1980	46	544	4,722	8.7
<b>COLOMBO</b>				
1967/68	24	135	4,948	36.7
1970/71	41	325	3,616	11.1
1980	34	318	3,335	10.5
<b>SRI JAYAWARDENEPURA</b>				
1959/60	—	—	466	—
1970/71	20	141	2,329	16.5
1980	14	144	2,967	20.6
<b>KELANIYA</b>				
1959/60	—	—	543	—
1970/71	18	141	1,734	12.3
1980	23	192	2,795	14.6
<b>MORATUWA</b>				
1972/73	11	117	690	5.1
1980	13	137	827	6.0
<b>JAFFNA</b>				
1975	14	83	365	4.4
1980	25	243	1,279	5.7
<b>RUHUNA</b>				
1980	12	46	421	9.2

Source : Statistical Pocketbooks; UGC. Div. of Planning & Research.

TABLE 4.5  
**STAFF-STUDENT RATIOS BY DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES AND DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES**  
 (1976/77 and 1978/79)

	ARTS		LAW		MANAGEMENT		SCIENCE		MEDICINE		AGRICULTURE		ENGINEERING	
	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79	76/77	78/79
Peradeniya	14.6	12.3	—	—	—	—	5.9	6.0	5.4	4.4	8.3	6.9	7.7	8.2
Colombo	12.4	14.4	8.5	9.3	—	—	6.6	6.3	8.8	8.7	—	—	—	—
Sri Jayawardanapura	13.3	17.9	—	—	24.7	23.7	3.2	3.9	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kelaniya	14.9	13.7	—	—	—	—	3.6	4.6	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moratuwa	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jaffna	7.9	10.5	—	—	—	—	11.5	9.9	—	—	—	—	5.3	5.0

Source : UGC, Div. of Planning and Research, University Programme Budgets.

Between different disciplines there are even more imbalances with the Arts-oriented students being poor relations to the Science-oriented students. For 1976/77 the ratio for all Arts (including Management Studies and Law) was 1 : 14.6. However, it improved slightly to 14.0 by 1978/79. Corresponding ratios for all Sciences were 5.6 (1976/77) and 5.5 (1978/79). Table 4.5 further reveals the relative staff-student ratios in terms of different disciplines in separate universities, for two recent years—1976/77 and 1978/79. It can be presumed that the current situation may have changed, if at all, only marginally. However, the statistics seem to reveal some disparities, such as the relatively unfavourable 1 : 24.7 and 1 : 23.1 for Management Studies, and 17.9 for Arts at Sri Jayawardenepura University, and the most favourable 3.2 and 3.9, and 3.6 and 4.6 for Science at the same University, and the Kelaniya University respectively. Moratuwa also seems to enjoy a relatively very favourable position in this respect.

#### 4.10 University enrolments and admissions

When the idea of a University was first mooted, it was expected to have a total enrolment of around 500 students. This was later raised to 800, while at the time of the inception of the University (1942), enrolment stood at 904. Thereafter there was a steady increase, with 2,000 students by 1950 and well over 3,000 by 1960, with two more universities admitting students. With the relaxation of residential requirements at Peradeniya and a second Campus in Colombo in 1964, many students could be enrolled taking the grand total for all universities to 14,779 by 1967, a total not exceeded for the next 12 years. Since 1979, however, there has been some increase in enrolments, with the total for that year standing at 15,656, reflecting a 17-fold increase during a period of 37 years (See Table 4.6).

However, with regard to different disciplines the increase was neither similar nor uniform— (Table 4.7). For Arts-based disciplines, excluding Law and Management Studies, the increase in student enrolment for all universities was nearly twenty-fold, having started with 396 in 1942, going up to 6952 in 1979. For Law the increase was ten-fold with 14 students in 1947 and 158 in 1979. In Medicine the corresponding figures were 343 and



1435, reflecting only a five-fold increase. In Science the increase was very slow in the early years, but picked up in the Seventies, thereby attaining a fifteen-fold increase with the corresponding numbers being 165 (1942) and 2551 (1979). In Agriculture and Veterinary Science the initial number was a lowly 28 (1947), but increasing in the Seventies to a respectable 551<sup>1</sup> by 1979, reflecting a twenty-fold increase.

Management Studies including Commerce became a separate discipline in 1972 and at the time total student enrolment stood at 921. By 1979 this had almost doubled to 1806, for all universities. The most spectacular increase was recorded in Engineering Studies, where again the commencing figure was a very modest 53 in 1952. After a very slow rate of growth during the Fifties and the Sixties, there was an upsurge during the Seventies, taking the total to 1290<sup>2</sup> by 1979, and thereby achieving a record twenty-four-fold increase. The present figures for some of the disciplines could even improve further and reflect a greater increase, if only reliable and up-to-date figures were available for student enrolments in the Institutes of Aesthetic Studies and Ayurveda (Traditional Medicine). However, taking an overall view of all admissions to different disciplines it is possible to assume that our distribution pattern among disciplines themselves would compare favourably with corresponding figures for many developed countries and also some of the developing Commonwealth countries.

Over the years the pattern of student enrolment, other than in numerical terms, also underwent much change. To begin with in the Forties the greater proportion of undergraduates were drawn from the more affluent, Western-oriented, English educated urban backgrounds. With wider dispersal of educational opportunities following the educational reforms of 1945 and the use of the national languages as the media of instruction in schools from 1948 onwards, increasing numbers were drawn from the rural areas, and with a more pronounced lower middle class or even less affluent social and economic backgrounds. This trend was

1. 108 in Vet. Science and 443 in Agriculture.

2. Architecture and Town & Country Planning students are not included.

TABLE 4.6  
**ENROLMENTS—ALL UNIVERSITIES 1942—1980 (1942—1975 AT FIVE-YEAR INTERVALS)**

Year	Sri Lanka							Total
	Peradeniya	Colombo	Jayawardene- pura	Kelaniya	Moratuwa	Jaffna	Ruhuna	
1942	904	—	—	—	—	—	—	904
1947	1,554	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,554
1952	2,232	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,232
1957	2,718	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,718
1959/60	—	—	466	543	—	—	—	4,693
1962	5,117	—	802	802	—	—	—	6,727
1967	5,368	4,948	2,083	2,113	—	—	—	14,512
1972	4,549	3,557	1,589	1,882	497	(114-1974)	—	12,074
1975	4,436	3,586	1,844	1,715	712	350	—	12,643
1976	4,443	3,243	2,154	1,968	736	610	—	13,154
1977	4,472	3,350	2,261	2,352	771	1,141	—	14,347
1978	4,650	3,284	2,417	2,651	763	1,271	—	15,036
1979	4,960	2,140	2,834	2,749	859	1,523	174	15,239
1980	4,722	3,335	2,967	2,795	827	1,279	421	16,346

Source : Statistical Pocketbooks — Department of Census & Statistics,  
 UGC, Div. of Planning & Research.

TABLE 4.7  
**ENROLMENTS — ALL UNIVERSITIES BY DISCIPLINES**  
 (1975—1979)

Year	Arts	Edu- cation	Law	Manage- ment	All Arts	Science	Medi- cine	Dental	Agri- culture	Vet. Science	Engi- neering	Archi- tecture	All Science
1942	396	—	—	—	396	165	343	—	—	—	—	—	508
1947	—	—	(14)	—	—	—	—	—	(28)	—	—	—	—
1952	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	(53)	—	—
1972	—	—	—	(921)	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,283	—	—
1976	4,585	971	144	1,260	6,460	1,797	1,239	193	390	108	1,286	—	5,010
1976	6,008	794	152	1,104	8,058	1,854	853	191	405	109	1,242	—	4,698
1977	6,966	738	152	899	8,755	2,227	1,250	237	416	141	1,287	79	5,592
1978	7,754	494	151	981	9,380	2,181	1,385	196	427	108	1,296	73	5,857
1979	6,952	494	158	1,806	9,410	2,551	1,435	196	443	108	—	100	6,429

Source: Statistical Pocketbooks,  
 UGC Handbook, 1979.



further buttressed by the grant of special privileges to rural areas through the district quota system in the matter of admissions to the universities after 1974.

During the first thirty years of the universities (1942-1972) it was found that student enrolment was not in proportion to the ethnic and religious composition of the population, with the Sinhalese Buddhists being an overwhelming majority vis-a-vis the other ethnic and religious minorities. With the exception of Arts-based disciplines, in the other disciplines the apparent disparities caused much concern among the Sinhalese Buddhists. With some improvement discernible by the middle of the Sixties they were spurred to obtain even a better and more advantageous position in respect of admissions to Science-based courses. It was as a concession to this demand that the Government adopted a scheme of standardisation of marks between different media in 1973 (this was given up in 1978) and a district quota system for university admissions in 1974. These changes had the immediate effect of increasing very considerably the number of Sinhalese Buddhist students admitted to the more prestigious Science-based disciplines, such as Medicine, Dental Surgery, Agriculture and Veterinary Science, and Engineering Studies.

TABLE 4.8  
ENROLMENT BY SEXES, ALL UNIVERSITIES 1942-1977  
(AT 5 YEAR INTERVALS) AND 1979-80

<i>Year</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
1942 .. ..	813	89.9	91	10.1	904
1947 .. ..	1,312	84.4	242	15.6	1,554
1952 .. ..	1,752	78.5	480	21.5	2,232
1957 .. ..	1,990	73.2	728	26.8	2,718
1962 .. ..	5,255	75.6	1,729	24.4	7,084
1967 .. ..	9,233	62.5	5,546	37.5	14,779
1972 .. ..	6,907	57.3	5,143	42.7	12,050
1977 .. ..	9,264	60.8	5,981	39.2	15,245
1979/80 ..	10,284	60.8	6,638	39.2	16,922
1981 Population ..	7,539,128	50.8	7,310,873	49.2	14,850,001

Source : Statistical Pocketbooks, Dept. of Census & Statistics,  
Preliminary Release No. 1, 1981, Dept. of Census & Statistics.  
UGC, Div. of Planning and Research.

In the beginning student enrolment between sexes was also highly disproportionate and very much at variance with the male-female distribution pattern of the total population. In 1942 out of a total of 904, only 91 or 10.1 percent were women. It took nearly ten years for women to obtain 25.0 percent of the places in the university and even by 1965, in the University of Ceylon, the position of women had improved only up to 42.7 percent or 4,579 females out of a total of 10,753 students. Though there has been a very slight improvement since then in relation to all universities, women are still some distance away from the elusive 50 percent (Table 4.8). The distribution pattern of women students among different disciplines also lends itself to some comment. Although there is a percentage-wise increase of women in all disciplines every year, the pattern of distribution seems to indicate a greater preference for Arts, Medical Studies and Science over Agriculture and Engineering.

With regard to university enrolments the greatest concern has been caused and much heart-burning has been experienced in the matter of numbers admitted every year, which had over the years become more and more disproportionate to large numbers who seek admission to the universities, and who obtain after severe competition and great hardships, the minimum academic qualifications to enter a university. The most alarming feature has been that over the years while the numbers qualifying to enter the universities have increased by the thousands, the actual numbers admitted have increased only very marginally, causing thereby a steady decline in the percentage of those selected out of the total numbers eligible for selection (Table 4.9).

TABLE 4.9  
UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS 1970-1980

<i>Examination year (GCE—A/L)</i>	<i>Admission Year</i>	<i>Number eligible</i>	<i>Number admitted</i>	<i>Percentage admitted</i>
1970	1970	10,262	3,457	33.69
1971	1972	N.A.	3,338	—
1972	1973	10,747	3,420	31.82
1973	1974	12,961	3,532	27.25
1974	1975	15,446	3,789	24.53
1975	1976	15,023	3,942	26.23
1976	1977	19,045	4,150	21.79
1977	1978	27,582	4,996	18.11
1978	1979	26,918	4,661	17.32
1979	1980	29,698	4,857	16.35
1980	1981	40,300	5,020	12.46

Source : UGC Annual Report, 1979.

UGC Admissions Division.

The percentage for the current year alone (1981/82) stands at 12.46 percent or 5,020 out of 40,300 eligible candidates. The corresponding figures have also been found to be falling far short of those computed for countries with similar population statistics, such as Australia or even Canada. In 1942 Sri Lanka had 1.5 students per 10,000 population, which increased very slowly to 9.5 by 1965. During the last fifteen years it has only increased to 11.0 per 10,000 population, while the corresponding figures for most developed countries would be well over 20, and going up in some instances to as much as 55 (USSR) per 10,000 population. *First Annual Report of the University Grants Commission for 1979* (pp. 41-42) itself reports that compared to our six universities and 16,300 total enrolment for 1979, Australia with a population almost equal to Sri Lanka had 19 universities with an approximately 103,000 student enrolment. Canada with a population  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times that of Sri Lanka had 53 universities and a 392,000 strong student enrolment. It is also noted that these countries had as many part-time students in the universities, and a large number of degree-granting colleges of advanced education and also institutes of technology, also providing opportunities for higher studies.

#### 4.11 Admission policies

Admission to the university was determined by a minimum age (17 years) and success at an entrance examination. For Science-based courses, passing a practical test was also a prerequisite, till 1970. Passing in a *Viva-voce* was compulsory for all candidates before 1953. From 1942-46, the Entrance Examination was conducted by the Department of Education. In 1946 this was replaced by a Preliminary Examination conducted by the University. Each university organised its own Preliminary Examination till 1964. Thereafter, selection to the universities has been made from a common General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination, conducted by the Ministry of Education. Selection was on the basis of the highest marks obtained at these examinations and on the availability of places in the universities, for the preferred course of study. For a few 'adult' candidates, however, some exceptions were made. With the creation of the Central Agency for Admissions in 1966, under the aegis of the



NCHE, universities lost virtually all control of admission of students. At present admissions come under the direction and control of the UGC.

In the beginning the number of students seeking places in the university was very limited, but as the years passed, the number of students qualifying to enter far exceeded the number of places available in the universities. Even with 2 new universities, removal of residential requirements, over-stretching the existing facilities and external examinations the situation has not changed, and in fact with many more new universities today, the situation has become even more critical. Over the years, however, the demand for university places has shifted from Arts-based courses to Science-based courses. The restrictive admission policies themselves have been taken to task by students, parents and school authorities, and they have become an explosive issue, with even racial undertones. As a result the need for special consideration for educationally disadvantaged groups and districts and the need for standardisation of marks between different language-media came to be recognised, and were gradually applied for university admissions. This in turn has raised the charge of unfair discrimination against racial minorities and urban schools. (See Tables 4.10 and 4.11). Since 1978 media-wise standardisation of marks has been stopped, but currently the UGC continues to follow the selection of students on the basis of All-Island merit : 30 percent; and on district-basis merit : 55 percent; and the balance 15 percent on under-privileged district merit.<sup>1</sup>

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1. See Appendix 1, *Basic Statistics on Higher Education in Sri Lanka 1981*, Division of Planning & Research, UGC, Sri Lanka.

TABLE 4.10  
**UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS — 1975**  
**DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY THEIR DISTRICTS OF ORIGIN**

<i>District</i>	<i>Population percentage</i>	<i>Medicine &amp; Dental Surgery</i>		<i>Engineering and Sciences</i>	
		<i>Actual selection on district basis</i>	<i>Hypothetical selection according to order of merit</i>	<i>Actual selection on district basis</i>	<i>Hypothetical selection according to order of merit</i>
Colombo ..	21.03	110	132	70	129
Kalutara ..	5.76	15	11	20	16
Kandy ..	9.34	24	17	31	11
Matale ..	2.49	08	03	08	03
Nuwara Eliya ..	3.57	02	02	06	—
Galle ..	5.80	29	18	20	24
Matara ..	4.63	08	05	15	20
Hambantota ..	2.68	01	—	08	—
Jaffna ..	5.54	29	61	20	56
Mannar ..	0.61	01	01	01	—
Vavuniya ..	0.75	—	—	—	—
Batticaloa ..	2.03	06	04	07	02
Amparai ..	2.14	—	—	01	01
Trincomalee ..	1.51	03	01	05	05
Kurunegala ..	8.09	12	03	26	09
Puttalam ..	2.99	03	02	10	02
Anuradhapura ..	3.06	02	01	04	01
Polonnaruwa ..	1.29	01	—	01	—
Badulla ..	4.84	02	01	07	02
Moneragala ..	1.51	—	—	02	01
Ratnapura ..	5.21	11	07	10	05
Kegalle ..	5.13	08	06	28	03
<b>SRI LANKA</b> ..	<b>100.00</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>290</b>

Source : Planning & Research Unit, University of Sri Lanka.

TABLE 4.11  
UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS — BY DISTRICTS AND DISCIPLINES 1980/81

District	Arts	Law	Commerce	Medi- cine	Dental	Vet. Science	Agri- culture	Eto Science	Engi- neering	Archi- ecture	Physical Science
1. Kegalle	82	02	38	11	04	01	08	14	16	—	19
2. Ratnapura	91	03	22	10	02	01	08	09	15	—	10
3. Anuradhapura	84	02	30	15	02	01	04	02	18	01	01
4. Polonnaruwa	35	02	12	04	—	—	04	03	03	—	03
5. Galle	108	03	29	19	02	04	03	22	24	01	25
6. Matara	103	03	30	14	03	—	06	09	20	01	19
7. Hambantota	94	02	23	13	—	01	06	12	16	—	18
8. Badulla	125	04	44	22	02	01	09	13	25	—	12
9. Moneragala	47	01	13	02	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10. Kurunegala	184	03	45	19	02	01	09	13	24	—	26
11. Puttalam	80	02	31	16	03	02	05	10	17	—	39
12. Matale	43	—	12	05	02	—	03	05	09	—	09
13. Nuwara Eliya	72	02	27	10	—	01	05	—	05	—	—
14. Kandy	142	04	41	24	—	06	10	16	27	—	29
15. Jaffna	225	03	44	40	12	06	25	37	75	06	44
16. Mannar	18	—	05	01	—	—	02	02	03	—	09
17. Vavuniya	11	—	03	02	—	—	—	02	02	—	02
18. Trincomalee	38	01	08	07	01	—	02	07	09	—	08
19. Batticaloa	65	02	09	10	—	—	02	08	12	—	14
20. Amparai	60	03	22	11	01	—	06	12	15	—	08
21. Kalutara	123	03	31	15	02	—	07	11	18	01	20
22. Colombo	203	21	97	96	19	01	22	89	97	29	92
23. Gampaha	138	05	82	20	—	—	10	18	28	—	26
24. Mullattivu	15	—	02	03	—	—	01	01	02	—	01
TOTAL	2,186	71	705	389	57	26	157	313	480	39	434

Source: Admissions Division of the UGC.



#### 4.12 Graduate output

Between 1942 and 1960 the output of graduates was very modest, but with the opening of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara, and with increased intake into the University of Ceylon, there was a proportionate increase in the output. This momentum was maintained till about 1970. Thereafter emerged a downward trend, which was not arrested till 1977 since when there has been a significant increase in graduate output. (See Table 4.12).

With regard to the distribution of graduates among different disciplines, Arts graduates have always been in a majority, being close to two-thirds of the total output. In some years the proportion has been even greater. This maldistribution was the cause of considerable unemployment among Arts graduates, and the resultant social and political tensions. Since about 1975 there has been a deliberate attempt to achieve a better distribution of students between Arts-based and Science-based courses, which is also reflected in the increasing numbers of non-Arts graduates. Graduate output among external candidates, however, has continued to be dominated by Arts graduates. (See Tables 4.12 and 4.13).

#### 4.13 External studies

From the late 19th century, there was provision in Sri Lanka, for external degrees of the University of London. Since the University of Ceylon did not provide the same facility, the former continued to perform this function even after 1942. In 1959 Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara opened their doors for external candidates and the University of Ceylon followed suit in 1961. With that, registration for London degrees was stopped. With the setting up of a single University of Sri Lanka in 1972, steps were also taken to establish a centralised agency for all external and extension services. This innovation resulted in a number of significant changes and developments, and a further expansion in external studies in the country. With the establishment of independent universities in 1979, the central agency was abolished, and some of the universities were once again given the right to conduct external examinations in different disciplines.

TABLE 4.12  
**GRADUATE OUTPUT BY DISCIPLINES — 1942-1979**

Year	Total	Arts, Education, Management, Law	Science	Medicine	Dental Surgery	Agriculture	Vel. Surgery	Engineering
1942-65	..	..	1,839	2,189	126	129	66	473
1965	..	8,813	214	208	17	29	08	81
1966	..	1,587	208	203	21	25	15	95
1967	..	3,078	238	267	21	13	13	100
1968	..	3,525	190	403	21	22	18	113
1969	..	4,652	234	216	27	26	18	135
1970	..	4,312	323	282	25	24	13	206
1971	..	3,733	3117	261	27	27	14	167
1972	..	3,891	278	249	23	48	25	225
1973	..	2,914	347	250	21	43	17	233
1974	..	3,673	379	219	38	42	17	171
1975	..	2,586	372	228	50	47	42	283
1976	..	2,511	414	164	33	90	03	251
1977	..	1,447	416	127	16	90	20	253
1978	..	2,392	426	189	43	104	27	268
1979	..	3,605	483	257	45	98	26	208
	..	2,840	491	189	43	104	27	268
	..	2,004	483	257	45	98	26	208

Source : Manpower Planning Div. - Ministry of Plan Implementation.  
 Marga Survey, (1980)

In the matter of external studies, the demand has been mostly in Arts, Humanities and Law. Since lately, however, there is an increasing demand for Science and Management Studies. From the very beginning external students did not enjoy any facilities, other than for registration and appearance at examinations. Vidyodaya and Vidyalkara, however, recognised "affiliated" institutions for the conducting of regular classes for such candidates. Further improvements were effected by the central agency, with some limited provision of library facilities and distance teaching.

TABLE 4.13  
EXTERNAL STUDENT REGISTRATION 1973-1978

<i>Discipline</i>	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	<i>Total</i>
Arts .. .. .	4,655	5,487	5,426	2,627	3,866	4,945	28,006
Commerce .. .. .	25	35	512	445	780	1,042	2,839
Law .. .. .	1,905	2,044	2,114	1,644	1,362	1,626	10,695
Science .. .. .	109	159	386	523	765	993	2,935
Education (Post-graduate) .. .. .	528	509	—	425	—	523	1,982
<i>Total</i>	7,222	8,231	8,438	6,664	6,773	9,129	46,457

Source : External Services Agency — 1978.

#### 4.14 Welfare and other services

While the main preoccupation of the universities has been the performance of academic functions including that of library services, the universities have also been engaged in the provision of many non-academic services, such as hostel and catering facilities, health, sports and student and staff welfare services. The first university (Peradeniya) itself was conceived as a fully residential university, requiring both staff and students to reside in the campus itself. This necessitated an extensive building program, which has only been able to partially meet the needs of both these groups. In the other universities there is very limited accommodation, and both staff and students have been subjected to much hardship and deprivation. In all universities there are modest health centres, providing mainly out-patient treatment. Sports facilities would extend to both out-door and in-door services. Among other services are the catering services and staff and student centres. The need for counselling services has been largely ignored and seems to evoke very little interest among



the authorities. In the early years direct financial assistance was available for needy students. This has since been replaced by a loan scheme, with the recipients obliged to repay the loan on the completion of university studies. Student government and voluntary student organisation is a privilege enjoyed by students, and in which they have been actively engaged over the years.

#### 4.15 Education White Paper (1981): proposals for university reform<sup>1</sup>

The White Paper on Education, presented by the Government in 1981 (to which reference has been already made in chapter 3) has submitted a set of reform proposals on university education. At the time of writing this chapter, no definitive steps have been taken by the Government to translate these proposals to concrete programmes of action. However, some of these proposals seem to have a direct relevance to the issues discussed in this study. Hence, the following excerpt, which spells out these broad proposals, should suffice to give an indication of the line of thinking prevailing just now at policy-making levels :

“University education has ceased to be an enriching experience for the majority of students. Further, the economy finds it difficult to absorb the universities’ output, as the demands of the expanding sectors of the economy are mostly for middle-management personnel. Such personnel do not need a 3 to 4 year course of studies and can best be trained in non-university tertiary educational institutions, leaving the universities to develop as centres of excellence.

The following proposals stem from the above observations :

- (a) Universities will concentrate on first-degree and post-graduate work, creating a favourable climate for research. They will be developed into centres of excellence at the apex of the educational pyramid devoting a fair proportion of their resources to higher studies and research in science

1. *Education Proposals for Reform—General, University and Tertiary (Vocational, Technical and Professional)*. Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Employment—1981.

and technology. This will ensure that every student who enters a University will receive a thorough academic grounding in his field of study.

- (b) The numbers admitted to different courses will be in accordance with the country's requirements of academically qualified personnel. This would be reflected in the numbers admitted to the different courses.
- (c) In order to enable the Universities to develop as centres of excellence, facilities will be provided for staff development through such measures as better remuneration, better post graduate and post-doctoral study, opportunities for collaborating and establishing close links with foreign Universities and an exchange of senior personnel between the University faculties on the one hand and private and public sector employæes in Industry, Commerce, Research etc. on the other.
- (d) Universities will be encouraged to specialise in some field of post-graduate studies and research through a planned disbursement of research grants and allocation of funds for specialised physical plant. This allocation for specialities to the different Universities will prevent wasteful duplication.
- (e) Commencing with one University, an attempt will be made to cut across the academic barriers, between Arts and Science students by encouraging Arts students to do a Science subject for the degree."<sup>1</sup>

In regard to the Open University, the White Paper states that the strategy of the Open University will be significantly different from that of other universities. It will provide for those in employment and others who cannot devote their full time for studies to re-enter the educational system by following courses at certificate, diploma under-graduate and post-graduate levels. It will concentrate initially on courses in Mathematics, Science, Management Studies and Technology.

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1. Ibid (pp. 15—16)

4.16 To sum up, in this chapter we have examined how university education has developed in Sri Lanka in quantitative and qualitative terms, and some of the problems that confront the system. One important aspect of this development is the introduction of "job-oriented" courses in the Arts Faculties in the universities. Because of the importance of these innovative programmes in the context of this study, the next chapter is devoted entirely to a discussion of these programmes.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE "JOB-ORIENTED" COURSES OF STUDY IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF SRI LANKA

#### 5.1 Introduction

An analysis of the development of university education in Sri Lanka during the last two decades would be incomplete without an examination of the efforts made by some of the universities to relate university education to employment. During the 1970s, these efforts culminated in the development of the "job-oriented" courses of study in the Arts Faculties. The main objective of this chapter is to briefly trace the development of these innovative curricular programmes and to identify the problems of implementing such employment-oriented programmes at university level. Since a fair proportion of Arts graduates surveyed under this research study had themselves been subjected to this experiment, the discussion that follows would contribute to view, in the proper context, the complexity of factors related to this issue, to which more reference would be made in the ensuing chapters.

#### 5.2 Background to the commencement of the courses

Nearly 20,000 graduates were produced by the Universities in Sri Lanka during 1959—1968<sup>1</sup> about three-fourths were graduates in Arts. By 1968 the unemployed graduates ranged around 6,000 to 7,000; some estimated them higher.<sup>2</sup> This huge problem of graduate unemployment, ascribed to unplanned expansion of university education, especially in Arts, caused concern.

1. A. D. V. de S. Indraratne, *Population Growth and Education Development (Papers, 1975)*.

2. *Ibid.*

There was, therefore, an interest in making education meaningful for Sri Lanka's developmental needs. University education was to be refashioned so that graduates could be profitably employed. The Five Year Plan (1972-76) envisaged changes for diversifying courses of instruction emphasising applied studies in Arts and Science. Furthermore, the stress was not to be on providing formal Arts courses, but on combining disciplines relevant to supply the needs of a developing country<sup>1</sup>. In a directive of 14 June 1973 from the Education Minister to the Vice Chancellor of the University, "The Cabinet of Ministers accepted that university education should be organised in a manner that would enable the Arts students in particular to obtain jobs more easily in the future and to participate in the national development effort".

Several employment-oriented courses of study were commenced to meet this challenge. The "rationalisation scheme" launched according to the aims of the University of Ceylon Act of 1972<sup>2</sup> provided facilities for introducing the above type of courses, and changing university curricula. Additionally, some employment-oriented courses were organised, responding to requests from Ministries. Courses in Public Finance and Taxation, at the Colombo Campus, and in Estate Management and Valuation, at the Colombo and Vidyodaya Campuses, were introduced following a requirement from the Finance Minister, who desired to have trained personnel mainly for the Departments of Inland Revenue and Valuation<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, Courses in Library Science and in Education were commenced at Vidyalankara and Colombo Campuses following requests from the Education Ministry.

With the refashioning of the university curricula, about six "job-oriented" courses of study were initiated at the Colombo, Vidyalankara and Vidyodaya Campuses. The Colombo Campus conducted courses leading to degree in Public Finance and Taxation, Education, and Estate Management and Valuation; Vidyalankara Campus had courses in Mass Communication and

1. *The Five Year Plan, 1972—1976* (Ministry of Planning and Employment, 1971) pp. 109—111.

2. For a critical discussion of this Act see Kingsley de Silva, "The Universities and the Government in Sri Lanka", *Minerva* Vol. XVI, No. 2 (London, Summer 1978), pp. 265—271.

3. Extract of minutes, first meeting to report on the establishment of courses in Estate Management and Valuation, 14 March 1972; also copy of annexed extract from the Budget Speech.

in Library Science, while Vidyodaya Campus, too, began a course in Estate Management and Valuation. Furthermore, at Colombo and Vidyodaya Campuses the Development Studies Course was taught.

### 5.3 The Courses : An outline

(1) *The Degree Course in Public Finance and Taxation* ran through four years.<sup>1</sup> Initially, students read Mathematics, English, Elements of Science and Technology, Economics, and Commerce and Management. In the next three years the focus was on Public Finance and Taxation; and on subjects like Economics, Accounting, Statistical Methods and the Law of Property and Persons.

More significant were the practical components. The study of Accounting included practical work in an accounting establishment and teaching was done by practising accountants. In their third year students undertook practical work; preparation of case studies and auditing in professional establishments. A period of internship was wedged in between the conclusion of the Final Examination and the release of results.

The objective of this course was to provide trained personnel for the Inland Revenue Department. The graduates were to be employed on work related to the imposition of taxes. Also, the Customs Department, the Treasury and the Central and commercial Banks were expected to use these graduates. The Course was so designed to supply employees for whom a demand was anticipated following changes in fiscal policy announced by the Finance Minister.<sup>2</sup>

(2) *The Bachelor of Education* was another special degree course of four years. Students chose academic subjects like Geography, History and Economics which were taught within the Faculty of Arts.<sup>3</sup> Professional subjects, also a part of the course,

1. Minutes of 2nd meeting, Committee to report on the establishment of a course in Public Finance and Taxation, 28 April 1972; also draft syllabus by sub-committee appointed at the meeting, 11 April 1972.
2. Notes of discussion on Exploring the Possibility of Job Opportunities for Estate Management and Valuation and Public Finance and Taxation Students, Colombo Campus, 2 December 1975.
3. University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus, Faculty of Education — Hand Book; also Notice to students, Bachelor of Education Degree—First Year, 1975, Dean, Faculty of Education. This course in Education underwent changes from its initial form.



were taught by the Faculty of Education : Comparative Education, Educational Psychology and Principles and Problems of Education. In Methodology, the students gained practical experience as teachers during their final year. They were attached to schools under the supervision of tutors from the Faculty of Education.

The major objective in conducting the course in Education was to supply teachers, and the course was commenced at the request of the Education Ministry. Changes in curricula had been introduced in schools; and trained staff were expected to teach in accordance with the changed curricula.<sup>1</sup>

(3) *The four-year Estate Management and Valuation Course* was formulated with a first year programme of studies similar to that of the Public Finance and Taxation Course. This foundation year syllabus contained hardly any professional elements, apart from one technical subject: Building Construction and Building Materials. Thereafter, the scope of studies became more technical. Students learned advanced Building Construction, Elementary Quantity Surveying, Maintenance and Management of Buildings; and course work formed a part of their training.<sup>2</sup> Some of the subjects read by students for the Degree in Estate Management and Valuation and Public Finance and Taxation were common.<sup>3</sup> This course also dealt with the new legislation governing lands and real estate.

The Estate Management Course focused on Management and Valuation while the Public Finance Course centred on Public Finance and Taxation. The Estate Management Course, like other employment-oriented courses, provided for practical training. There was a term of internship sandwiched between the third and fourth years. A project report was expected from students on their work experience.<sup>4</sup>

1. Letter from Convenor, sub-committee of the Academic Committee, Faculty of Arts, Colombo Campus — 2 April 1976; also Minutes of sub-committee to report on extent to which B.Ed. Courses cover school syllabi from Grades 6 to 11, 19 April 1976.

2. Minutes of 2nd meeting, Board of Studies, Estate Management and Valuation, 7 September 1972; also Minutes of 3rd meeting, Board of Studies, Estate Management and Valuation, 14 December 1972.

3. Minutes of 3rd joint meeting, Board of Studies, Estate Management and Valuation and Public Finance and Taxation, 8 June 1973.

4. Minutes of 2nd meeting, Committee to report on establishment of Courses in Estate Management and Valuation, 22 March 1972.

The objective underlying the course on Estate Management was to provide personnel for the Valuation, Survey, Town and Country Planning, and National Housing Departments; the Rent Board, Local Government Institutions, the Land Reform Commission, and the Ministries of Building and Construction, Plantation Industries, Agriculture and Lands and Irrigation, Power and Highways, the State Plantations Corporation, the Mahaweli Development Board, and for other financial institutions and the private sector.<sup>1</sup>

(4) *The four-year Bachelor of Development Studies Degree Course*, commenced in 1973, at the Vidyodaya and Colombo Campuses, was designed to cater to the manpower needs of a developing country.<sup>2</sup> The course of studies comprised three components—(a) theoretical, (b) technical and practical, and (c) preparation of an individual project report.<sup>3</sup>

In the first year, at the Colombo Campus, there was a Foundation Course of six subjects — Geography, Economics, History, Sociology, Mathematics, General Science, and Culture and Development. During the second year, students followed four core courses in Economic Theory, Geography, Socio-Economic Development and Statistical Analysis. In addition, students selected two courses from among the subjects in different job-ranges such as Development Planning and Administration; Banking, Insurance and Finance and Trade and Commerce.

The compulsory subjects in the job range, Development Planning and Administration, were Economic Planning and Resource Studies, while in Banking, Insurance and Finance the compulsory subject was Monetary Economics, and optional subjects were Commerce, History and the Law of Commercial Banking and Accountancy.

1. Letter from Dean, Faculty of Arts (former Social Sciences) to President, Colombo Campus, 16 October 1974. Also Notes of Conference on Employment for students following the Course in Estate Management and Valuation, 15 January 1975.
2. Draft 2, Working Paper on Development Studies by Chairman, Board of Study, 4 May 1973.
3. *Development Studies Special Degree— Courses of Study and Syllabuses*, University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus, Faculty of Arts, Colombo 1977; also for an analysis see *Non-Formal Education*, Proceedings of the WUS Asian Regional Workshop, University of Sri Lanka, Colombo, April 19—24, 1976 (Moratuwa), pp. 210—260.



Students offered three core courses in their third year—Development Economics, Socio-Economic Development, and Communication and Development. Three other subjects were selected from those related to the job-range which the student had chosen in his earlier year. Students who selected the range, Trade and Commerce, offered in their third year as compulsory subjects, Internal Trade, Distributional and Organisational Network; and also chose two optional subjects from among Central and Commercial Banking, Accounting, Principles of Management, and Growth of Sri Lanka's Trade Connections and Commercial Relations.

In the fourth (final) year students read four subjects pertaining to their job-ranges. Some subjects had to be compulsorily studied by a whole group that had chosen a particular job-range; and the number of compulsory subjects for a group varied from job-range to job-range. Accordingly, the number of optional subjects also varied. Those who had selected the range, Population and Manpower Planning, in the fourth year offered compulsorily the subject, Labour Force and Manpower Projection and two optional subjects from among six - Spatial Analysis and Spatial Planning, Social Psychology, Mathematical Economics, Cartography and Field Techniques, Rural Settlement and Rural Sociology, and Computer Applications in Population Studies.

Furthermore, a student following the Development Studies Course worked on an individual project relevant to his job-range, and prepared a Report guided by a member of the academic staff. The project work was meant to get the student to apply his theoretical ("technical") and practical knowledge and experience to the study of a problem during his final year. The Development Studies Course also provided for six weeks' "work experience". The work experience programme was meant for furnishing an insight into practical aspects of development and an "on-the-job training".

The core courses, offered by all students in their first, second and third years, were expected to stimulate an interest in and provide a knowledge of development along with an academic base in relevant disciplines, thus supplying the background for engaging in development-oriented activities. The compulsory



courses for all students, including training in the job ranges, were meant to impart the theoretical and practical knowledge pertaining to particular job-ranges, and additionally some specialisation in respective job-ranges. The optional courses enhanced the specialisation appropriate for a job-range.

The broad aim of the Development Studies Course was to provide graduates for employment in development-oriented schemes initiated by Ministries, government departments and corporations, and the private sector.<sup>1</sup> The Development Studies Course of the Vidyodaya Campus was specifically meant to make university education more meaningful for the country's developmental needs. This course, however, was somewhat different from that at the Colombo Campus. Instead of 'job-ranges' there were 'areas of specialisation'. But, basically, both in content and intent, the two courses on Development Studies at the two Campuses varied little.<sup>2</sup>

The other two employment-oriented courses conducted at the Vidyalkara Campus may be dealt with summarily.

(5) *The Degree Course in Mass Communication* had been planned before 1972, when the restructuring of university courses and syllabi was commenced owing to the Government's intention to make traditional-type Arts degree courses more meaningful following the pursuit of a new policy in tertiary education aimed at rendering courses of study relevant to meet the needs of a developing country; and thereby also make university Arts graduates employable.<sup>3</sup> The Course in Mass Communication focused attention on the mass media and their role, especially in developmental activities.

Journalism, broadcasting, and dissemination of information received attention in teaching. This Course was for providing university trained personnel in an area wherein the university had formerly shown little concern. Those who specialised in mass

1. Statement of Registrar, University of Ceylon, 24 October 1972; for a subsequently modified view see Minutes, third meeting, Committee to Report on the organisation of new Arts Courses (Development Studies) 2 August 1973.
2. Draft 2 of the Working Paper, op. cit. also Minutes, Board of Development Studies, 22 December 1975 for details.
3. *The Five Year Plan, 1972—1976* (Ministry of Planning and Employment, 1971), pp. 109—111.

communication were to work in the Information Department, the Broadcasting Corporation, in newspaper offices, and as Information and Publicity Officers in the public sector. Graduates in Mass Communication were to be effective agents in propagating information on Family Health, Population Planning, Rural Development, Industrial and Agricultural activity and on other Development, Industrial and Agricultural activity and on other development-oriented ventures.

(6) *The Library Science Degree Course* too was initiated owing to a request from the Education Ministry. Library Science hitherto had hardly been taught at the university. This course dealt with librarianship, specialised and technical aspects of library management, organising, building up and running of libraries.

A National Library Services Board had been set up while the Ministry of Education also planned for the development of libraries in schools. The main motive for running a course in Library Science was to provide trained library staff for school libraries. Local Government bodies like Urban Councils, Town Councils and Research Institutions too had libraries. Graduates in Library Science could be employed in all these libraries, and, indeed, there was a shortage of trained librarians.

#### **5.4 Differences between the job-oriented courses and the traditional academic courses**

Some characteristics of the employment-oriented courses indicate certain differences between these and the purely academic-type courses. First, in designing the job-oriented courses the university had obtained assistance and expertise from professional elements from outside. The working paper on Development Studies was approved by a committee of academics and representatives from the Ministries of Education, Finance, Planning and Employment.<sup>1</sup> Again, in formulating the practical work programme assistance from outside was sought.<sup>2</sup>

1. Statement by Registrar, University of Ceylon, 24 October 1972.

2. *Non-Formal Education* *op.cit.* pp. 132-243.

Similarly, when the courses on Public Finance and Taxation and Estate Management and Valuation were formulated and conducted, the assistance of experts from the Ministry of Finance, the Department of Inland Revenue and Valuation and the Treasury was obtained.<sup>1</sup> Consultations were also made with prospective employers while organising employment-oriented courses.

Second, these new courses catered to the requirements of either a specific profession or a range of jobs as illustrated by their structure and syllabi. The Library Science Course was meant for providing graduates to meet the need for librarians. Courses in Education were for supplying staff for handling the new curricula in schools. The course in Public Finance and Taxation aimed at supplying personnel for the Inland Revenue Department and other revenue establishments, while the Estate Management and Valuation Course was geared to provide valuers for the Valuation Department and Local government bodies. The Mass Communication Course was organised for supplying personnel for specific jobs in the mass media sector. The Development Studies Course endeavoured to furnish trained staff for deployment on development-oriented assignments.

Third, these courses furnished theoretical knowledge related to particular areas of employment-oriented specialisation, be they Public Finance and Taxation or Estate Management and Valuation. Some courses also gave opportunities for even narrower specialisation. The Development Studies Course permitted specialising in one of several job-ranges.

Fourth, practical training was a component of all these courses, the type of training being relevant to the type of course. Moreover, training was under specialist supervision and at places appropriate for the courses. Students in Public Finance and Taxation pursued a training programme formulated along with and conducted by staff from the Treasury and Inland Revenue Departments. Training for students in Estate Management and

1. Minutes of 2nd meeting, Committee to report on the establishment of a course in Public Finance and Taxation, 20 April 1972; also draft syllabus presented by the sub-committee appointed at the meeting of 11 April 1972; Minutes of 3rd Meeting, Board of Studies, Estate Management and Valuation, 14 December 1972; Letter from Registrar, University of Ceylon to Dean, Social Sciences, Colombo Campus, with copy to President, Colombo Campus, 13 July 1972.



Valuation was largely at the Valuation Department's Training School. Students reading for the Degree in Education underwent "school practice training" supervised by staff from the Faculty of Education; those who followed the Development Studies Course gained "work experience" in institutions which bore a relationship to the job-range in which they were specialising.

Fifth, these courses and the teaching centred on narrow particular specialisation. The elements of a broader system of education, characteristic of purely academic courses of study, were not components of these employment-oriented courses.

Sixth, there was liberal use of the expertise outside Faculties. Qualified and experienced personnel handled the specialised disciplines of these employment oriented courses. The knowledge and training of experts, outside the university, were harnessed both in organising and running the courses.

### 5.5 Problems in running the courses

Problems arose *ab initio* because these courses were hastily introduced. Suitable teachers for lecturing in new subjects could not be easily found; there were hardly any in the Faculties to teach subjects like Building Construction and Building Materials for the Estate Management Course; or Taxation, and Valuation for the course on Public Finance; or some subjects in the job-ranges, such as Industries, in the Development Studies Course. Inevitably, the Campuses relied heavily on visiting lecturers. This was unsatisfactory. Visiting lecturers were too busy and could not devote sufficient commitment to teaching.

These subjects may have been taught by university staff provided there was time for training or retraining which might have made them competent for conducting new courses. Unfortunately, there were neither time, facilities nor funds for training or retraining staff.

For successful implementation of the new courses a reorientation in thinking and attitudes within the Faculties of Arts was needed. For some staff members, the courses offered a challenge and a fresh academic experience, for others an excuse for opting out of the main stream of academic activity. Those who positively

responded endeavoured to adapt their specialisations and interests to meet new demands, and ventured into fresh fields for conducting the courses. Others, with a negative approach, were apathetic and bemoaned the innovations. A few sceptics considered that experimentation implied failure; a few simply ignored the innovations.

Some of these courses were interdisciplinary, or multidisciplinary; the Development Studies Course comprised different disciplines. The Faculty of Science taught Mathematics or General Science. The courses in Public Finance and Estate Management too were taught by several departments of study from different Faculties; even the staff in Engineering and Technology at the Katubedde Campus were utilised. Likewise, the Education Degree was run by two Faculties—the Arts and Education. Consequently, there arose difficulties because the courses were still conducted within a framework of semi-autonomous Departments of study in almost autonomous Faculties. Semi-autonomous Departments, handling different disciplines, were a heritage and tradition. Therefore, the conservative members of the academic staff reluctantly handled interdisciplinary programmes of studies. To conservative academics, autonomy and compartmentalisation of the Departments of study were inviolable “sacred cows”.

Furthermore, there was insufficient coordination of the contributions from specialists in different fields; these specialists belonged to different Departments of study or Faculties or Campuses; and collaboration was inadequate or reluctant. The necessary readjustment in thinking and attitudes among the staff never readily took place. Moreover, as these courses had been commenced without consulting the Faculties and Senate of the Campuses, the Departments of Studies, the Faculties and the Campuses were insufficiently cooperative. They tended to be unconcerned with the innovations in the curricula or syllabi.

Actually, the Vice-Chancellor had imposed these courses from above.<sup>1</sup> Boards of Studies were usually instituted by the Vice-Chancellor for formulating, organising and managing these

1. Letter from Registrar, University of Ceylon to President, Colombo Campus, 12 May 1972; also letter from Vice-Chancellor to President, Colombo Campus, 19 June 1972.



courses, and Faculties were ignored.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, more responsibility and work devolved upon the Deans of the Faculties, who alone had to requisition the necessary coordination. But neither efficient nor substantial coordination could be ensured through the issue of directives; the response to directives was lukewarm.

Problems also arose when practical work programmes had to be arranged. The initial intake, especially into the courses on Development Studies, Estate Management, Public Finance, and Education, was heavy. For the courses in Estate Management, Public Finance and Development Studies 189, 108 and 450 (250 to Vidyodaya and 200 to Colombo Campus) students were enrolled.<sup>2</sup> Such numbers could not be accommodated at work places for practical training. There were also financial constraints since students were paid when gaining work experience. The Education Faculty, likewise, encountered difficulties when it endeavoured to find placements at schools for students, following the Education Course as there was inadequate financial provision.

Initially, students took to the new courses eagerly. An expectation of jobs had been aroused. Nonetheless, soon there was anxiety since students hoped for jobs immediately on completing the job-oriented courses. The reasons for commencing the courses had indicated that jobs will be available for those who received the correct type of academic training.<sup>3</sup> But quickly the students learned from experience that their confidence was misplaced.

The University Campuses had recognised the difficulty of finding jobs for a large output of graduates with employment-oriented Degrees. In 1973 (the year after the course was commenced) it was realised that the number admitted to the Public Finance Course should be reduced to 29 from 108<sup>4</sup>. The Chief Valuer recommended that the intake to the course in Estate

1. Minutes of 7th Meeting, Board of Study, Applied Social Sciences, 9 July 1973, Minute No. 47
2. Notes of discussions on Exploring the Possibility of Job Opportunities, 2 December 1975; also Minutes of 7th Meeting, Board of Study, Applied Social Sciences, 9 July 1973; Minutes No. 47; Statement by Registrar, University of Ceylon, 24 October 1972.
3. *The Five Year Plan*, 1972, op.cit.
4. List of New Admissions for Degree Courses in Public Finance and Taxation, University of Ceylon, 26 May 1973.



Management be limited to 30;<sup>1</sup> earlier, the number admitted was 215.<sup>2</sup> In Development Studies, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs suggested that the number of options for specialisation needed restriction<sup>3</sup>. The numbers selected for the course in Education too were gradually decreased; the Education Department found it difficult to offer placements for students to gain teaching practice. To give them appointments, after graduation, was even more formidable because there were insufficient funds.

## 5.6 Objectives of the new courses - Failure to realise them

The main broad objective of these new courses was to produce graduates suitable for use in a developing country—university educated personnel who could be productively employed in meaningful roles in a developing economy and society<sup>4</sup>. The premise on which these employment-oriented courses was commenced was that the earlier graduates were unemployed because of the irrelevance of their education to a developing country's needs: "The unplanned expansion of educational facilities and the present problem of the educated unemployed raises a critical question.....the purpose of education.... it.....used to be said that education is an end in itself..... education raises the cultural and intellectual level of the population and.....enables the enjoyment of a fuller life.....this view.....is not entirely without relevance today.....the ultimate purpose of economic development itself is to enable people to lead a better, fuller and more satisfying life. If indeed that had been the ultimate outcome of the massive investment in education—('in 1970 it absorbed something close to 5 percent of the gross domestic product, a high share by any standards') there would be no cause for alarm. However, experience has been entirely different. The failure, .....the inability, of the

1. Letter from Chief Valuer, Valuation Department, to Dean, Social Sciences, Colombo Campus, 17 January 1973; also annexure, letter from Chief Valuer, 5 January 1973.
2. Minutes of 5th Meeting, Board of Study in Estate Management and Valuation, 9 May 1974.
3. Minutes of Meeting, 10 May 1974, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, statement of Secretary to the Ministry.
4. Draft 2 of Working Paper on Development Studies, Chairman, Board of Study, 4 May 1973.

economic system to provide a meaningful and productive role for the output of the educational system has resulted in fear, frustration and despair rather than a net increase in social satisfaction"<sup>1</sup>.

The reference was to the failure of the economic system to provide meaningful, productive employment to the educated youth. Actually, thousands of educated youth (graduates formed a small proportion) had no employment whatever, meaningful or productive. The cause for this sad situation, however, was ascribed to the educational rather than the economic system: "The training, the skills, the attitudes and aspirations that are the product of the educational system must be related to the socio-economic environment."<sup>2</sup>

The remedy for this malady was clear: "The content of education, the curricula, syllabuses and the members undergoing training in the different fields of knowledge must conform in broad outline to the country's occupational profile."<sup>3</sup> For this, "In the Universities.....changes would need to be made to diversify courses of instruction and to emphasise applied studies in the Arts and Sciences....."<sup>4</sup> It was "also clear that emphasis should shift from pure Arts courses to combinations that are more directly related to the needs of a developing country."<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, the new courses were introduced. But no worthwhile results accrued; and the problem remained. Early in 1974 itself, the Planning and Economic Affairs Ministry announced that there was no guarantee of jobs for those reading for the Development Studies Degree.<sup>6</sup> The Head of the Ministry admitted that it was difficult to find money for employing graduates; graduates in Development Studies were to apply for jobs whenever vacancies occurred.<sup>7</sup> This was poor consolation; hopes and

1. See *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations—A Programme of Action for Ceylon* (Technical Papers), ILO, 1971 and *The Five Year Plan, 1972—1976*.

2. *The Five Year Plan 1972—1976* op. cit.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. Minutes of Meeting, 10 May 1974, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs — Statement of Secretary to the Ministry.

7. *Ibid.*

optimism engendered by earlier statements were frustrated. The rationale which led to a restructuring of tertiary education became questionable.

Apparently, the diagnosis for graduate employment had been wrong. Unemployment had not been due to deficiencies in the educational system, but owing to a want of finances for employing any type of graduates.

Furthermore, the Development Studies Course really did not provide 'Development Education'. But the course could have been improved. However, no time was given; instead, the course was abandoned. Moreover, since large numbers were admitted to the course, regardless of inclination or aptitude or facilities in the Campuses, it was difficult to motivate students or change attitudes to enable them to feel that they could contribute towards development.

Worse, since there were no forecasts indicating manpower needs, 'job-orientation' was no valid basis for planning development education for employment. It might have been more prudent to have provided development motivating basic mental disciplines, while specific job-oriented training could have been more profitably imparted through specialist post-graduate courses, especially for employed personnel.

More difficult to surmount, however, was the reluctance and diffidence within the community to accept new courses of studies. Conservatism among employers rendered the new courses valueless and unattractive; employers preferred time-tested traditional degree courses. Employment schemes and attitudes of employers needed change for creating a favourable climate for educational innovation. Only 'propaganda' and governmental goodwill, since the state is the single largest employer, could have helped. The course did not last long to carry out 'propaganda' about it; only a little lobbying was done. Nor did the state remain enthusiastic about the programme of Development Studies, while the new government in 1977 showed no interest in it. Ultimately, the students suffered; they were victims of an experiment that yielded no benefits. Apparently, the experiment was a hasty panic reaction to the insurrection of 1971; therefore, the experiment was neither well-planned nor dispassionately conceived.



Those who took the courses in Public Finance and in Estate Management fared no better. Students grew restive about employment prospects.<sup>1</sup> From January 1975 conferences were convened to discuss finding employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Representatives from Ministries, and the Local Government Services Department met on 15 January 1975 along with university authorities. The Budget proposal, which led to the creation of the two courses in Estate Management and Public Finance was iterated, and the State's responsibility to ensure employment was emphasised. Yet, no assurance of employment was given; the degree in Estate Management was to be regarded equal to any other degree when choosing employees for the State's services. Eventually, this conference concluded that the problem of finding employment for graduates and solutions to it needed to be presented to the Government.<sup>3</sup>

Under pressure from students, apprehensive about their future, the Colombo Campus was saddled with the task of urging the Government to find employment for graduates in these new courses. Initially, the need for a course in Estate Management had been indicated by the Finance Minister.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, the Treasury and the Valuation Department added that courses in Estate Management and in Public Finance needed to be commenced with a large intake of students, although the representatives of the university had been sceptical.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the Courses were commenced since the Government was keen. The Minister of Finance had announced that he had planned to change the institutional framework of Valuation.<sup>6</sup> The Valuer's role in a developing economy had not been appreciated; the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee had repeatedly drawn Parliament's attention to this. In a developing

1. Minutes, 8th Meeting, Boards of Study in Estate Management and Valuation and Public Finance and Taxation, 11 September 1974.
2. Letter from Dean, Faculty of Arts (formerly Social Sciences) to President, Colombo Campus, 16 October 1974.
3. Notes of Conference on employment opportunities for students following the Degree in Estate Management and Valuation, 15 January 1975.
4. Ibid.
5. Extract of Minutes, first meeting to report on the establishment of courses in Estate Management and Valuation, 14 March 1972.
6. Copy of extract from the Budget Speech annexed to extract from Minutes of first meeting to report on the establishment of the courses, 14 March 1972.

country like Sri Lanka, town planning and proper land utilisation were important. The Valuer has a key role to play, especially an important role in revenue enforcement. The Finance Minister referred to the imposition of estate duties, gifts' taxes and other levies. A committee inquiring into the Valuation Department's functions too had recommended that a course in Estate Management and Valuation in the universities was needed.

Nevertheless, now the university was burdened with the responsibility of obtaining placements for graduates, even though the university had commenced the new courses answering state imperatives. Establishments concerned with Estate Management and Valuation or Public Finance and Taxation, were solicited for jobs.<sup>1</sup> The Chief Valuer's response and that of the Bank of Ceylon were encouraging.<sup>2</sup> They were interested in the graduates in Estate Management and Valuation, but little concern was evinced in those who read Public Finance and Taxation;<sup>3</sup> their lot was bleak.

Finally, another meeting of prospective employers was summoned. But it was disheartening that, while the university was labouring to find employment for those who followed the new courses begun on the government's initiative, only 4 out of 21 State institutions sent representatives for discussions.<sup>4</sup>

Discussions yielded no tangible results. Therefore, towards the end of 1975, the university authorities were again engaged in the unrewarding endeavour of scouting for employment opportunities for those who had followed these new courses. The Colombo Campus repeated that these courses had been introduced at the behest of the Finance Minister; and those selected had been increased because of the Ministry's assurance that more personnel trained in these courses would be needed;<sup>5</sup> but these efforts were of no avail.

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1. Letter to President, Colombo Campus, from Dean, Faculty of Arts, 21 November 1975.
  2. Notes of discussion on exploring the possibility of job opportunities for Estate Management and Valuation and Public Finance and Taxation students, Colombo Campus, 2 December 1975.
  3. *Ibid.*
  4. Letter from Dean, Faculty of Arts, to Director, Supply and Cadre, General Treasury, 21 November 1975.
  5. Notes of discussion on exploring the possibility of job opportunities, 2 December 1975.

Meanwhile, the students became victims of changes in State policies and practices. The Public Finance Course had been devised for meeting the Inland Revenue Department's requirements. But, owing to changes in land reform and taxation, prospects of additional recruitment to that Department had decreased. Moreover, both in the Inland Revenue Department and the Bank of Ceylon, the employees were against recruitment of graduates as this would reduce their chances of promotion to higher grades.

The consensus of opinion that emerged, at discussions, was that graduates in both these courses were employable in various departments and corporations. Nevertheless, prevailing schemes of recruitment did not permit their employment. The university was advised to get these schemes of recruitment changed<sup>1</sup>. The university sought to achieve this,<sup>2</sup> but rather unsuccessfully.

Eventually, the graduates in these two new courses, presented their problem to the Deputy Minister of Finance. They had grown impatient with abortive endeavours by the university authorities to help them to get placements. State departments and other establishments also had done little to assist them. The university, therefore, apprised the Deputy Minister of Finance of the difficulties confronted by the students; and they were received at the Ministry on 24 February 1978.<sup>3</sup>

Later, however, the graduates in Estate Management and Valuation were fairly successful in finding employment. But as the first batch was large, it was difficult to secure jobs for so many so quickly. In the Valuation Department, local government bodies, and establishments dealing with lands and estates, employment was gradually given.

The course in Estate Management, conducted from 1973 only at the Vidyodaya Campus (now the University of Sri Jayawardenepura), was continued. Basically, the course was similar

1. Notes of discussion on exploring possibility of finding job opportunities for Estate Management and Valuation, and Public Finance and Taxation graduates, 30 December 1975.

2. Letter from President, Colombo Campus (copy of draft).

3. Letter to Minister of Finance from Colombo Campus, 24 February 1978.



to the one started at Colombo. Yet, modifications made it somewhat different; the original narrow job-orientation of the course was jettisoned.<sup>1</sup>

The Public Finance graduates, however, faced greater difficulty in finding employment; and later this course was abandoned. A few obtained satisfactory jobs; many chose occupations inappropriate to their training, and were disillusioned; others accepted employment not meant for graduates, and were disappointed; a few remained unemployed. They were in a poorer plight than those who had read Estate Management. But the reduction of the intake into the course in Estate Management indicated that they too were not going to have it good for long, and soon securing jobs for them also became formidable.

Those students, admitted to the Education Degree Course, commenced at the instance of the Ministry of Education, were in an equally bad position. The Education Department had to find placements for these students during their terminal year to enable them to acquire teaching practice;<sup>2</sup> and they also needed to be employed after graduation. The Education Ministry found this a hard task as the financial situation was not buoyant.

Furthermore, teachers were also recruited from teacher training schools, from lesser qualified groups, and from other university graduates. The Bachelor of Education graduates did not receive any remarkable preferential treatment. No wonder, therefore, that, in December 1978, the Dean, Faculty of Arts, Colombo Campus, observed that no students were admitted to the Education Degree Programme.<sup>3</sup> This was not the first time that a Bachelor of Education Course had come to such an end. In 1962, at the University of Ceylon, a combined course of academic and professional studies leading to a degree in Bachelor

1. "1976-1977 — Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Lanka, Vidyodaya Campus — courses and curriculum;" also "Instructions to Applicants for Admission to the Undergraduate Courses in the Universities . . . . 1980". Arts, Law, Commerce and Management Studies." (University Grants Commission, Colombo) pp. 22-24.

2. University of Sri Lanka, Colombo Campus, Faculty of Education Hand Book.

3. Draft of a Memorandum for the Cabinet of Ministers on Employment Opportunities for Graduates with Job-oriented Degrees and the Recognition of such Degrees, Faculty of Arts, Colombo Campus, 21 December 1978.

of Education was inaugurated, but it lasted only till 1965.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of a new government in 1970, a similar course had been again inaugurated, but that too was now collapsing.

Briefly, all graduates in employment-oriented courses suffered when they sought employment. Graduates in Mass Communication or in Library Science were as badly off as the graduates in Development Studies, Public Finance or Estate Management.

### 5.7 Jobs for graduates in "Job-oriented" courses

Representatives from Colombo, Vidyodaya and Vidyalandara Campuses (presently the Universities of Colombo, Sri Jayawardanapura and Kelaniya) formulated a memorandum for the Cabinet of the present government requesting that jobs be given to these graduates turned out after so much effort, time and expenditure.<sup>2</sup> (Also see Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3).

These graduates were trained in narrow specialised fields. Hence, it was unreasonable to expect them to vie for jobs through 'open competition.' Moreover, in advertising vacancies these new degrees were often overlooked, thus precluding these graduates from applying or competing for jobs, with those holding traditional academic degrees. Therefore, the preference paid to academic degrees should be abandoned. With regard to the Education degree, it was stressed that in-service training was essential before students could qualify; hence, these students ought to be absorbed into the teaching profession.

A general proposition was made that a clear policy on employment-oriented degrees and employment was essential. The university had invested ample resources in organising and conducting courses. The training provided through employment-oriented courses, expected and enabled graduates to contribute towards national development. More saliently, students were admitted to these courses following the 'rationalisation' of courses effected according to the previous government's policy: "The Cabinet of Ministers accepted that university education should be organised

1. Jayasuriya, J.E., *Education in the Third World — Some Reflections*, Indian Institute of Education, Pune, Somaiya Publications, 1981.
2. Draft Cabinet Memorandum "Employment opportunities for graduates with an Employment-oriented Training". (1978).



in a manner that would enable the Arts students in particular to obtain jobs more easily in the future and to participate in the national development efforts".<sup>1</sup> This view, on a directive to the Education Minister on 14 June 1973, had been enforced on university education.

Therefore, it was the government's responsibility to acquaint state establishments of the functional relevance of these courses of studies to the work of those establishments. The recruitment procedure also had to be amended for enabling graduates with employment-oriented training to receive preferential consideration over other graduates wherever jobs bore a relevance to the training and specialisation gained by employment-oriented graduates. Second, for other jobs, these graduates were to be permitted to compete equally with those holding purely academic degrees.

Two other 'long-term' measures were suggested: the formation of a Careers' Advisory Committee comprising University and Government representatives; and a "manpower needs survey" for effecting a meaningful rationalisation of the admission of students to employment-oriented courses. With a new government, and new persons in authority at the university, nothing was done. Instead, again fresh suggestions were presented anew to the Cabinet.

These proposals of December 1978 differed little from the earlier ones.<sup>2</sup> It was reaffirmed that employment-oriented courses were commenced on the Education Ministry's initiative. The course structures had been built in consultation with that Ministry and the Ministry of Planning and Plan Implementation. There had been an understanding that the Education degree graduates and other job-oriented degree holders will be employed. The employment-oriented degree courses comprised a part of the former government's tertiary educational changes because it was anticipated that the services of these graduates would be needed for the State's development projects. Furthermore, the students had been given no option except to follow these courses into which they were compulsorily streamed.

1. Ibid.

2. Draft Memorandum to the Cabinet of Ministers on: Employment opportunities for graduates with Job-oriented Degrees and Recognition of Degrees, by Dean/Arts, Colombo Campus, 21.12.78; also letter to President, Colombo Campus, from Dean/Arts, Colombo Campus, 22 December 1978.



By 1978 only some who graduated in Education had been employed. A few others had, with difficulty, found jobs in the Inland Revenue, Valuation, and Census and Statistics Departments where some employment-oriented degrees had been accorded reluctant recognition. A larger number, however, faced a major problem; their job-oriented degrees were not even recognised. Many employers doubted the value of these qualifications; advertisements for jobs did not stipulate them as acceptable. Hence, employment-oriented degree holders, especially those with Development Studies degrees, were unable to apply for jobs, while those who applied were apparently not selected because their degrees were deemed to be unacceptable.

The Government was, therefore, requested to advise employers to recognise these degrees as qualifications equal to other degrees, and to give the graduates a fair chance in competing for jobs. Then these employment-oriented degree graduates could receive an opportunity for serving the nation. These courses had given a thorough training not merely in the social sciences, but in applied social sciences. Instruction was imparted by university teachers and visiting staff from government institutions. Consequently, a group of valuable graduates had been produced; and they deserved employment.

In spite of these endeavours those who graduated in the new courses of studies, started in the Seventies, suffered. They could not easily secure employment; they became disillusioned and frustrated. Inevitably, some courses died a natural death; the students and the staff saw no purpose in running them. The few courses that were continued were modified and did not resemble in content or structure the original courses. As the courses did not endure it is simple to assume that they failed. But as these courses were not given fair or sufficient trial, it may as well be a premature conclusion.

## 5.8 General comments

One deduction is, however, inevitable. Changes of governments, even of Ministers and Cabinets within a Government, and Cabinets and Governments, had hit the employment-oriented

courses of studies and the graduates hard. The university thereby learned a clear but bitter lesson. Hasty improvisation and imposition of courses of studies following dictates from above, sometimes to meet *ad hoc* needs, cause to the university problems and difficulties. Ultimately, only students and the university suffer. If courses of study are commenced in response to directives from above, courses also could change with changes in the complexion of governments. This indeed happened to the job-oriented courses.

From the beginning, however, there were signs that the courses might not work well. Faculties and Senates of the Campuses had not been consulted when the courses were commenced. Consequently, neither the Faculties nor the Senates adopted constructive or positive attitudes. On the contrary, the attitudes of the academic staff in the Faculties and the Senates were uncooperative and negative.

The students too were not wholly committed towards following the new courses. Many of them had been involuntarily streamed into these courses; and if they showed any interest it was because of the expectation of jobs that was aroused. When it became evident that hopes of getting employment were dim, student disillusionment and disenchantment depressed their interest. Their preoccupation, thereafter, was only with ways and means of securing employment.

Job-orientation, however, was not a solid basis on which courses should have been founded. There were no funds for ensuring a creation of jobs and for assuring employment. Worse still, there was no appraisal of the jobs that would be available for students following these courses. Without an awareness of specific national manpower needs it was imprudent to train students for particular types of jobs. It might have been wiser to have given to the courses of studies a broad and general developmental bias instead of creating specific employment-oriented specialist courses. Devoid of any proper survey of manpower requirements, and, later, with the lack of suitable jobs, these job-oriented courses had initially created hopes and ultimately frustration and bitterness.



Furthermore, inadequate preparation and insufficient funds prevented the Campuses from making these courses of studies work more successfully. In the courses on Estate Management and Public Finance the syllabi were prepared from year to year; there was no time to prepare a complete course ahead. Everything about these courses was conceived and executed in indecent hurry, and shortcomings were inevitable. A want of funds worsened the difficulties. Staff could not be trained, nor retrained; practical work programmes could not be satisfactorily conducted; even books and essential material could not be sufficiently supplied. Those who followed the course on Estate Management had to rely on the material and staff of the Katubedde Campus (University of Moratuwa) for practical classes.

Yet, that the Campuses conducted the courses despite these problems, redounds to the credit of the university. Eventually, however, when governmental goodwill became lukewarm and with a new government being elected in 1977, some of these new courses collapsed. Others survived, but with a new orientation and modification.

The baby, nevertheless, need not have been thrown out with the bathwater. The courses could have been continued after effecting changes to supersede shortcomings. There could have been a development-oriented applied social sciences course of study instead of an employment-oriented one. Broad themes and aspects of development could have been taught, and a viable course in Development Studies conducted. There are several universities elsewhere with commendable courses in Development Studies; and, likewise, reputed university courses in Estate Management, Public Finance, Mass Communication and Library Science are run. The Bachelor of Education course likewise is conducted in many leading universities.

Of course, given time, sufficient funds, and with a judiciously selected and manageable intake of students into these courses, they could have been developed and run successfully in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, no time was allowed to improve the courses or to conduct them in a better way after learning from early experience. The courses, hence, ended in a failure; but there is insufficient reason for concluding that these courses were intrinsically bad or



for decreeing that they only needed discontinuance. Now, however, some of the courses would have to be revived before they could be continued; and this is not easy after the earlier bitter experience of students and staff alike. In any case, job-orientation needs to be abandoned; development orientation could displace it.

## 5.9 General conclusion

If there is to be restructuring of higher education, the objectives of such a venture should be clear. Development oriented education, in a country like Sri Lanka, should be fashioned to ensure that the products of such education could contribute towards an assurance of equity and social justice, especially for the large lot of the poorer masses. Education must aim at changing the minds of the educated to a style of thinking relevant to a developing nation. Courses of study should turn out agents who could bring about social and economic changes, and thereby development. Such agents ought to be able to perceive the needs of society and must not, by their education, be temperamentally alienated from the people. Briefly, the type of education introduced must produce personnel more responsive to the challenges of development.

Pure academic education alone might not produce such personnel. Education, coloured by development orientation, could produce personnel who would collaborate with, rather than command, those whom they are meant to serve. The educated official should consult with those who would be affected by development to understand their needs, and should not impose any "office-designed process" meant for development. Officials, therefore, cannot be a class apart from the people, and development-oriented education should be able to guarantee this. The content of courses of studies must produce an attitudinal change in those educated; and they should be conditioned to integrate themselves in the development processes. It might, hence, be better to have in all courses of studies, not merely at the tertiary level, and not merely only in courses like Development Studies, Education, Estate Management, Public Finance, Library Science or Mass Communications, components that would transform the recipients of education into agents of development.

Indeed, all education must have some component of development orientation; and, to understand the needs of a developing country and supply these needs, education must be a continuing process as much as development is a continuing process. There cannot be devised even by a university a satisfactory system of education, which at the end of a defined period would produce an effective agent of development for all times. Perhaps a continuing system of development-oriented education with refresher courses, practical work, seminars and workshops might help, after an initial development-motivating education at school and university levels.

Details to illustrate some of the generalised statements about unemployment and employment of these graduates appear in the chapters that follow. In the light of such details generalisations may be better understood. On the whole, one can see that the main objective of the "job-oriented" courses was to find employment for these graduates more easily, although this objective could not have been realised entirely. Some of the reasons for the failure of this objective have been already examined in this chapter. This failure is related to the overall problem of employment of university graduates and the operation of the employment market for graduates. This is the subject of our discussion in the next chapter.

TABLE 5.1  
**NUMBERS ENROLLED IN "JOB-ORIENTED" COURSES IN UNIVERSITIES FOR THE PERIOD 1974-1980**

Campus	Course	Number passed out							
		1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	
Colombo ..	1. B.Sc. in Public Finance and Taxation ..	..	98	—	26	25	27	51	
	2. Bachelor of Education ..	..	—	—	253	252	157	152	
	3. B.Sc. in Estate Management and Valuation..	..	159	—	—	—	—	—	
Vidyalankara ..	1. B.A. in Mass Communication ..	..	53	—	46	13	—	1	
	2. Bachelor's Degree in Library Science ..	..	—	20	8	12	—	—	
Vidyodaya ..	B.Sc. in Estate Management and Valuation..	..	—	—	44	43	22	27	

Source : Draft Cabinet Memorandum prepared by Vidyodaya, Vidyalankara and Colombo Campuses, (1978).



TABLE 5.2  
**DISTRIBUTION OF NUMBERS ENROLLED IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF SPECIALISATION UNDER  
 BACHELOR OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES DEGREE COURSE OF TWO UNIVERSITIES (CAMPUSES)  
 OVER THE PERIOD 1977-1979**

Areas of specialisation	Vidyalaya				Colombo				
	1977	1978	1979	1977	1978	1979	1977	1978	1979
1. Agriculture and Fisheries	..	..	..	33	6	26	25	18	27
2. Industry and Industrial Relations	..	..	..	28	7	20	9	—	12
3. Transportation	..	..	..	—	26	9	14	14	15
4. Banking, Insurance and Finance	..	..	..	35	37	35	56	36	37
5. Development Planning and Administration	..	..	..	33	36	32	33	50	25
6. Population and Manpower Planning	..	..	..	31	13	27	11	10	19
7. Statistics	..	..	..	34	35	35	37	42	36
8. State and Foreign Services	..	..	..	12	13	15	19	27	24
9. Public and Industrial Relations	..	..	..	10	13	12	6	—	—
10. Cooperation	..	..	..	22	27	18	—	—	—
11. Mass Communication	..	..	..	—	4	—	—	—	—
12. Tourism and Recreation	..	..	..	13	9	—	7	8	—
13. Urban and Rural Community Development	..	..	..	14	3	—	6	—	—
14. Social Work and Social Administration	..	..	..	6	12	8	—	7	—
15. Trade and Commerce	..	..	..	—	—	—	7	30	19

Source : Draft Cabinet Memorandum prepared by Vidyalaya, Vidyalankara and Colombo Campuses, (1978).

TABLE 5.3

**THE COLOMBO CAMPUS : STUDENTS IN EMPLOYMENT-ORIENTED COURSES-1978**

<b>A, Sinhala Medium</b>		<i>Part I</i>	<i>Part II</i>	<i>Part III</i>
1.	Development Studies Special Degree .. ..	44	101	191
2.	Bachelor of Education Special Degree .. ..	137	125	145
3.	Public Finance and Taxation Special Degree .. ..	38	40	20
<b>B. Tamil Medium</b>		<i>Part I</i>	<i>Part II</i>	<i>Part III</i>
1.	Development Studies Special Degree .. ..	—	14	25
2.	Bachelor of Education Special Degree .. ..	14	4	16
3.	Public Finance and Taxation Special Degree .. ..	13	11	6

Source : Draft Cabinet Memorandum by Dean, Faculty of Arts,  
Colombo Campus, 20.12.78.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

#### 6.1 Introduction

As in most other developing countries, the labour market in Sri Lanka is characterised by two distinct phenomena. On the one hand, there is surplus labour; nearly 20 percent of the labour force was unemployed in 1975. On the other hand, there is a shortage of high level manpower such as engineers and doctors. In addition 'brain drain', exodus of trained and skilled labour, has been aggravating the imbalance in the labour market in recent years.

The main objective of the present chapter is, however, to analyse the demand for university graduates, one segment of the labour force. In pursuing this objective it is proposed to examine :

- (a) the imbalance in the graduate labour market,
- (b) the employment sectors and the type of jobs available for graduates, and
- (c) the recruitment and selection procedures.

In Sri Lanka, the educational qualifications of the labour force are rather poor. The data of the 1971 census, for example, show that the proportion of degree holders was negligible, only 0.8 percent (Table 6.1). When differentiation is made by sex, however, the data indicate that 3.3 percent of the female labour force were degree holders while for males the degree holders consist of



0.7 percent. The present study, therefore, relates to the employment situation of a very small fraction of the labour force, namely university graduates, from varying academic backgrounds and disciplines.

TABLE 6.1  
LABOUR FORCE, EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATES BY EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 1971

<i>Educational attainment</i>	<i>Labour Force</i>	<i>Employment Rate</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>
No schooling .. .. .	942,167	89.3	10.7
Grades 1—10 .. .. .	3,150,240	80.5	19.5
GCE (O/L) .. .. .	287,288	60.7	39.3
GCE (A/L) .. .. .	74,604	90.8	9.2
Degree, equivalent or higher .. .. .	33,900	88.5	11.5
Total .. .. .	4,488,139	81.3	18.7

Source : 1971 Census of Population

## 6.2 Imbalance in the graduate labour market

The imbalance in the graduate labour market arises mainly because of the shortages in labour demand at a time when the supply has been increasing steadily. Of the university graduates, 88.5 percent were employed and the balance 11.5 percent were unemployed in 1971 (Table 6.1). It is true that the unemployment rate among graduates is relatively low when compared to those with other educational qualifications, particularly with persons with Grades 1 to 10 and GCE (O/Level) qualifications. But when the amount of resources that had been spent to produce these graduates is considered, one has to accept that this is a considerably higher level of unemployment. The unemployment rate among women graduates was remarkably high, 23.8 percent as compared to 6.5 for male graduates. The sex differentials in graduate unemployment partly reflect the influx of a large number of female graduates to the labour market in recent years. It is partly a result of the 'sex preference' in employment.

The available data suggests that the extent of unemployment among graduates varies from time to time because of the introduction of various state sponsored special programmes.<sup>1</sup> The

1. There were three such programmes — Graduate Training Scheme, Job Bank and Graduate Placement Service introduced in 1971, 1978 and 1980 respectively.

report of the official committee on graduate unemployment estimated the number of unemployed graduates to be in the region of 10,000 at the end of 1968. The Central Bank's Con-summer-Finance Surveys of 1973 and 1979 have observed a drop in the number of unemployed graduates from 16.2 percent of the workforce in 1973 to 3.2 percent in 1978.<sup>1</sup> The drop in the unemployment levels may be partially due to the drop in output since the 1970s,<sup>2</sup> experienced among the category of Arts graduates, and the special programmes initiated by the govern-ment since the 1970s to ease the problem of unemployment. Despite the drop in unemployment as a percentage of the work-force, the present labour market situation points to the fact that unemployment among graduates will continue to be a serious problem in the future.

The lack of information precludes the analysis of unemployed graduates by course followed (Arts, Science and Professional). Despite data constraint it will not be incorrect to presume that a great majority of the unemployed are those who have an Arts degree. In 1968, it was estimated that the unemployment among Arts graduates was as high as 6,000—7,000. The employability of graduates with special degrees, or those who have obtained classes within this category is greater since they form a small fraction of the Arts output, compared to the General Arts graduates, and therefore have a better chance of being absorbed. Graduates specialising in Commerce subjects are in a relatively better position, consequent to the demand for these graduates in the labour market. The employability of those specialising in the Bachelor of Edu-cation courses, and Development Studies on the other hand presently is at a low ebb.<sup>3</sup> The rationale underlying the introduc-tion of the 'Development Studies' course and the job-oriented courses were to orient university education towards prevailing employment opportunities and to diversify the Arts curricula in keeping with development needs. The output from these courses were soon found to be unemployed, due to the lack of employment opportunities and the reluctance of employers to employ these graduates. Upto 1978, graduates specialising in B.Ed. subjects

1. Central Bank of Ceylon — Review of the Economy 1979, p. 97.  
2. See Chapter 4 for details regarding the output of graduates.  
3. See Chapter 5 for details on "job-oriented courses."

were given teaching appointments while following their course. This method has since been abandoned with the result that a large percentage of these graduates remain unemployed at present.

Although there were instances of unemployment among both Science and Professional graduates in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the prevailing employment situation has changed much to the advantage of these graduates. The employability of Science graduates, when compared to that of the Arts graduates is high in view of the available employment opportunities. For example the teaching service suffers from a shortage of Science graduates, who are lured by lucrative employment opportunities both in the private sector and abroad. The cadres in the Ministries, for Science graduates are said to be heavily depleted with several vacancies occurring at high levels.<sup>1</sup>

Under-employment and qualification escalation (educational inflation) are two possible consequences of rising unemployment among graduates. In Sri Lanka, while qualification escalation has taken place with the upgrading of entry qualifications for specific job categories,<sup>2</sup> there are a few instances when graduates are actively sought by employers for routine jobs. Most often formal qualifications remain the same, while the effective level rises, and employers may recruit those with higher educational qualifications for positions which require lower educational attainments.

The expansion in the supply of graduates in Arts based disciplines has inevitably led to these graduates offering themselves for sub-graduate positions, which are not commensurate with the educational training received or their expectations. Limited employment opportunities and the supply of these graduates over and above labour market needs, have reduced their market value, leading to under-employment and a spill over into clerical, technical and supervisory positions in the non-graduate labour market. The Government Clerical Service now employs around 1,500 graduates in clerical positions, and another 1,000 are believed to be distributed among semi-government institutions.

1. Daily Mirror Report — 14.07.79.

2. For details — see I.D.S. Research Report No. 2 — *Qualifications & Employment in Sri Lanka*, I.D.S. & N.I.M. 1978.



The survey of unemployed women Arts graduates<sup>1</sup> revealed that 60 percent of the employed graduates held positions ranging from clerical, secretarial posts, to police constables, sewing instructors, nurses, research assistants, statistical investigators and development assistants.

Some state aided programmes also help to aggravate the under-employment among graduates, for example, the Job Bank placement service.

The Job Bank was introduced in March 1978 assigned to undertake the task of finding intermediate level placement for unemployed persons, who are socially and economically under-privileged. Unemployed graduates are also included in this scheme, and at present (1981) the number of graduates registered with the Bank is presumed to be 427<sup>2</sup>. Most public sector institutions are required to fill vacancies at intermediate grades (clerical and allied) via the Job Bank. Thus graduates who register with the scheme may enter lower level positions in the employment hierarchy.

Amongst the under-employed graduates are those who held honours degrees, with good classes in subject areas such as economics, statistics, public administration, business administration and development studies. The position of graduates employed as clerks in government departments was quite frustrating from the point of view of these graduates. It so happens that for higher appointments, graduate clerks were often overlooked while officers in other posts or even outsiders were given preference and consideration over graduate clerks. The prospects of these graduates to seek better employment, are grim in view of the fact that most schemes for the absorption of unemployed Arts graduates, did not cover under-employed graduates. Even Job Bank placements excluded those already in employment.

The imbalance in the graduate labour market arises not only from shortages in demand, in the form of unemployment and under-employment, but also from excess demand for graduates.

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1. Report of Study of Unemployed Women Arts Graduates, S.L.F.U.W. 1980, p. 11.

2. (Unpublished data) — Ministry of Plan Implementation — Manpower Planning Division.

However, the excess demand is limited to the graduates who followed professional courses. For example, there is a dearth of Engineering and Medical personnel, in the country at present. A survey of engineers, carried out by the Manpower Division—Ministry of Plan Implementation, revealed that at the beginning of 1979, the number of posts which required the services of engineers was 3,509, and the number employed in 1979 had amounted to 2,695 with 814 posts remaining vacant<sup>1</sup>. The highest number of vacancies were for civil engineers. According to the survey of engineers an additional requirement of 1,836 would be needed between 1980 and 1984 to meet existing demand, and future requirements. Some private sector institutions have started recruiting middle level and technical personnel as junior engineers in order to meet the existing shortage. Similarly the present shortage of doctors is around 800 to 850. Despite attempts to increase the number of students in the Medical Faculties and the opening of two new Medical Faculties in Galle and Jaffna, the shortage of doctors it is believed would continue for a few more years.<sup>2</sup>

The shortage experienced in such categories as engineers, doctors and scientists is partly due to the outflow of these personnel to both developing and developed countries for employment purposes. During the period May 1971 to June 1974, for example, the number of such persons who migrated abroad was 1,705. The highest numbers recorded were for the categories of doctors and engineers—558 and 275 respectively.<sup>3</sup> 80% of the university teachers who leave for employment abroad are from scientific disciplines. Between 1976 and 1978, 266 persons representing high level manpower migrated to the Middle East Countries.<sup>4</sup> In 1979, 166 persons belonging to the high level category obtained employment in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> The high level manpower category for 1976-1978 and 1979 includes

1. *Survey of Employment & Manpower in Sri Lanka* — Ministry of Plan Implementation, (1979), p. 6.
2. (Unpublished data) : Research Division — Ministry of Health.
3. Gunawardena L. "Medical Migration, Inappropriate Education and a Distorted Health Care System" in *Marga* Vol. 4, 1977, p. 39.
4. "Migration of Sri Lankans to the Middle East Countries" — Ministry of Plan Implementation, June 1979, p. 6.
5. *Employment of Sri Lankans in W. Asia* — Ministry of Plan Implementation, p. 4.



doctors, engineers, managers, accountants and scientists. The numbers migrating would be higher in view of those leaving through unregistered agencies, and the migration of these persons to the developed and other developing countries. The exodus of high level manpower categories, inevitably involves the outflow of exceptional and irreplaceable talent, which poses a serious problem to a developing country like Sri Lanka.

With regard to other categories of graduates such as dentists, veterinary surgeons, agriculturalists and architects, there is no evidence of a mismatch between demand and supply. Most of these graduates are absorbed by the Government sector on graduation, except for architects and agriculturalists.

### **6.3 Employment sectors and type of jobs available for graduates**

The demand for graduates mainly originates from the public sector which includes both the government and semi-government sectors and the private sector. The proportion of self-employed graduates seems to be negligible. Employment opportunities in public and private sectors are largely conditioned by the scale of activity and the consequent manpower requirements. The participation of the two sectors in the economic activities of the country is conditioned by the ideological principles of governments in office. Despite the different emphasis given to the public and private sectors, the public sector has taken its place as an essential component of the national economy.

### **6.4 Demand in the government sector**

Although data constraints prevent an analysis of the distribution of university graduates between the public and private sectors, the public sector provides the largest number of employment opportunities, and from the point of view of graduate employment has long been considered as the chief employer of graduates. Similarly, the employment in the public sector is preferred by graduates because it offers higher prestige, security and prospects for promotion as revealed by a survey of undergraduates.<sup>1</sup> However, there are only a limited number of avenues for graduates in the public sector.

1. *Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations*, ILO (1971), p. 148.



The teaching service, which is solely government controlled, provides the single largest area for the employment of university graduates in Sri Lanka. Apart from staff positions in the universities, and positions in the Civil Service and in the public service, the teaching profession was regarded both as a respected and socially prestigious form of employment for university graduates in the past. Compared to other avenues of lucrative employment in the government sector, the teaching profession at present offers very little by way of economic and social rewards, although it continues to draw a large proportion of those specialising in the Arts and Science disciplines, and from the point of view of women graduates, remains a preferred form of employment.<sup>1</sup>

The recruitment of graduates into the teaching service is at the level of *Assistant teachers* and their services are generally utilised at the senior secondary levels (GCE O/Level and A/Level). The non emphasis on degree qualifications for entry into the teaching service, to teach at all levels of the school system (whereas in many developed countries, a degree is a minimum requirement for entry) greatly limits the number of graduates who could be absorbed as teachers. Government policy has, over the years, been favourably disposed towards the recruitment of non graduates (GCE O/Level and A/Level qualified) — for appointments, perhaps due to political and economic reasons. Since 1972 following the youth insurrection a number of efforts were made to recruit graduate teachers — seen mainly as an effort to reduce the growing unemployment among the Arts graduates. In 1972 for example under the 'Graduate Training Scheme', Arts graduates were given teaching appointments in government schools. In 1976 a crash programme for the recruitment of teachers was introduced and all graduates who applied for posts under this scheme, were given appointments as government teachers but on a salary scale that was less than normal graduate teachers' salary<sup>2</sup>. Although no statistics are available on the number of graduates in non graduate entry levels, graduates are employed in private schools and in government schools at the level of non graduate teachers.

1. *Report on the study of unemployment among Arts graduates*, SLFUW, 1980, p. 45 and p. 8. Table 3.22 (b).

2. *Ibid.* p. 9.

The cadre for graduates at present is 19,000 although only about 18,000 graduates are presently in service.<sup>1</sup> The present requirements with regard to graduate teachers point to an over-supply of graduates in social science disciplines, while graduates specialising in commerce, aesthetic studies (Fine-arts), languages and science are in short supply. Ministry of Education sources indicate that there is an overall shortage of 2,700 graduate teachers specialising in languages, (Sinhala 2,000 and Tamil 700), 930 Commerce teachers (Sinhala 700 and Tamil 230) and 800 Science teachers (Sinhala medium). There are no vacancies for the absorption of Tamil medium science teachers, while Tamil medium teachers in social science disciplines are found to be in short supply.

The acute shortage of science graduates in Mathematics, Bio-science and Physical Science to take up assignments as teachers in the Sinhala medium has greatly inhibited the provision and distribution of equal facilities to students aspiring for a science education. The present requirement with regard to science teachers is such, that there is provision in the teaching service for the absorption of the entire annual science output, although only an average of 100 science teachers could be retained in service, out of the annual intake due to the general preference of science graduates to seek entry into attractive avenues of employment in the private and public sectors, and the migration of science teachers abroad. For example within the last twenty years a total of only 2,000 science teachers have been recruited into the service.<sup>2</sup> In view of this the Government has initiated a proposal to recruit science undergraduates for teaching posts to ease the shortage of science teachers in schools. By contrast, excluding the demand for teachers in Commerce, Aesthetic studies and Languages, the teaching service cannot absorb the bulk of Arts graduates seeking admission into the service. In 1980 for example 400 science graduates were recruited and provision has been made for the recruitment of 250 Commerce graduates. Arts applicants for teaching assignments cannot be absorbed at present as they do not satisfy the present school requirements. Up to 1978

1. (Unpublished data) : Research & Planning Division — Ministry of Education (1981).

2. Ibid.



graduates specialising in the Bachelor of Education course, were given teaching appointments as teachers prior to completion of their course, as teaching experience constituted an essential component of the course.<sup>1</sup>

The Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS) is another field of employment open for graduates in the country. Here, the entry points are well defined. Graduates first enter to the Class II Grade II, the lowest rung of the administrative ladder of the SLAS. Fifty percent of the vacancies in this grade are filled by means of an open competitive examination and the qualifications adopted for entry, pointed, as in the former Civil Service, to an intake of university graduates. 25 percent of vacancies were formerly reserved for female candidates but this system has now been abolished. However, the cadre for graduates in the SLAS is presently known to be saturated.<sup>2</sup>

The position of university graduates seeking graduate entry positions, in the SLAS is further hampered by the selection process, whereby graduates are compelled to compete with those already in employment in the public service. In 1976, sixty percent of the intake was from officers already in the government service. By contrast to the selective process followed in the past which led to the selection of young graduates, the emphasis at present is not on academic performance alone; which opens the possibility for those with experience to enter the service. A recent study on the present recruits to the SLAS reveals that 95 percent of the recruits had been previously employed in positions ranging from clerical and technical positions to academic posts.<sup>3</sup>

Recruitment of science and professional graduates into the state sector is handled by the respective service coming under the Ministry of Public Administration—although the graduates are also directly recruited by the Ministry or department within the Ministry. (Minutes of the Sri Lanka Scientific Services). For example the unified administration did not absorb all officials in the administration. On the contrary there are other categories of

1. For further details with regard to B.Ed. Graduates see : *Report on the study of unemployment among Women Arts Graduates* SLFUW. 1980, p. 10.
2. Minutes of the SLAS : Ministry of Public Administration, Sri Lanka.
3. Amunugama, S. 'A sociological analysis of present recruitment to the S.L.A.S.' in *Economic Review*, 1977. Vol. 3 No. 2 pp. 24—28.



officials, who, by virtue of their professional training and expertise formed separate services. These services encompassed all professional and scientific personnel within the public service. Engineering and science graduates entering the state sector, enter at the Class II Grade II graduate entry point. A similar pattern obtains among the medical graduates, who enter the preliminary grade of the Sri Lanka Medical Service. However, for science graduates seeking entry into the State sector through the Sri Lanka Scientific Services (SLSS), job opportunities at present point to a very small number of vacancies per year at graduate entry levels.

A most notable feature of employment in the state sector is the functioning of an *internal labour market* wherein jobs are open to internal competition (either through the promotion of suitable persons, or by competition). The greater occupational mobility of public service personnel is ensured because it has become customary under trade union pressure to give preference to internal candidates either by specifying lower educational qualifications or by establishing quotas<sup>1</sup>. 30 percent of the vacancies in Class II Grade II of the SLAS are filled by means of a limited competitive examination. Both graduates and non graduates in subordinate positions with ten years of permanent service may vie for staff posts in the administrative hierarchy or may enter the supra class of the Clerical Service after completion of 8 years of service. 20 percent of the vacancies are filled by the promotion of officers in subordinate grades. Similarly the public service reserves 50 percent of clerical career entry point posts for internal competition open to minor employees. A recent Cabinet decision was to give concessions to graduates in the Clerical Service by reducing the present requirement of ten years service to sit the limited competitive examination to five years. Concessions were also given to graduate clerks to sit the Accountants' Service Examination without the five year service requirement and to enter the Supra Grade of the Clerical Service without the eight year service requirement<sup>2</sup>.

1. I.D.S. Research Report No. 2 — '*Qualification and Employment in Sri Lanka*'. The Institute of Development Studies & the National Institute of Management, 1978, p. 10.
2. Sun Report — February 19, 1981.

Although no quota is available for internal competition in the technical departments that absorb engineering graduates, technical personnel with twenty one years of permanent service, possessing the Inspector's certificate issued by the Commissioner of Examinations may vie for posts in the graduate entry point grade of the engineering service.

However, the existence of internal promotions to graduate entry point levels does not affect graduates with professional qualifications, such as the engineering and medical graduates. Many of the vacancies for doctors and engineers in the public service, remain unfilled due to the present shortage experienced in respect of these graduates.

### 6.5 Demand in the semi-government sector

The semi-government sector — which covers all Corporations, Boards, Statutory Bodies and the National Banks — provide employment opportunities for university graduates at specific levels of the hierarchies of employment. Most vacancies for graduates in this sector are career, entry point vacancies, with structured career opportunities, which permit the entry of graduates into higher grades of the service. The employment of graduates would generally be at three levels :

1. *Professional level*-positions at this level would require specialisation and skill, and would therefore be confined to professional graduates;
2. *Executive/Administrative levels*, open to all categories of graduates in the Arts and Sciences;
3. *Clerical grades*—entry into this grade would generally require secondary level qualifications, but under the present employment situation university graduates, especially in Arts oriented subjects, are increasingly being absorbed into clerical positions.

A proportion of vacancies at the graduate entry level are filled through the internal promotion of employees from lower grades, except in instances when the requirements of the job does not permit the functioning of the internal labour market principle.

The practice of promoting from within the organisation has gained momentum in recent times. In one Public Corporation, Management Trainees were recruited from within and without, the minimum requirement for entry being higher in the case of external recruits who were required to possess a first or second class special degree in Commerce, Economics or Statistics. For internal recruits a General Degree with 5 years experience or any number of years in grade six of the clerical grade was stipulated<sup>1</sup>. The provision for internal promotions within the semi-government sector as in the case of the government sector greatly limits the number of vacancies for the external recruitment of graduates.

In the Bank of Ceylon for example the recruitment of graduates into staff positions did not take place between 1975-1980. The recent policy of the Bank, however, was to recruit twenty five graduates per year into staff positions. In 1980, 52 graduates were absorbed into the Sub-Manager level, as management trainees. Twenty seven were external recruits, while twenty five were internal candidates. The entry point for graduates is at the Class II Grade II level of the banking service.<sup>2</sup>

The banking sector provides the most scope for the employment of Arts graduates although recruitment policies do not discriminate between Arts and Science graduates. Positions for graduates would range from executive trainees, probationary officers, agricultural field officers to clerical officers. The requirement for entry into staff positions is a first or second class honours degree. Graduates without a class serve in the clerical grades recruitment to which depends on performance at the GCE (O/Level).

The provision of employment within the semi-government sector, would largely depend on the number of employment opportunities generated during the last few years. While employment for graduates in Engineering proves to be satisfactory, due to the present shortage experienced in respect of these graduates, the number of vacancies at the administrative/managerial level would be minimal compared to the number of graduates seeking employment. According to the Central Bank Review (1979), of

1. I.D.S. Report No. 2 *Qualifications and Employment in Sri Lanka*, I.D.S. & N.I.M. 1978, p. 31.  
2. Interview — Bank official.



the total number of jobs generated in this sector between 1978-1979 the percentage of jobs in administrative grades was only 2 percent.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore all vacancies occurring at this level may not be open to graduates seeking first employment.

## 6.6 Demand in the private sector

The extent of demand of graduates in the private sector would depend on three factors : (a) the employment needs of the organisation and the categories of manpower required, (b) the degree to which a differentiation is made between graduates and non-graduates, (c) type of graduates required if such a differentiation is made. Most often the degree may not be considered as a prerequisite for entry into the private sector.<sup>2</sup> Employers may in fact show preference to the GCE (O/Level) and or (A/Level) qualified, who possess the attributes required by the organisation. Thus, the demand of graduates into the private sector is very small, if not negligible.

On the basis of the criteria stipulated by most private sector organisations employment in this sector would be confined to a select group of persons, possessing the required criteria for selection. For example, most private sector organisations stress fluency in English, as a major requirement, in addition to such factors as personality, social standing and school background.<sup>3</sup> For the average Arts graduate therefore there are a number of constraints which prevent their entry into the private sector.

In terms of new employment opportunities the 'package of economic policies' offered to the private sector for the promotion of industrial and commercial growth and development has led to an expansion in private sector activity and a consequent increase in employment opportunities. According to a survey of newspaper advertisements conducted by the Manpower Division—Ministry of Plan Implementation, there has been an upward trend in employment generation, especially in the middle level and skilled level categories. In the high level category (professional,

1. Central Bank of Ceylon — *Review of the Economy 1979*, p. 98.

2. *Report on the Study of Unemployment among Women Arts Graduates*—SLFUW 1978, p. 105

3. Seminar on—*Report on the study of unemployment among Women Arts Graduates*—S.L.F.U.W

technological, scientific, administrative and managerial personnel of staff rank) the highest demand has been for engineers. Nevertheless there has been an overall drop in employment opportunities in the high level category between 1978 and 1980 (See Table 6.2). This may be due to the informal job description mechanisms used by the private sector to recruit high level manpower and therefore may not reflect a true trend. The growth in new employment opportunities does not necessarily lead to a growth in graduate employment in the private sector.

### **6.7 Self-employed graduates**

Possibilities for self-employment rest on the availability of initial capital for investment, access to financial incentives provided by formal and non formal agencies, training geared to specific occupations, entrepreneurial aptitudes, etc. Although data is not available, it is reasonable to assume that very few graduates embark on self-employment ventures. Presumably, the majority of self-employed are graduates in Law. The proportion of self-employed medical doctors seems to be small. Though there are thousands of unemployed Arts graduates in different fields (such as, Linguistics, History, Development Studies) the lack of resources and training geared to specific occupations demanded by society keep them away from finding self-employment.

A proposal to enlist graduates who wish to take to self-employment was mooted by the Minister of Youth Affairs and arrangements are being made to implement this scheme through the Graduate Placement Service under the Ministry. The Ministry has been able to identify a few Arts graduates in self-employment. Of this, the majority have tutories, while a few are involved in tailoring, manufacture of leather products and surgical gauze, and orchid growing. A few graduates were willing to take up agriculture provided they are equipped with land and capital.

TABLE 6.2  
**NUMBER OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES ADVERTISED DURING THE  
 YEARS 1977, 1978, 1979 AND DURING JANUARY-JUNE 1980**

<i>Year</i>	<i>High level</i>	<i>Middle level</i>	<i>Skilled level</i>	<i>Unskilled level</i>	<i>Total</i>
1977 .. ..	1,035	3,153	3,607	1,359	9,154
1978 .. ..	1,297	5,274	6,913	2,985	16,489
1979 .. ..	1,280	9,965	14,074	9,636	34,955
1980 .. .. (Jan-June)	1,050	5,887	7,669	8,425	23,031

Source : Survey of Employment in the private sector, p.3 and Surveys on Employment & Manpower in Sri Lanka, p. 2, Ministry of Plan Implementation, Sri Lanka.

## 6.8 Recruitment and selection procedures

The examination of recruitment and selection procedures of graduates may help to gain a clear understanding of the internal labour market. Formal and informal mechanisms are generally used when advertising job vacancies in the labour market. Government departments use formal mechanisms when informing potential applicants about vacancies in the departments. Graduates are notified of all vacancies occurring in the departments through the Government Gazette which is published in all three languages-Sinhala, Tamil and English. In addition to gazette notifications some high level jobs may also be advertised via newspapers.

In respect of vacancies for medical and engineering graduates, ministerial lists are sent to the universities indicating the number and distribution of vacancies in Government institutions-on the basis of which graduates make their applications, in accordance with their preferences.

By contrast, the semi-government sectors and private sector institutions use a combination of formal and informal methods. Newspaper advertisements are the most popular instruments used by private firms, public corporations and other semi-government institutions, although some vacancies, at the higher levels may not be advertised but news about such vacancies may be passed by word of mouth. In Sri Lanka, the operation of informal mechanisms are significant, especially in private sector institutions where information regarding employment opportunities may reach potential applicants through friends, other employees and relatives.



The universities may also be approached by private sector employers and corporation heads regarding suitable candidates for specific job categories. What is implicit in this type of approach is the emphasis on formal educational preference for job performance. Seeking the best products of the universities from the relevant field, accelerates the whole process of selection which saves the employer the weary operation of weeding out the less suitable applicants.

Some private sector firms may even entertain 'unsolicited applicants', and applicants may be informed of vacancies as and when they occur. The subject of degree, academic performance (class obtained), type of degree (General or Special) are some of the universalistic criteria adopted by employers when advertising vacancies for graduates. In addition consideration may be given to particularistic criteria, i.e. knowledge of English, school and home background, social skills, personality, age and sex—in the selection of graduates for employment.

A lack of a good knowledge of English is not considered a serious constraint to public sector employment—(as most government departments and, to some extent, semi-government institutions conduct their business largely in Sinhala, except in interaction and communication with outside agencies)—although for most high level appointments English is considered a necessity. The private sector by contrast favours the use of particularistic criteria in selection, laying greater emphasis on proficiency in English, personality and social standing.

The interview method is the most popular method used by both public and private sector institutions in selecting suitable graduates for their vacancies. All candidates who reach the minimum requirements in terms of the criteria stipulated by the employing institutions are called for an interview. The final selection is made on the basis of their performances at the interview.

In some cases the recruitment of graduates is based on the result of a written examination which is designed to test the candidates' general knowledge or knowledge of specific subjects. In the Bank of Ceylon, in addition to the interview, an aptitude

test is conducted for graduates seeking positions, as management trainees. The final decision would rest on the scores obtained via the two methods. A similar pattern obtains in the SLAS. Candidates are tested on a wide range of subjects, in an open competitive examination.

A noteworthy method of selection adopted by large scale private organisations and semi-government institutions, e.g. 'the Banks' is the group test, where an assessment is made of the candidate's leadership qualities, social skills, conduct etc., which facilitates the selection process.

We have described above the problem of graduate employment in Sri Lanka and the methods the successive governments have adopted to reduce this problem. An examination of the demand for supply of graduates by different specialisations has also been made in so far as it was permitted by the available data. The influence of recruitment and selection criteria on this problem has also been dealt with briefly, using some of the available documents. In Chapter 1 of this study, we have discussed some additional instruments (surveys) to enrich our knowledge base so as to develop strategies for reducing the problem of unemployment of graduates. To reduce misallocation of graduates, to increase their productivity with increased job-satisfaction, to channel the students to areas where they are most needed and to increase the quality of the output of the system, these survey instruments, we believe, play an important role, particularly in helping the decision-makers to adjust the development of the higher education system and the operation of the employment market, so that these two sectors can come closer together. The results of these surveys are described in the next four chapters.

## CHAPTER 7

### SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS—UNDERGRADUATES (FINAL YEAR)

#### 7.1 Introduction

The earlier chapters which are based on the available data portray the scenario pertaining to the varied but directly relevant components of the study. The trends and patterns observed therein provide a back-drop in terms of a macro picture, to the topic under consideration, namely "university education and graduate employment." With regard to the scope and content, the study necessarily delves into two broad components, firstly university education and secondly, graduate employment. The factors influencing these two components though varied in nature are not only inter-related but also influence the transitional process (from university education to graduate employment) at different points of the continuum.

An attempt is made in this chapter to identify these factors at the different points of the transitional process and their degree of impact in influencing a shift in the accepted norms of this continuum.

The broad based classifications used for the purpose of this chapter originate from the two chapters of the desk study, one dealing with the socio-economic background of the country and the other dealing with the formal school education system. In the Sri Lankan context the hypothesis would be that the socio-economic hierarchy bears a positive correlation not only to university education, in terms of access to different university courses but has its influence on the graduate employment hierarchy as well. The latter appears to have a strong relationship to the former which, by and large, could pave the way for the continuing process of university education and graduate employment.



## 7.2 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the student population

The sample covered a total of 534 students. Table 7.1 shows the university specific distribution of final year student population and the corresponding sample sizes. Here it could be seen that the distribution of the sample is more or less in keeping with the distribution of the parent population.

TABLE 7.1  
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENT POPULATION BY UNIVERSITY

	No. of Students		% Distribution	
	Total	Sample	Total	Sample
Colombo	811	113	22.4	21.2
Sri Jayawardanepura	804	77	22.2	14.4
Kelaniya	708	118	19.5	22.1
Moratuwa	148	7	4.1	1.3
Peradeniya	1,151	219	31.8	41.0
<i>Total</i>	3,622	534	100.0	100.0

Of the sample of students in the universities it was found that 85.4 percent were Sinhalese followed by Sri Lanka Tamils (11.4%), Sri Lanka Moors (2.6%) and Burghers (0.6%). The University of Jaffna was not considered<sup>1</sup> for the study, the reason being that this university is relatively new and the graduate sample for the years 1974 through 1979, dealt with in Chapter 8, could not be obtained in this university.

Age-sex composition of the student population is shown in Table 7.2. It could be seen that the male proportion is higher than the female proportion. Two explanations could be offered for this discrepancy. Firstly, large scale female participation in university education is a fairly recent phenomenon and could perhaps be treated as being only two decades old. Secondly, the social and cultural norms and values governing the role of

1. It is assumed that the only possible distortion resulting from this procedure would be that the ethnic composition of the student sample would not highlight the true ethnic composition in the universities, for in the University of Jaffna the proportion of students belonging to one ethnic group (namely, Sri Lanka Tamils) form a very high proportion of the total student population in that University. With the inclusion of Jaffna probably the existing proportion of Sri Lanka Tamils and Sri Lanka Moors would have gone up and may be one could also have trapped a handful of students belonging to the two ethnic groups not represented in the current sample, namely Indian Tamils and Indian Moors. On the other hand the inclusion of the University of Jaffna only in the case of the student sample would have distorted the pattern emerging from the transitional process obtained otherwise.

women had, by and large, restricted the participation of women in education and employment in the past and to some extent even today. Ethnicity and religion are highly relative in Sri Lanka and an examination of ethno-religious distribution helps us to identify the groups that are important. A perusal of the ethno-religious distribution of the student population highlights the above reasoning. The low proportion of female undergraduates could be seen only among Sri Lanka Tamils (Hindu) and Sri Lankan Moors (Islam). Among the many ethno-religious communities in Sri Lanka, the Hindu Sri Lanka Tamils and the Islamic Moors observe their social and cultural norms and values (especially in respect of the role of women in society) to a very high degree. With regard to other ethno-religious groups, this is not so. Hence the pattern of female participation observed through the sample is quite in order, considering the reality.

The mean age of graduation, as obtained from the sample, is approximately 25 years. This could be partially explained by the fact that entry into the university being competitive, some students appear for the General Certificate of Education (A/Level) examination even for the third time (which is the last chance allowed) to secure admission. This results in wasting nearly a year between each appearance and an additional year from the time one gets through the examination and the actual admission to the university.

TABLE 7.2  
DISTRIBUTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (FINAL YEAR — 1979/80)  
BY AGE AND SEX

(A) Absolute Number

Sex :	Age (Years)	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	Over 26	Total
Male ..	..	00	04	23	47	53	63	39	73	302
Female ..	..	01	04	12	32	66	51	33	33	232
	Total ..	01	08	35	79	119	114	72	106	534

(B) Percent Distribution :

Sex :	Age (Years)	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	Over 26	Total
Male ..	..	0.0	1.3	7.6	15.6	17.5	20.9	12.9	24.2	100.0
Female ..	..	0.4	1.7	5.2	13.8	28.5	22.0	14.2	14.2	100.0
	Total ..	0.2	1.5	6.6	14.8	22.3	21.3	13.5	19.9	100.0

A perusal of Table 7.2 shows that 66.7 percent of the students are aged  $\leq 25$  years. It is also evident that the proportion of females in the younger age groups is higher than the corresponding proportion for males (i.e. the proportion of males aged  $\leq 25$  years is 62.9 percent whereas the corresponding proportion for females is 71.6 percent). The proportion of males aged 27 or more years is as high as 24.2 percent whereas for females the proportion is only 14.2 percent. Highest proportion of females (28.5 percent) is in the single age 24 years. Age distribution also proves the effect of cultural norms and values prevalent in Sri Lankan society and are fast vanishing as a result of increasing participation in education. Tendency among women to acquire higher education is increasing and this has influenced the rise in the age of marriage considerably. The mean age at marriage for females in Sri Lanka stands at 24.5 years, whereas for males it is 28.5 years.

In order to get a clear picture of the students' socio-economic background, some socio-economic characteristics had been used in this study. They are—

- (a) Fathers'/Mothers' occupation
- (b) Fathers'/Mothers' education
- (c) Annual household income.

The degree of non-response to the question on fathers' and mothers' occupation were 22.4 percent and 16.1 percent respectively. However the responses of occupation revealed that 20 percent of the fathers were farmers/fishermen—(nearly 95 percent farmers), followed by teaching/clerical/technical and allied services (14.2 percent) and retired category (10.3 percent). Among mothers 61.3 percent were housewives followed by 10.1 percent holding positions in the teaching/clerical/technical and allied services category (most of them being teachers).

According to the data on fathers' educational levels it was found that among those responding the distribution was as follows :

No schooling	..	..	1.8%
Primary education	..	..	20.8%



Secondary education	62.2%
Tertiary education	15.2%

The proportion of fathers having obtained either secondary or tertiary education is as high as 77.4 percent. The proportion under no-schooling category is only 1.8 percent which is quite low when compared with the proportion of males in the no-schooling category (8.7 percent) observed at the Census of Population 1981. This does suggest that those from the affluent category of the socio-economic hierarchy have greater access to university education.

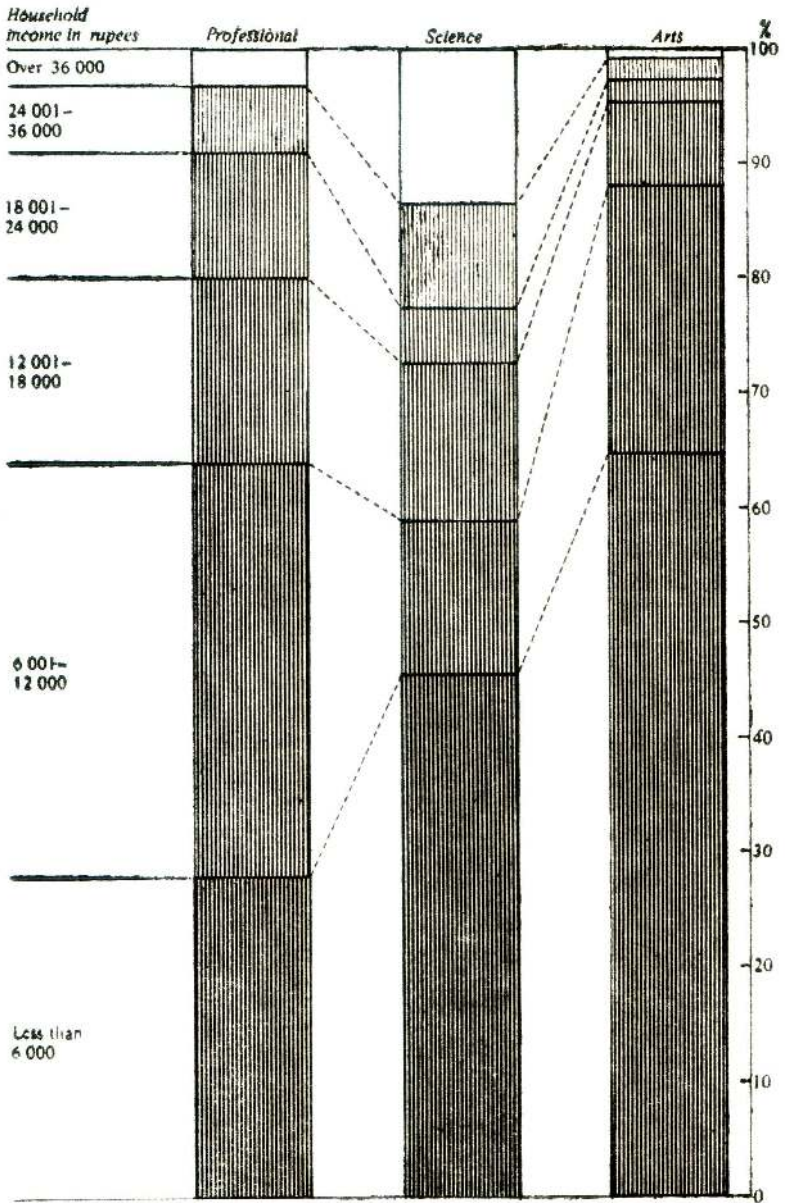
As would be expected it was found that occupation and education were highly correlated in the sense that a majority of the fathers holding professional positions have had tertiary education and those who have had no schooling or primary education belonged to the occupational category of farmers/fishermen. In the case of mothers, those who have had tertiary education were mainly teachers.

The above two socio-economic variables had a link with the annual household income, except in the case of businessmen (very few in number) where, though with low educational levels they had high incomes.

The household income data, with reference to broad based university course of study of students is shown in Table 7.3. The table shows that only 11.2 percent of the students come from families with an annual household income of more than Rs. 18,000. Besides it could also be seen that a high proportion of students (87.3 percent) following Arts courses came from homes with a household income less than Rs. 12,000 per annum. Corresponding proportions for Professional and Science courses are 59.4 percent and 58.2 percent respectively. This does reflect the fact that a large proportion of students entering Professional and Science courses are from fairly affluent families and ties up with the earlier proposition in terms of father's occupation and education.

TABLE 7.3  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BY COURSE FOLLOWED AND ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

<i>Course</i>	<i>Household Income</i>	<i>No. of Students</i>	<i>Less than Rs. 6000</i>	<i>Rs. 6001 to 12000</i>	<i>Rs. 12001 to 18000</i>	<i>Rs. 18001 to 24000</i>	<i>Rs. 24001 to 36000</i>	<i>Over Rs. 36000</i>	<i>Total</i>
Professional	..	101	24.8	34.6	14.9	11.9	9.9	3.9	21.0
Science	..	55	16.4	41.8	20.0	9.1	5.4	7.3	11.4
Arts	..	326	66.1	21.2	7.7	2.5	1.6	0.9	67.8
<i>Total (%)</i>	..	481	51.8	26.4	10.6	5.2	3.7	2.3	100.0



Percent distribution of university students by course followed and annual household income



### 7.2.1 School background

The geographical location of students indicate indirectly the students' access to education and the quality of their education at school. It has an important bearing on entry into university education according to the prevalent admission policy. Furthermore, it could offer an appropriate variable to account for the choice of University in terms of proximity. Analysis of the data showed that 56.5 percent of the students come from five relatively urbanized districts (Colombo 22.8 percent, Galle 9.0 percent, Kurunegala 8.6 percent, Jaffna 8.4 percent and Matara 7.7 percent), where educational facilities at the secondary level are fairly high and of good quality.

The schools in Sri Lanka could be classified into two broad types, namely Government and Private, with almost all the private schools being located in the above mentioned districts. The cross tabulation of the "type of school" data by University and Sex reveals that though the overall percentage of students entering the universities from private schools was only 7.1 percent, the proportion of females was in the region of 10.2 percent as opposed to the male share of 4.8 percent. Some of the private schools being fee levying institutions and many of them being located in Colombo, the females entering through private schools could be from households with high income (more than Rs. 24,000) and this trend is in keeping with the earlier finding in terms of household income.

The data on participation in extra curricular activities reveal that 64.1 percent (Government 64.9 percent, Private 56.2 percent) of the students had taken part in two or more of the following activities :

1. Sports
2. Literary activities
3. Cultural activities
4. Social work
5. Held office in honorary societies
6. Scouting/Cadeting/Guiding.

About 12 percent of the students had held office in different Societies (12.7 percent-Government; 4.2 percent-Private), and another 5.4 percent had taken part in Sports (5.5 percent-Government; 4.2 percent-Private). The data reveals to some extent the kind of amenities available in the school in which students had their education. It can be safely concluded that most students entering the university are from schools which are also well equipped for providing extra curricular activities.

While analysing the data on the streams available for secondary education at the schools by district, it is found that the proportion stating that the Arts stream was available both in the General Certificate of Education—Ordinary Level—(GCE O/Level) and General Certificate of Education—Advanced Level—(GCE A/Level) classes is high in all the districts. The proportion stating that they had Science in school both in GCE O/Level and GCE A/Level classes came next followed by proportions stating the availability of Commerce. While looking at it district-wise the picture is distorted partially by virtue of the fact that the sample of students trapped in the study are university students, which apparently indicates that they would have gone through their pre-university education in some of the better schools in their native districts. For instance, even in the case of an educationally under-privileged district, such as Batticaloa, the university students who came from this district might have had their secondary level education in the few good schools available in that district. The data reveals that the districts of Amparai, Matale, Kegalle, Matara and Badulla (in descending order) have students coming from schools which have less than 50 percent of the pupils in the Science stream at the GCE O/Level classes. While looking at the availability of Science at the GCE A/Level, the districts of Anuradhapura, Nuwara Eliya, Hambantota, Badulla, Kegalle, Polonnaruwa, Ratnapura, Puttalam, Matara, Moneragala and Kurunegala have students coming from schools which have less than 50 percent of the pupils in the Science streams.

### 7.2.2 Educational background

The educational background of the students prior to entering the university would be relevant to portray a comprehensive

picture of the students' educational career. The tabulated data reflected the fact that an approximate 80 percent of the students chose Science at the GCE O/Level because—

1. They liked Science (24.4 percent);
2. Parents wanted them to do Science (25.7 percent);
3. Science education has better employment prospects (28.7 percent).

There are no marked deviations in the sex specific responses. Among those who did not choose Science the following reasons are predominant :

1. They were not selected for Science (39.1 percent);
2. They did not like Science (19.3 percent);
3. School had no facilities for the study of Science (12.6 percent).

It was found that for those who chose Science 64 percent of the fathers had either secondary or tertiary education (43 percent secondary and 21 percent tertiary) whereas for those who did not choose Science, only 49 percent (47.5 percent secondary and 1.5 percent tertiary) had either secondary or tertiary education. The non response among those who did not choose Science is 27 percent whereas among those who chose Science is 21 percent. Hence there is reason to suspect that there is a high degree of association between fathers' educational level and choice of Science at the GCE O/Level.

The parents' occupation also appears to have a high degree of association with Science education. Among those who chose Science at GCE O/Level, a sizeable proportion of fathers are from occupations such as :

1. Teaching/clerical/technical and allied grades (23.9 percent);
2. Managerial/administrative/professional and university staff (14.4 percent).

(It should be noted that data reveals that 'Retired Employees,' most of whom would have belonged to the above occupation categories, account for 15.9 percent).



Among those who *did not* choose Science a large proportion of the fathers' occupations are—

1. Farmers/fishermen (26.4 percent);
2. Teaching/clerical/technical and allied grades (13.2 percent);
3. Skilled and semi-skilled occupations (12.3 percent).

Since it has been established earlier that father's occupation and education are related to the children's education, the above trend is to be quite expected. However at this juncture it may be suggested that the fathers' occupation and education also have a relationship to the districts of origin of the students. The majority of the students who enter the universities from these districts are relatively urbanized and the population living therein are mainly engaged in non-agricultural occupations.

Nearly 55.7 percent of the students who chose Science at the GCE O/Level come from the districts of Colombo (33.7 percent), Jaffna (12 percent) and Galle (10 percent). On the other hand the data pertaining to those who did not choose Science at GCE O/Level, when subjected to the above cross classification revealed the following district-wise distribution pattern : Colombo (16.4 percent), Matara (11.9 percent), Kurunegala (10.3 percent), Kegalle (8.4 percent) and Badulla (8.2 percent).

After the successful completion of the GCE O/Level examination, students have to pass the GCE A/Level examination prior to entering the university. While looking at the cross classification of field of study (i.e. Arts, Science and Commerce) at the GCE A/Level and the sitting<sup>1</sup> at which the student entered the university, the following pattern emerges : generally, the entry to University is through 1st sitting (48.1 percent) or 2nd sitting (42.8 percent). Among the Commerce students the entry through the first sitting is proportionately higher than that for either of the other two streams. The entry through the 3rd sitting, however, indicates a pattern relatively in favour of the Science and Arts students as against the Commerce students—the least proportion (3.6 percent)

1. In Sri Lanka, students intending university education are allowed to sit (or appear for) the GCE A/Level Examination more than once to improve upon their performance in order to meet the university admission requirements. These requirements may vary from year to year.

of Commerce students enter through the 3rd sitting. The reason for this is that the competition for Science and Arts education is rather high whereas in the Commerce stream the students, instead of waiting for the third sitting, enter other Educational Institutes which offer, for example, professional courses in Accountancy. In the recent past this spill-over has spread into Science and Arts streams as well, with quite a number of students from these streams taking up Professional courses, (such as in Accountancy) outside the universities without waiting for their 2nd or 3rd sitting at the GCE A/Level Examination to enter university.

TABLE 7.4  
PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY SITTINGS THROUGH WHICH UNIVERSITY ADMISSION WAS SECURED AND COURSE FOLLOWED AT SCHOOL

No. of Sitting	Course			Arts	Science	Commerce	Total
1st Sitting ..	..	..	..	48.3	46.7	52.8	48.1
2nd Sitting ..	..	..	..	42.2	43.2	43.6	42.8
3rd Sitting ..	..	..	..	9.5	10.1	3.6	9.1
			<i>Total</i> ..	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
				(263)	(199)	(55)	(517)

Note : Number of Students responding, in parentheses

### 7.2.3 Career guidance sources

Generally, the social structure in Sri Lanka is such that the students are guided by their parents, teachers and other elders throughout their educational career. The available data on *career guidance* brought to light the following pattern of ranked answers :

Of the 383 respondents who indicated Rank 1 answers, about 41.5 percent had been primarily guided by the *staff of the school*. *General information sources* came as the next popular Rank 1 answer with 26.6 percent, followed by *parents* (21.1 percent) and *friends* (10.7 percent). Among the Rank 2 answers *general information sources* have 27.6 percent followed by *the staff of school* (26.1 percent), *parents* (23.6 percent) and *friends* (22.8 percent). Among the Rank 3 answers the order was found to be:

*friends* (32.3 percent), *general information sources* (27.1 percent), *parents* (22.4 percent) and *staff of school* (18.1 percent). The above trend does suggest that the two popular career guidance sources used by students are (1) *staff of school*, (2) *general information sources*. When analysed by Sex the data revealed that among Rank 1 answers the pattern in respect of females was as follows: *staff of school* (50 percent), and *parents* (28.7 percent). In the case of males the order was, *general information sources* (35.4 percent) followed by *staff of school* (34.4 percent). This clearly reflects the higher dependency of females on *staff of school* and *parents*.

The data on sources of career guidance when analysed by first choice of university course of students reveals that for the majority of students who opted for professional courses, parents emerged as the most important career guidance source. For Science students, parents and staff have equal weightage whereas for the Arts students staff of school emerged as the most important source of guidance.

An analysis of the source of career guidance data, cross classified by fathers' education, reveals that for students whose fathers had tertiary education, *parents* emerged as the most popular source of career guidance followed by *staff of school*. In the case of when fathers' educational level is either primary or secondary, the *staff of school* were found to be the most important source of career guidance followed by *general information sources*.

A look at the data, cross classified by fathers' occupation brought to light the following features. *Staff of school* emerged as the first choice of career guidance for students with their fathers in all occupational categories, except when fathers belonged to the managerial/administrative/professional and university staff category. Here the most important source of career guidance turned out to be *parents*.

### 7.3 Students' perception of university education

The final year student population covered in this chapter, having opted to pursue university education have more or less



moved to the half way mark in the continuum referred to earlier. In this section an attempt is made to identify the factors influencing the demand for university education, and having moved into the universities, the benefits expected through university education. Although the two major issues to be dealt with in this section seem to be one and the same, it has to be stressed that in the continuing process of university education and graduate employment the time lag between events and the constantly changing externalities do have a bearing in bringing forth attitudinal changes in relation to aspirations and expectations.

### 7.3.1 Reasons for pursuing university education

The reasons for pursuing university education was sought from final year students through a closed question with an open tail. The pattern of responses revealed that the major reasons evolve around one factor, namely the *betterment of employment prospects*, with roughly 56.5 percent of the responses falling within two factors, *chances of obtaining employment better with a degree* and *inability to obtain employment with only GCE A/Level qualifications*. Looking at the data in terms of broad based course categories too one does not see a major shift from the above pattern. However, *status* considerations seem fairly important for Professional and Science students. Also *academic interest* is of a fairly high order for Arts students than one would expect. With more than half the students having indicated that they would not have come to the universities if they had managed to secure employment at the end of their school career, and if their parents had not persuaded them, one begins to wonder whether the universities still continue to be a place of academic excellence with most of the students not having entered primarily to achieve academic excellence.

A perusal of the sex specific data shows that the proportion of males giving the following reasons for pursuing university education are greater than the corresponding female proportion :

- (a) Chances of obtaining employment better with a degree ;
- (b) Inability to obtain employment with only GCE A/Level qualifications ; and
- (c) Persuasion by parents and members of the family.

However, academic interest was strikingly higher among females than males. It may be conjectured that Sri Lankan society is, by and large, male dominated, and hence, the males wish to be independent as early as possible whereas most females are dependent on their parents until such time they are married. Since the demand for employment is rather high, with the rate of unemployment being 15 to 20 percent of the labour force, the females find it quite difficult to secure employment soon after leaving school and even after going through university education. Therefore, it may be that they tend to develop an *academic interest* and continue education in the absence of employment, rather than stay at home. This general pattern did not vary very much even when looked at in the light of their socio-economic background.

### 7.3.2 Choice of university and course of study

When applying for university entrance, students are asked to select (in order of preference) the university in which they wish to study, although the final satisfaction of their choice would depend both on the availability of places in the particular university preferred, and on their being selected to follow a particular course of study. A question was posed as to what reasons prompted students to opt for a particular university as their first choice. 28.5 percent of the students (male and female) are influenced by the *superior content and teaching methods of the University*, while *prestige attached to a particular University*, *availability of residential facilities* and the *close proximity to location of home* are reasons given by 24.5 percent, 20 percent and 19.6 percent of students respectively for the choice of university.

When responses are analysed by University it is found that while *the superior content and teaching methods* is a high priority reason for the basis of choice in regard to all universities, *the availability of residential facilities* emerged as the most popular reason for choice, in the case of the Peradeniya University, which has a tradition of more superior residential facilities than the other universities.

Mention must be made of the comparatively low figure in respect of choice of university regarding those who were admitted



to the Kelaniya University. Only 37.2 percent of the students admitted into Kelaniya University, have given their first choice for it. The majority of students in the Universities of Peradeniya, Colombo, Sri Jayawardenepura and Moratuwa, had succeeded in entering the university of their first choice.

When choice of course of study at the time of applying for admission to the university is considered, it is pertinent to find out the factors that influence a student in choosing a particular course of study. While it is apparent that in choosing a course, a student would be guided by one or more of the career guidance sources mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, it has to be stressed that socio-economic background of a student would also play an important role in his choice of a course. Hence it was decided to classify first choice course of study by such factors as occupation and education level of father, household income and ethnicity.

The majority of the fathers of those students who opted for Professional and Science courses of studies belong to the teaching/ clerical/technical and allied occupational category and managerial/ administrative/professional and university staff category (see Table 7.5). In the case of those who opted for Arts courses, the occupation of fathers clustered around the farmers/fishermen category. What is significant here is that in a country in which 50.4 percent of the population belong to the agricultural/forestry/ hunting/fishing occupational category (1971 Census data), only 9.6 percent and 15.0 percent of those who opted for Professional and Science courses arose from this occupational category. The bulk of this group (40.3 percent) have access mainly to Arts courses, largely due to the fact that the districts from which these students come are districts with a low degree of facilities for Science education.

Despite the fact that a significant proportion of fathers had secondary education among those who opted for Professional and Science courses, the fathers of a fair share of them had tertiary education, the percentages being 33.9 in the case of Professionals and 33.3 in the case of Science. Only 4.0 percent of those who had asked for Arts courses had fathers within tertiary education (see Table 7.6).



TABLE 7.5  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY DESIRED SPECIALISATION  
 AND FATHERS' OCCUPATION**

Desired Specialisation	Occupation of Father							Total
	Managerial/ Administrative/ Professional and University Staff	Teaching/ Clerical/ Technical and allied services	Business/ Landed Proprietor	Skilled and Semi- skilled	Farmers/ Fisher- men	Retired Employ- ees	Unem- ployed	
Professional	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	35.1
Science	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	(125) 5.6 (20)
Arts	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	59.3 (211)

Note : Number of students responding, in parentheses.

TABLE 7.6

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY DESIRED SPECIALISATION  
AND FATHERS' LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Education Level of Father	Desired Specialisation		
	Profes- sional	Science	Arts
Primary .. .. .	9.3	5.6	28.0
Secondary .. .. .	56.8	61.1	68.0
Tertiary .. .. .	33.9	33.3	4.0
Total .. .. .	35.4	5.4	59.2
	(118)	(18)	(197)

*Note :* Number of students responding, in parentheses. Generally, analytical comments are not made in the text in relation to numbers less than 25, unless the discussion warrants it so.

A high proportion (64.8 percent) of those in the low income category (i.e. less than Rs. 6,000 per year) had opted for Social Science and other Arts courses, whereas only 0.7 percent in the over Rs. 36,000 income category had asked for Arts courses. It is thus apparent that the demand for an Arts course shows a declining trend with an increase in income levels.

Those who opted for Professional and Science courses come from a comparatively higher income bracket than those opting for Arts courses. This is supported by Table 7.7, which shows that 36.1 percent of those who had opted for Professional courses and 40.9 percent of those who had opted for Science courses come from the Rs. 12,001 to over Rs. 36,000 income bracket. For the Arts group only 12.0 percent are from the same income bracket. Approximately 88 percent of those desiring Arts courses come from the two lowest income brackets.

The students' choice of a university course therefore is influenced by their socio-economic background in so far as socio-economic factors determine the degree of access to facilities, which would enable students to be prequalified for admission into the more prestigious and economically lucrative courses, and thereafter into socially and economically rewarding occupations.

When choice of course is analysed by ethnicity it is found that among the Sri Lanka Tamils with Science background, almost 100 percent had wanted to enter Professional courses, and this reveals the high priority given to Professional employment by this group. 36.1 percent and 5.2 percent of the Low-country Sinhalese opted for Professional and Science courses respectively, while

TABLE 7.7  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY DESIRED SPECIALISATION  
 AND ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME (IN RUPEES)**

Desired Specialisation	Household Income	No. of students responding	Less than					Over 36000	Total
			6000	6001 to 12000	12001 to 18000	18001 to 24000	24001 to 36000		
Professional	..	..	27.8	36.1	16.1	11.0	5.8	3.2	100.0
Science	..	..	45.5	13.6	13.6	4.6	9.1	13.6	100.0
Arts	..	..	64.8	23.2	7.4	2.1	1.8	0.7	100.0

Note : Generally, analytical comments are not made in the text, in relation to numbers less than 25, unless the discussion warrants it so.



58.7 percent were in the Arts category. Among the Kandyan Sinhala group, who did Science for the GCE A /Level, 18.1 percent and 6.0 percent opted for Professional and Science courses with 75.9 percent in the Arts category.

The choice of course of students was further classified by reasons that prompted students to go in for university education, type of employment preferred, and students' perceptions about factors that would make a job attractive. It appears that across all course choices the reasons influencing student participation in university education centred around the following five factors referred to earlier in this chapter.

1. Chance of obtaining employment better with a degree.
2. Inability to obtain employment with only GCE A /Level qualifications.
3. Academic interest.
4. Persuasion by parents and members of family.
5. Status considerations.

For considering the selection of students for different courses, it is pertinent to find out if there exists a match/mismatch between courses desired and actually followed. The students have no control over the actual selection process, which takes place at different stages in their university career. Selections for entry into Professional courses is completed at the time of admission into the universities, from among students who follow Physical, Biological or Combined Sciences (in the case of Law, from among Arts and others) on the basis of some stipulated entry criteria. Those who do not get selected for Professional areas of study spill over into Science or Arts areas of study. The filtering process for entry into Special Science and Special Arts courses<sup>1</sup> operated either at the end of the first or second year of university undergraduate study with the exception of a few Arts courses for which selection is done at the time of entry.

For the entirety of students in the Medical, Engineering and Law fields, the course followed had been their first choice, with the exception of students in Dentistry and Veterinary Sciences

1. These are 4 year courses of study where students specialise in one Discipline, selected according to the particular course of study.

wherein only 40 percent and 25 percent had obtained their first choice respectively. For the balance, therefore, it had been a rejection from the prestigious area of Medicine and a spill over into the other areas of Professional study.

For 37.2 percent of those in the Science group the course followed had not been their first choice. These students had already been rejected at the time of admission into the university, from the prestigious Professional areas of study and had entered the area of Science. For 56.6 percent of the General Science<sup>1</sup> students the course followed was not their first choice, which indicates that they may have been rejected at the second stage of selection from special courses, and had entered the general course. The majority of those in the Special Science courses, such as Botany, Zoology and Chemistry, had succeeded in obtaining their choices.

A similar process operates for selection into the Arts areas of study where selection for specialisation takes place after entry into the universities with the exception of the 'Job oriented' courses<sup>2</sup> for which selection is made at the time of entry. (In case of the Arts students, rejection from Science and entry into Arts stream would have taken place at the school level). 69.7 percent of the General and Combined Arts students had obtained their first choice. For a high proportion of students in Commerce (63.9 percent), Economics (58.2 percent), and Sinhala (57.1 percent) these courses had not been their first choice.

When reasons for being rejected from the first choice are analysed, it appears that for students following different courses of studies, the primary reason given is, *not qualified for first preference*, which accounts for 64.1 percent of the responses. 4.6 percent realised better employment prospects in the present course, 3.2 percent were prevented from following the course of their choice, as it was *not available in the University* and 2.5 percent had personal problems related to following the course. This again reflects the fact that students have very little control over the selective process operating at the university level, which is based entirely on objective factors of selection.

1. General Degree Courses (Science and Arts) are of 3 year duration, where students read 3 Disciplines, selected according to the particular course of study.

2. See Chapter 5 for details.

A perusal of the data for the different aspects of the student educational career when related to yet another key variable used in the study, namely age, did not bring to light any significant relationship.

### 7.3.3 Course of study followed

With the objective of determining the influence of the socio-economic background on the pursuit of different areas of undergraduate study, three indicators, viz. fathers' education, fathers' occupation and annual household income were considered for study. Each of these three variables has been analysed in terms of the course of study followed by students at the university. The ensuing paragraphs of this section give a brief account of the results of this analysis. It would be interesting to note, at this instance, that this data also serves to supplement the findings of an earlier part of this chapter, wherein desired specialisation was analysed by socio-economic background; these findings showed a high degree of relationship between students' background and course desired.

From the present analysis it appears that students actually following Professional and Science areas of study are also drawn from a relatively higher socio-economic level than those following Arts areas of study.

Furthermore, a comparison of the educational levels of the fathers of university students reveals that although a high proportion of them had secondary level qualifications, the fathers of 34.6 percent of those following Professional courses of study and 33.3 percent of the Science students had studied up to tertiary level, while only 4.1 percent of the Arts students had fathers with this level of education.

The available data show that the fathers of 44.1 percent and 52.2 percent of the Professional and Science students belong to the managerial/administrative/professional/university staff and teaching/clerical/technical and allied occupational categories. Only 15.3 percent of the Arts students had fathers coming from these occupational groupings. In contrast, the fathers of 36.6 percent of the Arts students belonged to the farmers/fishermen occupational grouping with only 6.6 percent and 11.9 percent of the Professional



and Science students respectively, having fathers engaged in this occupation. With almost half of all employed persons engaged in agriculture/animal husbandry/hunting/fishing/forestry<sup>1</sup>, it is significant that only 6.6 percent and 11.9 percent of the students coming from this group could enter Professional and Science areas of study respectively.

In relation to income levels the income bracket Rs. 12,001 to Rs. 36,000 and over accounts for 36.2 percent of the Professional students, 38.2 percent of the Science students and only 12.6 percent of the Arts students. The aggregate percentages as for the two lowest income groups viz. "less than Rs. 6,000" and "Rs. 6,001 to Rs. 12,000" are 87.4 percent, 59.4 percent and 58.2 percent for Arts, Professional and Science students respectively.

Despite the fact that the present university student population in Sri Lanka is drawn from a relatively larger segment of the country's population, than it was in the past, the data drawn reveals that there still exists a 'nexus' between socio-economic characteristics and the ability to enter courses leading to socially and economically rewarding employment in so far as socio-economic characteristics determine access to facilities which make participation in these courses possible.

### 7.3.4 Expected benefits from university education

At the time of entry into the university, students are most likely to have certain expectations in regard to university education either in terms of access to employment, academic benefits or social and personal benefits. The question on 'expected benefits' being an open one, it appears from the responses that students have different expectations with regard to education. Eighteen benefits were identified from the responses and of these the most important (in order of importance) are—

Improvement of subject knowledge (35 percent)

Acquisition of social skills (18 percent)

Improvement of employability (10.7 percent)

Improvement of general knowledge (7.2 percent)

1. Statistical pocket book, 1981 — Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka.

Personality development including development of discipline, self-confidence and ability to work systematically (6.4 percent).

An analysis by courses followed (Table 7.8) reveals that for all courses *improvement of subject knowledge* is the most important benefit expected by students, followed by *improvement of employability* for Science courses, and *acquisition of social skills* for Arts Courses. The Professionals gave equal importance to *the acquisition of social skills* along with *employability*. Of the above-mentioned benefits, *improvement of employability* rates third among the Arts students while *improvement of general knowledge* receives the fourth highest rating from all course groups.

There does not appear to be any observable relationship between the socio-economic background and students' expectations so far as the overall pattern described for all courses is reflected. However a higher proportion, with fathers in the primary educational level, expect *improvement of subject knowledge* as compared to those with fathers in the secondary and tertiary educational levels. Similarly a higher proportion in the former group is concerned with *the acquisition of social skills* than in other groups. A significant fact which emerges is that a higher proportion of students with fathers in the tertiary educational group and in the Rs. 18,001 to Rs. 36,000 and over income category, and from managerial/administrative/professional/university staff and teaching/clerical/technical and allied occupational categories expect *improvement of employability* as compared with the other groups. The confidence expressed in gaining access to employment may either be explained by their being in courses with a high degree of employability (a phenomenon observed earlier) or may be due to the type of socio-economic backgrounds from which they come which may help in accelerating the job-getting process. For the other groups the employment factor does not supersede other factors. For example the proportion giving *employability* as a benefit is seen to decrease with decrease in income levels.

TABLE 7.8

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES OF STUDENTS BY EXPECTED BENEFITS FROM UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY COURSE FOLLOWED**

<i>University course followed:</i>	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Expected benefits:</b>				
1. Improvement of employability ..	13.4	16.9	8.4	10.7
2. Improvement of subject knowledge ..	32.1	27.5	37.7	35.0
3. Improvement of knowledge of English/ Sinhala/other languages ..	2.8	0.6	1.1	1.3
4. Improvement of general knowledge ..	7.9	12.1	5.9	7.2
5. Improvement of social status ..	6.0	3.3	4.7	5.0
6. Acquisition of social skills ..	13.5	15.4	20.0	18.0
7. Personality development including development of discipline, self- confidence and ability to work systematically ..	7.1	9.4	5.6	6.4
8. Others ..	17.2	14.8	16.6	16.4
<i>Grand Total</i> ..	100.0 (215)	100.0 (149)	100.0 (663)	100.0 (1027)

*Note:* The distribution here is based on multiplicity of responses in regard to expected benefits. The absolute numbers are given in parentheses.

TABLE 7.9

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION AND COURSE FOLLOWED AT THE UNIVERSITY**

<i>Course followed:</i>	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Reasons for dissatisfaction:</b>				
1. Inadequate knowledge of the subject	26.9	11.1	42.9	36.9
2. Inadequate knowledge of English ..	—	11.1	8.1	7.5
3. Poor practical/vocational skills ..	23.1	29.7	8.1	12.6
4. Shortcomings in course content ..	23.1	3.7	5.0	7.0
5. Poor teaching methods ..	11.5	3.7	1.2	2.8
6. Course content not relevant to the needs of the country and/or life	11.5	14.8	4.3	6.5
7. No job opportunities where subject knowledge could be applied ..	—	7.4	16.8	13.6
8. Course studied—				
(a) does not promote creativity	—	11.1	6.2	6.1
(b) is not intellectually challenging				
(c) uninteresting				
9. Others ..	3.9	7.4	7.4	7.0
<i>Total</i> ..	100.0 (26)	100.0 (27)	100.0 (161)	100.0 (214)

*Note:* Number of students responding, in parentheses.



### 7.3.5 Degree of satisfaction with university education and with course followed

The previous sections reveal that students had fairly definite ideas regarding the reasons that prompted their participation in university education, and the benefits expected therefrom. To throw further light on the subject, it was felt necessary to assess the students' perception about university education, particularly at this stage when they had gone through, practically, the entirety of their undergraduate life in the university. To a question: "Do you think that the university education received has been a waste of time"? the majority of students had responded in the negative (73 percent). Only 14.9 percent are not sure. A similar response is observed when the question is classified by course of study and relevant socio-economic background.

The data on a further question on *the degree of satisfaction with the course followed* show that 53.4 percent had been satisfied with the course of study, while the remaining 46.6 percent had not shown satisfaction. Among the reasons for satisfaction, by course followed, it appears that *satisfied academic interests* (i.e. broadened subject knowledge, broadened general knowledge) is the most important reason given for satisfaction by all course groupings, followed by *improved employment prospects* and *improved social communicative skills*.

When reasons for dissatisfaction are analysed, it is seen that 36.9 percent are not satisfied due to *inadequate knowledge of the subject* and this is significant in the light of the fact that all students had stressed *improvement of subject knowledge* as the most important benefit to be expected. This was followed, in order of importance by (see table 7.9).—

*no job opportunities where subject knowledge could be applied;*

*poor practical skills;*

*inadequate knowledge of English;*

*shortcomings in course content;*

*course content not relevant to the needs of the country and/or life.*

A course specific analysis reveals that for the Professional students, *inadequate knowledge of the subject* emerges as the most important reason for dissatisfaction with course followed by *poor practical/vocational skills* and *shortcomings in course content*. *Poor teaching methods* and *course content not relevant to the needs of the country and/or life* are also reasons for dissatisfaction within this group.

For the Arts group *inadequate knowledge of the subject* received the highest response followed by *no opportunities where subject knowledge could be used*. This is understandable in the context of the limited employment opportunities for Arts graduates as at present. It is also noteworthy that of the students who gave this as a reason, a further probe shows that 24.1 percent are students in Economics, and 20.7 percent and 17.2 percent were from the General Arts and Education courses.

Science students seemed to be more dissatisfied with the poor vocational/practical skills than with the theoretical knowledge imparted at university level. *Course content not relevant to country's needs, inadequate knowledge of subject, inadequate knowledge of English and course studied—*

- (a) *does not promote creativity,*
- (b) *is not intellectually challenging and*
- (c) *is uninteresting*

are other reasons given by this group.

However, looking at the degree of satisfaction with course, when analysed by university and course, there seems to be a general dissatisfaction with the Combined and General Arts courses in all five universities.

At the University of Jayawardenepura 77.7 percent have been dissatisfied with those courses, while at Colombo, Kelaniya and Peradeniya the percentage dissatisfied are 50 percent, 68.8 percent and 50.9 percent respectively. Reasons for dissatisfaction may either be due to the meagre employment opportunities for those with General/Combined degrees, or may be attributed to the inadequacies of content of the subjects taught to which reference has been made earlier. In regard to the General Science courses, a higher percentage of students showed dissatisfaction in all universities.

### 7.3.6 Suggested improvements in course followed

Students were asked to suggest improvements in their course of studies related to *course content* and in *method of instruction*. Table 7.10 gives the *suggested improvements in course* for different courses of study. Approximately 95 percent of the students who responded are in favour of improving their course content, (the non-response to this question was as high as 30.7 percent) while 9.6 percent of the Professional students and 11.1 percent of the Science students have expressed satisfaction with their courses. 44.3 percent of the respondents are for improving the practical content of the courses and for relating content to national development needs, while 23.3 percent want a broader knowledge of the subject. Only 10.8 percent are interested in revising course content to give a job orientation.

Of the Professional group 25.8 percent are in favour of reorganising course content to relevant national needs while almost an equal percentage (21 percent) emphasized the need for practical and work experience and for broadening course content. A similar pattern can be observed for the Arts and Science groups who stressed the same factors, but with variations in percentage points. The generality of the content of General and Combined Arts subjects and the restricted employment opportunities for those pursuing these subjects led to concern among this group for revising course content to give a job orientation, while for the other groups this does not receive a high rating. The fact that only 11.3 percent of the General and Combined Arts groups emphasise practical training/work experience (the lowest proportion among all students) further explains the generality of these subjects which do not give scope for practical training. 16.1 percent of the Professional students are in favour of removal of unnecessary topics from their courses (component of 'other' category). This is particularly true for the Medical students who feel that they are overburdened with work arising out of the speciality of the subjects. 11.1 percent of the Special Science students felt there was no need for any change.

The non-response rate to the question on improvements in methods of instruction is as high as 35.3 percent. Here too the majority of those responding are for improving teaching methods



TABLE 7.10  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN COURSE  
 CONTENT AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

Suggested Improvements	Course Followed	ARTS			SCIENCE			Total
		Profes- sional	Combined & General	Special	General	Special	Total	
1. Should give more scope for practical training/work experience	..	21.0	11.3	23.0	30.6	50.0	22.7	
2. Should revise content to give a broader knowledge of course ..	..	21.0	27.4	25.0	16.7	16.6	23.3	
3. Course should be directed towards improving general knowledge	..	—	1.6	2.6	5.5	—	2.1	
4. Course content should be revised in order to give a job orientation	..	3.2	22.6	9.6	11.1	5.6	10.8	
5. Include English as a compulsory component of the course of study	..	1.6	6.5	7.7	—	—	5.1	
6. Should re-organise course content to relevant national needs ..	..	25.8	24.2	18.6	27.8	11.1	21.6	
7. Others ..	..	27.4	6.4	13.5	8.3	16.7	14.4	
<b>Total</b>	..	100.0 (62)	100.0 (62)	100.0 (156)	100.0 (36)	100.0 (18)	100.0 (334)	

*Notes:* Number of students responding in parentheses. Generally analytical comments are not in the text, in relation to numbers less than 25, unless the discussion warrants it so.

at university level (see Table 7.11)<sup>1</sup>. The improvements suggested by 48.3 percent of the respondents are related to the inclusion of techniques that would give a practical training knowledge. These are—

- Use of audio visual aids (7.2 percent)
- Field study programmes (4.5 percent)
- Practical training (25.8 percent)
- Self-teaching procedures and attitudes (5.1 percent)
- Research Programmes (5.7 percent).

15.9 percent of the students suggested free exchange of ideas through the use of—

- Discussions and seminars (6.6 percent)
- Seminar programmes with outside participation (3.3 percent)
- Better rapport between students and teachers (4.5 percent)
- Teaching method should contribute towards the development of personality (1.5 percent).

Altogether twenty one types of improvements were listed. For the Professional students, some among other suggestions are—

- Reduce duration of Clinical appointments<sup>2</sup>/suitable adjustments in time table (10.8 percent)
- Better library and other facilities (9.2 percent)
- Include field study programmes (6.1 percent).

The distribution across suggestions for the Science students is fairly well spread. Among the Arts category an equal percentage of students (7.3 percent) want more *discussion and seminars* and *research programmes*, while 6.4 percent are for *encouraging self-teaching procedures/attitudes*, and 6.0 percent are for *teaching in the medium of English*.

For the purpose of facilitating practical experience and for promotion of job oriented knowledge provided by different courses

1. Despite the fact that most suggestions are with low percentages, they have been included in the table to highlight variations. However, no attempt has been made to analyse them in the text, unless it was felt necessary.
2. Suggested by Medical Faculty students.

students were asked for their opinions on the introduction of work experience programmes at pre-university level and on the periodical exchange of academic/non-academic personnel between the universities and other institutions in the country. With regard to the former suggestions 39.2 percent are in favour of work experience, while the rest are classified under the 'no' or 'cannot say' categories. The reasons given for approval of this arrangement cluster around—

- opportunity of obtaining a subject based practical training (48.3 percent)
- such work experience would give an opportunity of studying courses with greater interest and understanding (27.5 percent)
- would enhance the value of academic education while providing a practical training along with a job at the time of securing a job (12.1 percent)

According to students the benefits accruing from the exchange of academic/non-academic staff between the universities and outside institutions, when analysed by course (see Table 7.12), show that across all courses the highest percentage of students feel that such an arrangement would *broaden the knowledge* (32.5 percent) and would *help supplement theoretical knowledge with practical experience in the field* (29.6 percent). 8.3 percent of the total respondents hope that this would *improve their knowledge of employment conditions* while 6.4 percent and 6.2 percent are of opinion that this would help *officials to gain an idea of student problems/an understanding of problems outside the university*. A higher proportion of females in the Professional, Science and Arts courses give, *broadens the knowledge*, and *improves knowledge of employment conditions* as reasons, as compared to their male counterparts. An increase in female participation in education and employment has been experienced only within the last twenty years, which explains their lack of knowledge of employment, as contrasted to the males.



TABLE 7.11  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS  
 IN METHOD OF INSTRUCTION AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

<i>Suggestions</i>	<i>Course followed</i>	<i>Profes- sional</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Use of audio visual aids .. ..	..	13.8	6.0	5.5	7.2
2. Use of discussion and seminars .. ..	..	4.6	6.0	7.3	6.6
3. More practical training .. ..	..	23.1	20.0	28.0	25.8
4. Include field study programmes .. ..	..	6.1	8.0	3.2	4.5
5. Include seminar programmes where experts from outside organisations could participate .. ..	..	—	2.0	4.6	3.3
6. Better rapport between teachers and students .. ..	..	6.1	2.0	4.6	4.5
7. Encourage self-teaching procedures and attitudes .. ..	..	1.6	4.0	6.4	5.1
8. Printed lecture notes should be distributed prior to lecture. Lecture time to be used more to discuss points .. ..	..	1.6	6.0	1.5	2.1
9. Include research programmes .. ..	..	1.6	4.0	7.3	5.7
10. Provide for the writing of dissertations, original essays, etc. as a necessary requirement .. ..	..	—	—	1.5	0.9
11. Improve language and teaching skills of staff .. ..	..	1.6	4.0	2.7	2.7
12. Better library & other facilities .. ..	..	9.2	2.0	4.1	4.8
13. Medium of teaching should be English .. ..	..	1.6	8.0	6.0	5.4
14. Medium of teaching should be Sinhala/Tamil and English .. ..	..	—	4.0	0.9	1.2
15. Teaching method should promote development of personality .. ..	..	3.0	—	1.5	1.5
16. Teaching method should develop a sense of responsibility .. ..	..	1.6	6.0	2.2	2.7
17. Teaching method should promote scientific thinking .. ..	..	3.0	2.0	3.7	3.3
18. Introduce continuous evaluation .. ..	..	4.6	—	—	0.9
19. Teaching method should not be confined to coaching for exams .. ..	..	4.6	2.0	1.8	2.4
20. Reduce duration of clinical appointments/suitable adjustment to be made in time table .. ..	..	10.8	6.0	2.2	4.5
21. Individual attention .. ..	..	—	—	0.4	0.4
22. No change .. ..	..	1.5	8.0	4.6	4.5
	<i>Total</i> ..	100.0 (65)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (218)	100.0 (333)

*Note* : Absolute numbers in parentheses.

Among the Professionals a higher proportion (10.2 percent) as compared to the Arts and Science students feel that course content should be made relevant to the country's needs. The proportion of females giving this reason is significantly higher than the male proportion (7.2 percent).

For 21.9 percent of the Arts students, *improve knowledge of employment conditions* (7.3 percent), *establish contact with outside organisations* (7.3 percent) and to *help officials to gain some idea of student problems and/an understanding of problems outside the university*, are advantages arising from the arrangement of periodical exchange of academic personnel between university

and outside activities. 17.2 percent of the Science group are of opinion that such staff exchanges would improve their knowledge of employment conditions. Here too the female proportion is significantly higher than the male proportion. For the Arts as well as for the Science students and more significantly for females in all courses, concern with employment seems to be an important factor.

On the other hand, the reasons given by those who disapprove of this arrangement are—(see Table 7.13)

Such programmes would cause confusion in the normal programmes of teaching (22.7 percent).

Such programmes are inappropriate to university education (20.4 percent). (the female proportion being higher).

No relationship to some courses of studies (18.2 percent) (female proportion was higher).

Employment of permanent staff will be preferred (18.2 percent).

Such programmes are already available (11.4 percent).

TABLE 7.12

**Percent distribution of students by reasons given for considering periodical exchange of academic personnel between the University and Government/Semi-Government/Private Sector as IMPORTANT and course followed**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Course followed</i>	<i>Professional</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Broadens the knowledge .. .. .	.. .. .	33.3	33.3	27.6	32.5
2. Supplements theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge in the field .. .. .	.. .. .	30.4	28.4	34.5	29.6
3. To make course content relevant to country's needs .. .. .	.. .. .	10.2	4.9	6.9	6.2
4. To correct shortcomings in course field .. .. .	.. .. .	5.8	4.2	1.7	4.1
5. To solve the problem of shortage of staff .. .. .	.. .. .	—	1.9	—	1.3
6. Improve knowledge of employment conditions .. .. .	.. .. .	4.4	7.3	17.2	8.3
7. To establish contact with outside organisations .. .. .	.. .. .	—	7.3	—	4.9
8. Could help officials to gain some idea of student problems/an understanding of problems outside the university .. .. .	.. .. .	5.8	7.3	3.5	6.4
9. Others .. .. .	.. .. .	10.1	5.4	8.6	6.7
	<i>Total ..</i>	100.0 (69)	100.0 (261)	100.0 (58)	100.0 (388)

*Note* : Number of students responding, in parentheses.

TABLE 7.13

Percent distribution of students by reasons given for considering periodical exchange of academic personnel between the University and Government/Semi-government/Private Sector as UNIMPORTANT

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Such programmes are already available .. .. .	11.4
2. Might create confusion to students/and in the normal programme of teaching ..	22.7
3. Might give room for political interference and interference by outsiders ..	6.8
4. Might not get competent teachers .. .. .	—
5. Might deprive students from visiting organisations outside the universities ..	2.3
6. No relationship to some courses of studies .. .. .	18.2
7. Such exchanges are inappropriate to university education .. .. .	20.4
8. Employment of permanent staff will be preferred .. .. .	18.2
<i>Total</i> .. .. .	100.0 (44)

*Note* : Number of students responding in parentheses.

A course specific analysis has not been attempted, for the frequencies are marginal and cannot be commented upon effectively.

#### 7.4 Employment preference and student perception of the employment market

It can be generally assumed that by the time a student enters the final year of his university academic career, he would have fairly definite ideas about the type of job preferred as well as a knowledge of the employment market into which he would enter on completion of his studies. His aspirations and expectations in regard to employment would partly be influenced by prevailing employment conditions, and partly by his academic and socio-economic background. Hence questions in relation to job preferences, factors relevant to secure a job, anticipated waiting period for a job and types of jobs available were cross classified by the academic and socio-economic background of students.

##### 7.4.1 Job preferences

Data was obtained relating to the job preferences of the students. Two categories of employment were identified—

- (1) those that are directly relevant to course followed and
- (2) those that are not directly relevant to course followed.



When the responses of those who indicated job preference directly related to the course followed (see Table 7.14), it appears that among the Professional students, 72 percent aspire to secure professional occupations while 19 percent and 5 percent preferred teaching/research and technical jobs and university staff positions respectively. The bulk of the Science and Arts groups preferred teaching/research and technical occupations, with only 31.7 percent and 9.2 percent in the Arts and Science groups indicating a preference for executive positions respectively. The fact that 1.5 percent of the Science students and 3.6 percent of the Arts students prefer clerical positions points to the gradual waning of traditional conventions with regard to 'graduate level' jobs with increasing numbers entering sub-graduate positions (see Chapter 6). Only 6.2 percent of the Science group and 6.8 percent of the Arts group prefer professional employment, and 4.6 percent of the former group and 5.3 percent of the latter group prefer university staff appointments.

When preferences for positions not directly relevant to course are considered by course followed (see Table 7.15), it emerged that of the Professional group almost an equal proportion (36.7 percent) prefer executive and teaching/research/technical occupations, with professional appointments receiving the second highest preferences (23.3 percent). Of the Science group a high proportion (56.4 percent) prefer executive positions, while among the Arts group an equal proportion (28.9 percent) prefer executive and teaching/research/technical positions. What is significant about the preferences prevailing among the Arts students is that a high proportion (23.5 percent) are satisfied with obtaining clerical appointments when moving away from directly relevant occupations. (It must be noted that a University Degree is not the minimum requirement for entry into clerical positions). A similar trend can be observed in the case of Science students.

With regard to choice of the sector of employment, responses received from students conform to the traditional expectations of youth, with the highest proportion of students in each course category i.e Professional, Science and Arts—preferring the government sector (See Table 7.16). However, of the Professional group a higher proportion of students (18.5 percent) preferred the private

TABLE 7.14  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY JOB PREFERENCE AND UNIVERSITY COURSE OF STUDY  
 (JOB DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO COURSE STUDIED)**

Course followed	Job Preferences	No. of students responding	Professional	Executive positions and Technical	Teaching/Research and Technical	Clerical	University staff	Others	Total
Professional	..	100	72.0	2.0	19.0	—	5.0	2.0	22.4
Science	..	65	6.2	9.2	76.9	1.5	4.6	1.6	14.6
Arts	..	281	6.8	31.7	48.4	3.6	5.3	4.2	63.0
Total	..	446	21.2	21.8	46.0	2.5	5.2	3.3	100.0

TABLE 7.15  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY JOB PREFERENCE AND UNIVERSITY COURSE OF STUDY  
 (JOB NOT DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO COURSE STUDIED)**

Course followed	Job Preferences	No. of students responding	Professional	Executive positions and Technical	Teaching/Research and Technical	Clerical	University staff	Others	Total
Professional	..	30	23.3	36.7	36.7	—	—	3.3	11.7
Science	..	39	—	56.4	25.7	12.8	—	5.1	15.2
Arts	..	187	2.7	28.9	28.9	23.5	3.7	12.3	73.1
Total	..	256	4.7	34.0	29.3	19.1	2.7	10.2	100.0

TABLE 7.16  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS BY PREFERRED SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT,  
 COURSE FOLLOWED AND SEX**

Preferred sector of employment	Course followed and Sex						Science			Arts		
	Professional		Science		Arts		Science			Arts		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Government ..	60.0	76.3	65.8	57.1	64.5	60.0	82.1	90.3	86.0	82.1	90.3	86.0
Semi-government ..	21.4	5.3	15.7	28.6	16.1	23.8	12.3	6.7	9.6	12.3	6.7	9.6
Private ..	18.6	18.4	18.5	14.3	19.4	16.2	5.6	3.0	4.4	5.6	3.0	4.4
<b>Total : (A)</b>	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<b>Total : (B)</b>		23.5			16.4			60.1			60.1	
M ..		(70)			(49)			(179)			(179)	
F ..		16.3			13.2			70.5			70.5	
T ..		(38)			(31)			(165)			(165)	
		20.3			15.0			64.7			64.7	
		(108)			(80)			(344)			(344)	

Note : Number responding, in parentheses



sector to the semi-government sector, while of the Science and Arts students a higher proportion preferred the semi-government sector to the private sector. Apart from certain objective factors influencing preference for the government sector (see Chapter 6) access to private sector employment is based on subjective considerations, which the majority of students are unlikely to satisfy.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand a higher proportion among the students in the professional category seeking private sector employment in preference to semi-government employment, would be due to the comparatively higher socio-economic levels of these students which partly determine access to the private sectors.

A significant fact which emerges when responses are analysed sex-wise is that in all three course groups, a higher proportion of females preferred government employment as compared to their male counterparts. Of the Science group a higher proportion of females preferred private sector employment.

Preferences for specific employment categories have also been classified with reference to socio-economic variables such as the occupation and education of father. Out of the total number who prefer professional appointments an equal proportion (21.3 percent) had fathers in the teaching/clerical/technical occupations and in the retired employees category (here fathers' occupation was unknown). Only 4 percent of the students' fathers were involved in farming/fishing. This conforms to findings referred to previously wherein the majority of the Arts group come from the farming/fishing occupational group with the major section of the Professional students coming from the two highest occupational groupings. The expectation for professional appointments could be low among the children of the farmers/fishermen whose academic background is relatively poor. When other employment preferences among students are considered, a significant relationship emerges between fathers' occupation and preferred employment. For example when preferences for executive level positions and teaching/clerical/technical occupations are considered, a higher proportion of students showing such preference in each group have fathers in the farming/fishing occupational category. An equal proportion preferring

1. See *Report on the study of unemployment among women Arts graduates* — Sri Lanka Federation of University Women, 1980.

executive positions (16 percent) have fathers in the 'retired employees' and teaching/clerical/technical groups, while 18.1 percent and 15.5 percent of those preferring teaching/research technical appointments have fathers in teaching/clerical/technical occupations and in skilled/semi skilled occupations respectively. However a deviation occurs in the case of those preferring university staff appointments, where a high proportion (33.3 percent) have fathers in the highest occupational category followed by 16.7 percent with fathers in skilled/semi skilled and another 16.7 percent with fathers in the farming/fishing occupation. Among those preferring clerical appointments, 42.9 percent of students have fathers in teaching/clerical/technical occupations and another 42.9 per cent in farming/fishing occupations.

When employment preferences of students are analysed by the educational level of fathers, it appeared that in the case of all employment preferences, the proportion of fathers with secondary education is highest in each group, with fluctuations occurring in each preference group, in relation to father with tertiary and primary education.

#### **7.4.2 Relative importance of different factors for making a job attractive**

In this instance, students were asked to indicate the relative importance of different factors for making a job attractive. In addition to the 8 specific factors listed under this question, a further 6 were also identified under *any other* category. Of these 14 factors, 8 were observed to have been given high priority by all students in different course groups, with marginal variations in the order of importance of factors within each course category (see Table 7.17). This shows to a large extent that common views prevail among students in regard to what would attract them to jobs in the employment market.

Table 7.17 gives the relative importance of different factors analysed by course followed. Among the Professional group *good income* receives the highest importance followed, in order of importance, by *job satisfaction*, *good career prospects*, *ability to improve competence*, *security of employment*, *opportunity for further studies available*, *scope for use of special talents* and *work*

TABLE 7.17  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES RELATED TO RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT FACTORS FOR MAKING A JOB ATTRACTIVE BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

<i>Courses</i>	<i>Factors</i>										<i>Total</i>
	<i>Good income</i>	<i>Security of employment</i>	<i>Career prospects</i>	<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<i>Ability to improve competence</i>	<i>Scope for use of special talents</i>	<i>Work experience</i>	<i>Opportunity for further studies available</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Professional ..	16.9	12.8	14.7	16.0	13.7	8.1	5.7	9.6	2.5	100.0 (531)	
Science ..	16.6	13.8	15.8	12.8	10.7	8.9	6.6	13.3	1.5	100.0 (392)	
Arts ..	17.2	16.9	16.0	11.6	11.3	8.5	4.1	11.8	2.6	100.0 (1703)	
	<i>Total ..</i>	17.0	15.6	15.7	12.6	11.7	4.8	11.6	2.5	100.0 (2626)	

*Note* : Figures in parentheses give the number of responses. The distribution here is based on multiplicity of responses in regard to factors for making a job attractive.



*environment*. The proportion of females giving *good income*, *job satisfaction* and *work environment* as factors are higher than the corresponding male proportion in these categories.

Among the Science group, *good income* is followed by *good career prospects*, *security of employment*, *opportunity for further studies available*, *job satisfaction*, *ability to improve competence*, *scope for use of special talents* and *work environment*. The proportion of females giving these factors (excluding those giving factors such as *ability to improve competence* and *use of special talents*) are higher than the corresponding male proportion.

For the Arts group, *good income*, *security of employment* and *good career prospects* receive the highest priority. These are followed by *opportunity for further studies available*, *job satisfaction*, *ability to improve competence*, and *scope for use of special talents*. There seems to be greater concern among the female Arts students for *good income*, *security of employment*, *work environment* and *availability of opportunity for further studies*, than among the males.

The general pattern of responses observed above is reflected in the results of analysis of the preferences by fathers' occupation, education and income. *Good income*, *security of employment*, *good career prospects*, *job satisfaction*, *ability to improve competence*, *scope for use of special talents*, *work environment* and *opportunity for further studies available* were factors which continued to be the main forms of attraction for students coming from varying socio-economic levels. However a deviation from the general pattern occurs when an equal proportion of students (6.7 percent) whose parents did not have any education indicated, *ability to improve competence*, *scope for use of special talents*, *work environment* and *opportunity for further studies available* as factors for job attractiveness. A further 6.7 percent in this category were concerned with *social status* whereas the percentages observed for the other educational groups giving *social status* as a factor was too small to be regarded as important.

### 7.4.3 Factors relevant to secure employment

Students were asked what factors were relevant to secure employment. Eleven specific factors were listed under this

question, allowing also for *any other* responses to be specified by respondents.

Students belonging to all course categories i.e. Professional, Science and Arts — gave a greater weightage to *knowledge of English, course of study followed, academic achievement, experience* and *personality* than to other factors listed. However, while the Professional and Science students regard *course followed* as the most important criterion of recruitment, Arts students however stress *knowledge of English* which emerged as the most important factor for selection into employment. Other predominant factors listed by all students are, *distinction in extra-curricular activities, letters of recommendation, personal contact with employer, political patronage, status of school* and *sex*.

A classification of the factors by fathers' occupation and education reveals that in the case of occupation, a similar clustering of responses over the same factors could be observed in each occupational group. However with the exception of the students with fathers in the managerial/administrative/professional/university staff group for students with fathers in the other occupational groupings *knowledge of English* was, by and large, the most important factor for securing employment.

A similar pattern of response comes out when the factors are considered by the educational levels of the fathers. Students, whose fathers have had a tertiary level education, specified *course followed* as the most important factor. In the case of students whose fathers have had either a primary/secondary level education, or no schooling at all, *knowledge of English* emerged as the most important factor.

The pattern of responses noted above conforms to the general situation in regard to the employment of graduates. In the context of the existing demand for Professionals and Science graduates in the labour market, *course followed* would be the determining factor for securing employment, whereas for the Arts graduates who are presently found to be in excess, entry into employment would have to depend on other factors. The importance given to proficiency in English by this group shows that this would emerge as the major criterion of selection of suitable candidates for employment, although other factors are also considered.

#### 7.4.4 Knowledge of English

A self assessment by students on the level of proficiency in the English language when analysed by course followed (see Table 7.18) points to a very low level of proficiency among the Arts students. A noteworthy observation however is that a higher proportion (50 percent) of those claiming to have a *high* level of proficiency come from the Professional areas of study, while the corresponding proportion for the Science and Arts groups are 16.7 percent and 33.3 percent respectively. It is also evident that a higher proportion of the Arts students had an *average* knowledge of English as compared to the Professional and Science students. Only 8.9 percent of the Professional students and 5.9 percent of the Science students had no knowledge of the language.

The proportion of females with *high* and *average* knowledge of English coming from the Science courses is higher than the corresponding male proportion, while the proportion of females with *average* knowledge, in the Arts courses, is higher than the corresponding male proportion.

TABLE 7.18

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS INDICATING LEVEL OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH BY COURSE FOLLOWED AND SEX**

Course and Sex		Level of Proficiency		High	Average	Weak	Nil
Professional	M	..	..	57.1	38.8	28.8	15.5
	F	..	..	43.7	29.0	18.8	0.0
	T	..	..	50.0	34.5	24.4	8.9
Arts	M	..	..	35.7	32.2	46.2	74.3
	F	..	..	31.3	39.2	68.3	100.0
	T	..	..	33.3	35.4	56.0	85.2
Science	M	..	..	7.2	29.0	25.0	10.2
	F	..	..	25.0	31.8	12.9	0.0
	T	..	..	16.7	30.1	19.6	5.9
Total	M	..	..	100.0 (14)	100.0 (62)	100.0 (104)	100.0 (39)
	F	..	..	100.0 (16)	100.0 (51)	100.0 (85)	100.0 (28)
	T	..	..	100.0 (30)	100.0 (113)	100.0 (189)	100.0 (67)

Note : Number responding, in parentheses. Generally, analytical comments are not made in the text in relation to numbers less than 25, unless the discussion warrants it so.



### 7.4.5 Anticipated period of waiting for a job

Students were asked to indicate the period of time they would have to wait between the graduation and the securing of the first permanent appointment. Data relating to their perceptions thus provided useful information regarding the job situation of students in the different course categories.

As seen in Table 7.19 a higher proportion of students from the Professional areas of undergraduate study, i.e. 62.7 percent, are confident of obtaining a job within 6 months of graduation. 24.7 percent of the Science students and only 11.2 percent of the Arts students anticipate a similar period of waiting.

The bulk of the Arts students responding to this question fall into the *over 3 years* waiting period. A major portion of the Professional students and Science students fall into the *less than six months* and *1-2 years* period respectively. This shows that the job situation seems to be better for the Professional and Science students than it is for the Arts group.

The duration of waiting period to secure permanent employment varies according to the occupation of father as well. Available data shows that 43.4 percent of the students giving a waiting period of less than 6 months had fathers engaged in the teaching/clerical/technical/allied occupations and in the managerial/administrative / professional / university staff occupational groupings. Similarly a higher proportion of students indicating a 6-12 months waiting period have fathers in the above mentioned two occupational groups. By contrast, those who gave waiting periods ranging from 1-2 years, 2-3 years and over 3 years, the highest proportions came from students where the fathers belonged to the occupational grouping of farmers/fishermen.

Since the anticipated period of waiting depends on the type of employment expected by students, the two variables were cross classified in Table 7.20. The pattern emerging from the table suggests that in regard to most desired occupational categories a large proportion of the students is confident that their anticipated period of waiting would be anything between 6 months and two years. In the case of those desiring technical occupations, 63.8 percent are confident that they can secure employment in

TABLE 7.19  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS INDICATING THE ANTICIPATED PERIOD OF  
 WAITING FOR JOB PLACEMENT BY UNIVERSITY COURSE FOLLOWED**

<i>Course of Study</i>	<i>Period of waiting</i>	<i>No. of students responding</i>	<i>Less than 6 months</i>	<i>6-12 months</i>	<i>1-2 Years</i>	<i>2-3 years</i>	<i>More than 3 years</i>	<i>Total</i>
Professional	..	102	62.7	19.6	10.8	4.9	2.0	21.1
Arts	..	303	11.2	18.5	19.5	8.2	42.6	62.9
Science	..	77	24.7	26.0	37.6	5.2	6.5	16.0
	<i>Total</i>	482	24.3	19.9	20.5	7.1	28.2	100.0

less than a year. This pattern is quite in order, bearing in mind the dearth for technical manpower resulting from outflux of such manpower to the oil rich developing countries and the increasing need for such manpower at the time when the country's economic policies are heavily oriented towards a rapid development process.

Among those desiring professional, university staff and teaching appointments, a high proportion felt the need to wait for more than 3 years. This indicates that the sample of students responding have understood that most of these occupations come under the purview of the State and the vacancies being limited, the opportunities are hard to come by within a relatively short period of time.

Having sought the opinion of students on matters pertaining to university education and employment, it was thought appropriate to find out their views on further education either in the form of post-graduate study or a course of study outside the university. In this regard the following two questions were asked :—

- (a) Do you intend following a post-graduate course ?
- (b) Are you following a course of study which is outside your field of graduate study ?

The responses to the above two questions are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

(a) *Post-graduate study*

A course-specific analysis to the question on post-graduate study reveals that a very high proportion of students from Professional, Science and Arts courses intend to follow post-graduate study. However the proportion expressing this desire is higher in the Professional group than in the other groups. Among the undecided category the proportion is high among the Arts students whereas the proportion stating that they have no intention of following a post-graduate study is highest for the Science students. Looking at the data in terms of fathers' occupation it was found that among the students whose fathers are in the teaching/clerical/technical and allied



TABLE 7.20  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES INDICATING THE ANTICIPATED PERIOD OF WAITING  
 BY EXPECTED TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT**

Period of waiting	Type of employment							Total	
	Profes- sional	Executive/ Managerial	Technical	University staff	Teacher	Clerical	Research/ Social work		
Less than 6 months	..	15.7	17.6	37.1	15.1	9.2	16.2	55.6	17.7
6-12 months	..	21.3	24.6	26.7	18.6	18.3	28.2	—	21.7
1-2 years	..	23.7	32.3	18.1	23.5	18.3	29.9	—	23.8
2-3 years	..	8.8	11.8	6.7	8.1	9.2	6.0	11.1	8.6
More than 3 years	..	30.5	13.7	11.4	34.7	45.0	19.7	33.3	28.2
Total	..	100.0 (249)	100.0 (102)	100.0 (106)	100.0 (285)	100.0 (109)	100.0 (117)	100.0 (09)	100.0 (977)

Note : The number of responses are given in parentheses. The distribution here is based on multiplicity of responses in regard to expected type of employment.

services, a high proportion (29.3 percent) state that they have no intention of following post-graduate study. It is also interesting to note that among those students that intend to follow post-graduate study, 27.9 percent happen to have their fathers belonging to the occupational category of farmers/fishermen.

(b) *Course of study outside graduate study*

Out of the total number of students in the sample (537) only 10.5 percent are following a course of study outside their present course of study. The courses followed by students are in the traditional professional fields such as Commerce, Accountancy, Law, Technical, Administrative and Certification courses. The Accountancy/Commerce field proves to be the most popular among students in the different course groups.

## CHAPTER 8

### SURVEY ANALYSIS—GRADUATES (1974-1979)

#### 8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7 the weightage with reference to the target population lies heavily on the university education component of the study, though in relation to aspirations on graduate employment. In this chapter the emphasis will be more on the graduates' perception of university education and the employment market. Furthermore, the sample of graduates passing out in the years 1974 through 1979 are dealt with in this chapter in order to cover the picture from the view point of transitional process influenced by external forces which are a resultant of changing government policies (direct or otherwise), which in turn are determined by the different political ideologies of successive governments.

With the above objective in mind the chapter is divided into three broad sections. The first section deals with the socio-economic and the school background of the graduate population. Labour force status of the graduates covering a detailed discussion of the employed and the unemployed has been dealt with in the next section. The final section discusses the perception of the graduates on university education and graduate employment.

The sample comprised 1,206 graduates with 23.9 percent having graduated in the year 1979. This was followed by 22.8 percent (1978) and 18.4 percent (1977). The remainder was equally spread from the graduate population passing out in the years 1974, 1975 and 1976 (clustering around 11.5 percent). This is quite in order taking into consideration the fact that the size of the samples and the response rates are necessarily based on



the graduate population passing out through the different universities during each year under consideration, (see Chapter 1 for details). The university specific distribution was quite well spread in proportions with reference to parent population. Ethnic and religious specific distributions too did not vary significantly from the national composition. However the picture observed within the different ethno-religious groups with reference to sex collaborates with the observations made in the earlier chapter in regard to the student sample and the explanation provided there holds true here as well.

## 8.2 Socio-economic and school background

This section intends to provide the background information pertaining to the sample of graduates. An attempt would also be made to compare and contrast the socio-economic and school background of the graduates with those of the student population, in order to highlight the major shifts in the university enrolment pattern. The salient features that emerge from such a comparison and which are considered important for this study, are spelt out in the subsequent paragraphs.

As could be expected the age distribution of the two samples cannot be compared. Sex composition of the graduate sample (males: 56.8 percent; females: 43.2 percent) did not vary significantly from the students' composition. Looking at one of the key variables used to explain the socio-economic background, namely, father's level of education, one sees a pattern of gradual increase in the proportion of university students whose fathers have had either a secondary or a tertiary level education, entering the universities when compared to the graduate sample, and a decline in the proportion of students whose fathers have had either primary education or no schooling at all. Among graduates this proportion is quite high. This could be either due to the fact that some of the parents of the student population were more fortunate to have benefited from the Free Education Scheme which commenced in 1945, or is indicative of a shift in the pattern whereby the entrants from affluent homes seem to have a slight edge over the others in the severe competition to find access to university education.

While comparing the data on fathers' occupation too one sees that a greater proportion of students with fathers in higher occupational categories have entered the universities. This suggests that the second reasoning suggested above is more plausible than the first.

District based entry pattern suggests that the entry from Colombo and Jaffna have increased markedly over the years. However it has to be noted that the University of Jaffna has been excluded from the study, and this may have resulted in the under-estimation of the proportion entering from Jaffna and complimentary over-estimation of proportions entering from other districts especially Colombo. Hence it is difficult to make a definite and conclusive remark in regard to the geographical distribution of entrants into the universities. Data on type of school revealed that the proportion entering from private schools had decreased over the years.

The educational background of the graduate sample did not vary significantly from the pattern observed among students. However, reasons for not following Science education at the GCE O/Level revealed a changing pattern. This becomes evident especially when we consider the response to the question whether the school had facilities for the study of Science. The negative response rate for this question, in the case of students was 15 percent as against a 55.2 percent for graduates. This generally indicates that at the time when the graduates went through secondary education, the facilities for study of Science at schools may have been rather poor, but over the years the situation could have improved with many more of the schools providing for Science education. Another interesting observation emerges from the response to the appended tail to this question, where the respondents were given the freedom to give any other reasons for not following the Science stream at the GCE O/Level. While 5.3 percent of the graduates cited economic constraints under *any other reasons* none of the students did so. This may be due mainly to the following reasons, :

- (i) The Science stream involved a greater personal expenditure on the part of the pupils in terms of materials to be used for the course than the corresponding expenditure for Arts education.

- (ii) Pupils desiring a Science education would have been compelled to move into another school in which facilities for Science education was available and this could have resulted in further expenses, on the part of the pupils concerned.

On the whole, socio-economic background was observed to have a positive effect on the choice of Science education with those at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy having better access.

Looking at the sitting<sup>1</sup> through which the graduates entered the university it is found that 57.8 percent of the graduates entered through the 1st sitting followed by 39.8 percent through the 2nd sitting, and only 8.4 percent through the 3rd sitting. The data on entry with reference to the course followed at the GCE A/Level reveals that entry through first sitting is highest among graduates who had studied Commerce followed by those who had studied Arts. The entry through the 2nd and 3rd sittings is found to be high for those graduates who had followed the Science stream at the GCE A/Level. In comparing with the students sample it could also be seen that the proportion having entered through first sitting is higher among graduates. This to some extent suggests the increasing competitiveness and the resultant increase in the entry through 2nd and 3rd sittings.

While comparing the data on reasons for pursuing higher education of the graduates with those pertaining to students it can be seen that *status consideration* tied up with university education has considerably diminished over the years and the pursuit of a university education at present is largely due to the following two reasons which are necessarily employment biased :

- (i) Chances of obtaining employment better with a University degree,
- (ii) Inability to obtain employment with only GCE A/Level qualifications.

These reasons, given by a fair proportion of university students, seem to highlight the belief held by many pursuing a university

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1. See footnote on page 206.



education, that the university is more a vehicle to better one's employment prospects rather than a place of academic excellence per se. Ironically, this trend seems to have grown despite the deterioration during the last two decades, of the graduate employment situation in Sri Lanka.

Discrepancies between choice of course of study and course actually followed in the universities have been there even at the time of entry of the graduate sample and the figures, when compared with those obtained from the student sample, do not indicate any major shifts in the trends and patterns.

In the case of expected benefits through university education, one sees a shift in the emphasis while comparing the responses of the graduates with those of the students. For instance, *improvement of employability* was an important benefit expected from university education, for 29.3 percent of the graduates whereas only 10.7 percent of the students seem to think so. On the contrary 35.1 percent of the students expected *improvement of subject knowledge* as a benefit whereas among the graduates it received the attention of only 24.0 percent. Another observation is that only 10.2 percent of the graduates felt that they could *acquire social skills* from the universities, whereas among the student sample the proportion expecting to acquire social skills at the university has almost doubled.

### 8.3 Labour force status of the graduates

The graduate sample was composed of 875 employed graduates and 331 unemployed graduates. This means that 72.6 percent of the graduates are employed and 27.4 percent are unemployed.<sup>1</sup> Despite all the remedial measures taken by the successive governments, still the unemployment rate among graduates is considerably high. A perusal of the age-sex data with reference to labour force status revealed that among the unemployed the maximum proportions came from the single ages 25, 26 and 27 years with the male proportion (57.8 percent) being slightly lower than the corresponding female proportion (62.3

1. Of the total graduate population, the percentage who had been in some form of employment prior to entering the university is 12.3 percent. A study of the employment records of these graduates reveals that a high proportion of graduates had held teaching/junior executive/clerical/technical and allied positions.

percent), whereas in the ages 28 years and over, a high proportion are employed. It was also noticed that among the females the proportion unemployed decreases rapidly with increasing age, whereas for males the decline is rather slow and continues up to the age of 35 years and over too. This reflects the effect of a larger influx of female graduates into the labour force in the recent years.

Table 8.1 shows the characteristics of the graduate population namely labour force status and year of graduation with reference to sex and course of study at the university. Here it could be seen that the proportion of unemployed is rather low among the graduates who passed out in the years 1974 and 1975. It gradually increases in the subsequent years to reach the peak of 49.0 percent for the year 1979. This broadly indicates that nearly 95.0 percent of the graduates would find employment within 3 to 4 years of graduation. However, when one looks at the data with the purpose of assessing the employment potential of graduates in the different areas of study, the employment situation of the graduates points to the prevalence of a high degree of employment among the Professionals and Science graduates, as opposed to the Arts graduates.

Similarly, available data indicates that graduates possessing a good class at the degree examination are placed in a more advantageous position with regard to securing of employment as opposed to those with Third Class/Pass Degrees. However, 23.8 percent and 24.3 percent of the unemployed graduates have obtained Second Class Upper Divisions and Second Class Lower Divisions respectively. This may be accounted for by the fact that the majority of unemployed graduates are from the Arts group. The possession of good classes by this group does not necessarily lead to the securing of satisfactory employment, which is determined by the combination of many factors.

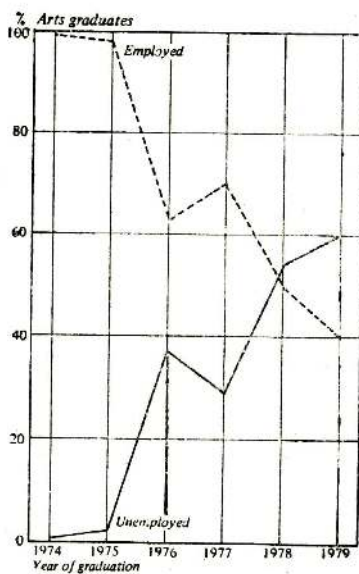
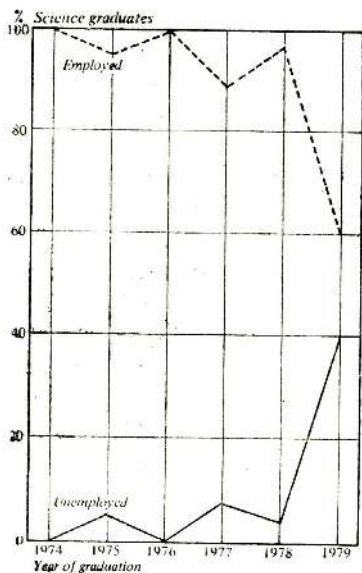
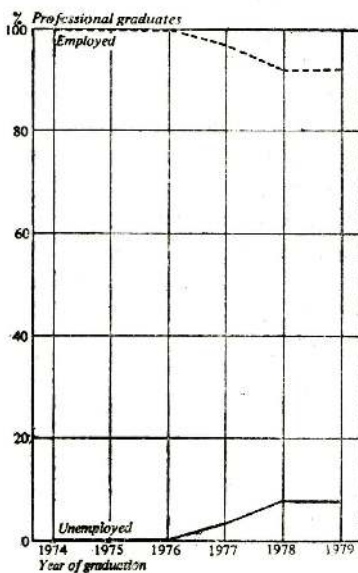
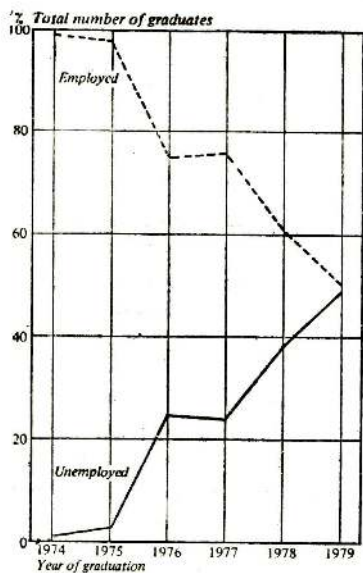
An analysis of the labour force status of the graduates by university reveals, that an approximate 70.0 percent of the graduates from the Universities of Colombo, Jayawardenepura and Peradeniya have managed to secure employment, while only 56.4 percent of the graduates from the University of Kelaniya are in employment. The bulk of the graduates from the University of

TABLE 8.1

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE OF GRADUATES BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS, (AS AT 1980) COURSE FOLLOWED,  
YEAR OF GRADUATION AND SEX**

Labour force status, Course followed & Sex	Year of graduation							Total
	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	
<b>Total No. of graduates (sample)</b>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1206
Percent	141	143	136	275	222	289	289	100.0
Employed	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Unemployed	99.3	97.9	75.2	76.0	61.3	50.9	50.9	72.6
Total	0.7	2.1	24.8	24.0	38.7	49.1	49.1	27.4
Male	11.7	11.9	11.3	22.8	18.4	23.9	23.9	100.0
Female	16.0	16.0	11.8	23.9	15.5	16.8	16.8	100.0
<b>Total No. of Employed (sample)</b>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	875
Percent	140	140	103	209	136	147	147	100.0
Male	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Female	60.7	56.4	67.0	58.9	65.4	68.0	68.0	62.3
Total	39.3	43.6	33.0	41.1	34.6	32.0	32.0	37.7
<b>Total No. of Unemployed (sample)</b>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	331
Percent	01	03	33	66	86	142	142	100.0
Male	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Female	—	66.7	36.4	28.8	43.0	47.2	47.2	41.7
Total	0.3	33.3	63.6	71.2	57.0	52.8	52.8	58.3
<b>Total No. of Employed (sample)</b>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	875
Percent	140	140	103	209	136	147	147	100.0
Professional	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Science (General)	10.0	17.2	28.2	15.8	24.3	25.2	25.2	19.4
Science (Special)	9.3	10.0	12.6	7.7	20.6	10.9	10.9	11.4
Arts (General)	0.7	2.8	3.9	3.8	4.4	8.8	8.8	4.1
Arts (Special)	47.1	36.4	23.3	10.5	12.5	10.2	10.2	22.3
Total	32.9	33.6	32.0	62.2	38.2	44.9	44.9	42.8
<b>Total No. of Unemployed (sample)</b>	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	331
Percent	01	03	33	66	86	142	142	100.0
Professional	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Science (General)	—	—	—	1.5	3.5	2.1	2.1	6.6
Science (Special)	—	33.3	—	1.5	1.2	13.4	13.4	0.6
Arts (General)	100.0	33.3	60.6	42.4	43.0	30.8	30.8	40.9
Arts (Special)	—	33.3	39.4	51.6	52.3	50.7	50.7	49.8
Total	0.3	0.9	10.0	19.9	26.0	42.9	42.9	100.0





**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF SAMPLE OF GRADUATES BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS (1980) AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

Moratuwa which offers Professional courses have been absorbed into employment. The proportion of unemployed graduates from the Universities of Colombo, Jayawardenepura and Peradeniya are 19.2 percent, 25.0 percent and 27.2 percent respectively, while in the case of the Kelaniya graduates, 43.1 percent are unemployed. 2.5 percent and 1.0 percent of the graduates who had obtained their degrees from the Universities of Colombo and Jayawardenepura respectively are in self-employment. The Law Course at the University of Colombo accounted for 30.8 percent of the self-employed graduates, while 15.4 percent of the self-employed graduates had obtained degrees in *Development Studies*.

The employment situation seems to be better among the males than it is among the females. While 78.3 percent of the males are in employment and 20.3 percent are unemployed, the corresponding proportions for the females are 62.5 percent and 36.4 percent respectively.

While considering the socio-economic background of graduates as signified by occupation and educational level of fathers and annual household incomes, it was seen that the employment situation of graduates with fathers in (i) the managerial/administrative/professional/university staff; (ii) teaching/clerical/technical allied; and in (iii) the business/landed proprietor occupational groups is better when compared with that of graduates whose fathers are in other occupational categories. The proportions employed among the three groups specified above are 83.7 percent, 73.6 percent and 67.4 percent respectively. 13.5 percent, 26.4 percent and 27.0 percent among the graduates with fathers in the above three occupational groups are unemployed. Of the graduates whose fathers are retired employees, as much as 80.1 percent are employed. 33.7 percent and 31.2 percent of the unemployed graduates have fathers involved in skilled/semi-skilled occupations and in farming/fishing occupations. Among graduates whose fathers are in the business/landed proprietor category, 5.6 percent are self-employed.

The educational level of the fathers serves to illustrate the fact that the prospect of employment of graduates with fathers in the tertiary educational groups is very favourable. In contrast it can

be seen that among the unemployed graduates the highest proportion had fathers who had attained a secondary level education, while those of a significant proportion among these graduates had no schooling.

High proportions of graduates in the over Rs. 12,000 income group are employed while the bulk of the unemployed graduates come from households with annual incomes of less than Rs. 12,000. The worst affected as far as securing of employment is concerned, are those graduates belonging to the less than Rs. 6,000 income category, the proportion being 35.2 percent. The proportion of unemployed in the over Rs. 24,000 income category is virtually nil. It is also significant that 12.5 percent of the self-employed group come from the over Rs. 36,000 income category.

#### 8.4 Unemployed graduates

A large proportion of the unemployed are Arts graduates. A closer perusal of the course background of the unemployed Special Arts graduates shows, that the population unemployed is highest among graduates who had followed the *job oriented* courses of studies, introduced during the early 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that these courses had been introduced with the objective of easing the unemployment situation among Arts graduates, by making them more employable, it is apparent that these programmes have had little impact on graduate employment. 26.6 percent of the unemployed Special Arts group are from the *job oriented courses*. It is also noteworthy that the highest proportion in this group consists of those with degrees in *Development Studies*, while 3.7 percent of the graduates had obtained degrees in the Bachelor of Education course introduced during the 1960s. From 1970 onwards the bulk of the Bachelor of Education graduates have been absorbed into the teaching profession but there still remain a fair number of B.Ed. graduates for whom suitable employment has to be found. However, it is likely that many of the unemployed in this group belong to the 1979 batch of graduates. 3.4 percent of the unemployed graduates are Commerce graduates and 1.2 percent and 1.2 percent are those with Estate Management/Valuation and Business Administration degrees respectively.

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1. See Chapter 5.



*Good income* is given by the highest proportion of the unemployed as a factor that would make a job attractive for them. Other factors in order of priority were *security of employment*, *good career prospects*, *job satisfaction*, *ability to use competence* and *opportunity for further studies available*.

In response to the query as to why they had failed to obtain permanent employment, the highest proportion of graduates in all course groupings pinpoint *discrimination in terms of race, caste, religion and politics* to be the major factor preventing their entry into employment (see Table 8.2). A high proportion also see *low standard of English* as being a major obstacle to employment.

One of the major constraints for entry into employment, of the graduates educated in the national language, is the inadequate proficiency in English language skills. A self assessment of graduates on the level of proficiency in the English language points to a low level of proficiency among the Arts graduates. A high proportion among those claiming high level of proficiency in English come from the Special Arts group. Of those stating to have an 'average' knowledge of the language, the highest proportion comes from Special Arts graduates, while the second highest proportions are from the General Arts graduates.

Among the Professionals, 25 percent explain their failure to obtain employment by the *low status of the school*. For the General Arts graduates *family background* (10.8 percent), *sex discrimination* (8.7 percent) and *absence of a scheme for the provision of employment of graduates* (6.6 percent) emerge as important reasons. 9.9 percent among the Special Arts group feel that *poor performance at the degree examination* as having contributed to their remaining unemployed, while *family background* and *sex discrimination* are reasons given by 8.1 percent and 7.2 percent among them respectively. *Sex discrimination* and *low status of the school* account for the responses of an equal proportion (i.e. 13.5 percent) among the graduates in the Special Science area, while 10.8 percent among this group relate their position to their *poor performance at the examination*.

TABLE 8.2  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES RELATING TO REASONS GIVEN BY UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES  
 FOR FAILING TO SECURE EMPLOYMENT BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Reasons	Course followed	Frequency of responses	Professional				Total
			(General)	(Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)	
1. Poor performance at the degree examination	..	51	—	8.4	5.4	9.9	8.2
2. Poor performance at test/interviews	..	19	8.4	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0
3. Low standard of English	..	130	16.7	20.2	20.2	21.7	20.7
4. Sex discrimination	..	51	—	8.7	8.7	7.3	8.2
5. Discrimination in terms of race, caste, religion and politics	..	202	33.3	33.1	33.1	33.2	32.4
6. Low status of school	..	42	26.0	5.0	5.0	6.6	6.7
7. Family background	..	56	8.3	10.7	10.7	8.1	9.0
8. Others	..	74	8.3	14.4	14.4	10.2	11.8
<b>Total</b>	..	<b>625</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note : (1) The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.  
 (2) Those having a total frequency of less than 25 have not been commented upon effectively in the text.

### 8.5 Employed graduates—Type of employment

The occupational profile of the employed graduates is given in Table 8.3. The teaching profession, it is found, is the single largest area for the employment of university graduates. A major proportion of the graduates in the Arts and General Science areas have obtained employment as teachers.

The occupational profile of the graduates studied, serves to highlight the better employment prospects of graduates (as regards to access to higher level appointments at the Executive, Staff and Managerial levels), in the Professional and Science areas as compared to that of the Arts graduates. Among the Professionals, as much as 98.0 percent have obtained positions at the Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional staff; Senior Executive staff/Academic staff and Junior Executive staff occupational levels. It is to be noted that there is a high degree of overlap in regard to the occupational category of Directors/Head of Department/Professionals, for the reason that all graduates, categorised as "Professionals" also get included in this category.

However, within the Science and Arts areas of study, graduates with Special degree are better placed with regard to type of employment secured as opposed to those with General degrees. Among the General Science graduates, 65.7 percent have secured teaching positions, the rest are distributed among Junior Executive/Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional Senior Executive/staff positions. 11.4 percent among the Special Science graduates are in teaching while as much as 85.7 percent are in higher level Executive/Staff/Managerial/Professional positions.

60.2 percent among the General Arts graduates and 51.3 percent among the Special Arts graduates are in teaching, while 19.4 percent among the former group and 29.3 percent among the latter group are distributed among Executive staff/Managerial/Professional occupations.

The above perusal being one with control imposed for courses, it was necessary to look into the picture emerging with occupational categories as the control variable. This exercise yielded a picture in which it was found that 75.3 percent of those holding Directors/



TABLE 8.3  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

Type of employment	Course followed	Professional				Arts			Science		Total
		Professional	Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)	Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)	
1. Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional	..	71.1	7.2	2.1	10.1	20.0	18.5				
2. Senior Executive staff	..	3.1	2.0	4.7	4.0	2.9	3.6				
3. Academic staff	..	17.2	1.0	2.9	2.0	31.4	6.4				
4. Junior Executive staff	..	6.8	9.2	19.6	16.2	31.4	14.8				
5. Clerical, Technical and allied	..	—	19.9	18.5	2.0	2.9	12.6				
6. Supervisors/Foremen	..	—	0.5	0.3	—	—	0.3				
7. Teachers	..	1.8	60.2	51.3	65.7	11.4	43.8				
8. Others	..	—	—	0.6	—	—	—				
<b>Total</b>	<b>..</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
		(163)	(196)	(341)	(99)	(35)	(834)				

Note : Number of graduates, in parentheses.

Heads of Departments/Professional occupational category, are Professional graduates. This is necessarily due to the overlap phenomenon referred to earlier. Among those in the Senior Executive/staff grade positions as much as 53.3 percent are Special Arts graduates. Largest share (52.8 percent) of Academic staff are those graduating from Professional courses followed by 20.7 percent graduating in Special Science courses. Junior executive/clerical, technical and allied occupations and the teaching profession are dominated by Special Arts graduates followed by General Arts graduates. This trend is to be quite expected, taking into consideration the share of Arts graduates passing out of the universities is very much higher than those coming from other courses.

An examination of the occupational profile of the graduates classified by sex reveals differences in the types of jobs secured by males and females. Although the highest proportion of graduates, both male and female, are found to be in teaching positions, the markedly high concentration of females in teaching must be noted. Despite the fact that women have been equal beneficiaries (along with men) of the educational reforms and are now moving into positions of responsibility at higher levels of the occupational hierarchy, their proportions in these positions are still found to be low. From an examination of the available data it was seen that, while 55.9 percent among the males have secured Executive staff and Managerial/Professional appointments, among the females only 20.8 percent are in similar positions.<sup>1</sup> While looking at the occupation of the employed graduates in relation to the socio-economic background, it was seen that a high proportion of those from the affluent families were holding high positions.

### 8.5.1 Employment sectors

The graduates surveyed were classified according to the following employment sectors of the labour market :

#### (i) Government sector

1. Also see : *Discrimination of Women in Employment — A case study of Sri Lanka* — Marga Institute, 1981 (mimeo) : This study also reveals certain trends indicative of discrimination of women in employment in Sri Lanka. In the light of some of the findings in this study, one may expect the proportions of women holding high positions in the State and private sectors, to be rather low.

- (ii) Semi-government sector
- (iii) Private sector

The Government sector continues to be the largest employer of university graduates. 62.3 percent among the males and as much as 83.0 percent among the females are in government employment, while the semi-government sector accounts for the employment of 30.9 percent among the males and 15.1 percent among the females. The private sector draws very few graduates, as only 6.8 percent among the males and 1.9 percent among the females are found to have been employed by the private sector.

### 8.5.2 Sources of information through which knowledge of present job was obtained

As highlighted in Chapter 6 of this study, formal and informal mechanisms are generally used when advertising job vacancies for university graduates. Graduates were asked to state the sources of information through which they learnt about their present jobs.

The responses of the graduates when analysed by course followed and present employment show an even distribution of responses over all sources. However, a noteworthy fact is that popularly known sources such as the newspapers and the Government Gazette which advertise job vacancies in the private and public sectors have not been the main sources through which these graduates had obtained information about their jobs. A significant point that emerges from the information given by the graduates is the fair proportion of graduates in the different courses and employment categories, who had learnt about their jobs through the Job Bank<sup>1</sup> and/or Member of Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

1. Also see Chapter 6.

2. Perhaps, largely due to the rather high rate of unemployment prevailing in the country, the political recommendation given by the Member of Parliament very often helps to secure employment, particularly in the State sector. Consequent upon the severe competition that unemployed graduates (especially the Arts graduates) have to face in securing the limited number of jobs available to (or preferred by) them, it appears that the M.P.'s recommendations are often based on affiliations and loyalties either to his political party or to himself or both. In this respect the M.P. in Sri Lanka, (particularly, when he happens to be a supporter of the Government in power), is not only a source of information on job vacancies, but also a main link point in the process of recruitment, at least to the extent that his recommendations are considered a pre-requisite by the recruiting authorities, in making the final choices for the existing job vacancies. It must also be noted here that the operation of the Job Bank Scheme is also linked with the M.P. However, the M.P. by himself may not be solely responsible for the situation, which apparently has been caused, over the years, by the complex interplay of a number of socio-economic and political factors. Some observers believe that this could be a situation into which the M.Ps and the desperate job-seekers have unsuspectingly and, perhaps even unwillingly, got entangled, and out of which both parties find it difficult to extricate themselves.



This situation has become evident despite the fact that the Job Bank does not cover the placement of graduates. Positions for which recruitment is done by the Job Bank are positions that do not require degree qualifications.

The data given in Table 8.4 reveals that for most students the following have been the main source of information :

1. Friends/relations
2. University
3. Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament
4. Through the institutions where the graduate was previously employed.

However a closer perusal reveals that *Institutions of previous employment* and *Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament* as sources have been more important for the General Arts graduates (nearly 70.0 percent) than for graduates from other disciplines. On the contrary *University* has been an important source for graduates of all disciplines except the General Arts group. For the Professional graduates and Science students, *University* had been an important source of information, whereas for the other graduates this source has been of little or no importance at all. The above findings point to the fact that the General Arts group of graduates get little or no assistance from the University in securing employment and this trend is quite disturbing and there seems no possible explanation except the fact that the University responds according to the requirement of the employing institutions.

Among the university graduates holding Directors/Heads of Department/Professional level positions, the highest proportions, i.e. 29.1 percent and 20.9 percent had learnt about their jobs from the Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament and institutions that had previously employed them respectively. 16.3 percent had obtained knowledge of their jobs through friends and or relations, while the University had been the source of information for 14.0 percent among them.

The highest proportions among those holding Senior Executive/ staff positions, had received information with regard to the present jobs through previous employment institutions and Job Bank

and/or Member of Parliament. The percentages are 40.7 percent and 29.6 percent respectively. Friends and/or relations and the University had functioned as the informants for 14.8 percent among them.

The Universities, previous employment institutions and Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament had been the means through which an almost equal proportion of the graduates holding university staff positions had learnt about their jobs—28.2 percent, 24.4 percent and 20.5 percent respectively.

A concentration of responses over such sources as Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament and previous employment institutions is observed for graduates in Junior executive/staff positions, the percentages being 35.1 percent and 29.9 percent respectively. 14.9 percent of them had received information through friends and/or relations.

With regard to graduates in teaching positions in the formal school system, the highest proportion (i.e. 31.5 percent) among them had learnt about their jobs through the Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament while 22.7 percent and 20.7 percent among them had received information through the University and previous employment institutions respectively. Friends and/or relations had informed 11.4 percent among this group, while for 8.3 percent it had been *compulsory employment*.<sup>1</sup>

### 8.5.3 Means by which jobs were secured

When considering the means by which these graduates had actually secured their jobs, it appears that a large proportion among graduates in the Professional, Science and General Arts areas and a fair proportion among graduates in the Special Arts areas had been recruited on the basis of their performance at interviews/examinations (see Table 8.5). Personal contact with the employer had been the means by which 18.6 percent among the Professional and 14.0 percent among the Special Science graduates had successfully secured their jobs.

1. The term "Compulsory employment" is used in Table 8.4 and the text, to describe a category which includes all those respondents who had already been in employment at the time they entered the University, and who have been granted "study-leave" by their employers, after bonding them to serve in their respective departments or institutions for a stipulated number of years, after the completion of their university education courses. Hence, the sources of information for their present jobs would be their respective departments or institutions, from which they have been released and to which they have to return in terms of the contracts they have signed with their employers.

TABLE 8.4  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES OF GRADUATES REGARDING SOURCES OF INFORMATION THROUGH WHICH KNOWLEDGE OF PRESENT JOB WAS ACQUIRED BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Sources of Information	Course followed	Frequency of responses	Professional	Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)	Total
1. Newspaper advertisement	..	01	—	—	0.2	—	—	0.1
2. Government Gazette	..	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Personal contact with employer	..	37	3.6	2.5	2.1	2.1	8.2	2.8
4. Other employees	..	41	4.1	2.5	3.0	2.1	1.7	3.1
5. Friends and/or relations	..	164	13.7	13.1	8.9	20.7	18.0	12.6
6. University	..	211	18.0	2.5	20.2	17.9	21.3	16.2
7. Radio announcements	..	05	—	1.7	0.2	—	—	0.4
8. Departmental circulars	..	20	2.4	0.8	1.9	—	—	1.5
9. Science Students' Union/Trade Unions	..	84	25.0	—	0.2	8.7	—	6.5
10. Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament	..	371	14.3	33.2	36.4	30.3	16.4	28.5
11. Through the institution(s) where I was previously employed	..	287	14.3	37.0	20.9	15.9	29.5	22.1
12. Compulsory employment	..	81	4.0	6.7	6.4	10.3	4.9	6.2
	<i>Total</i>	1302	100.0 (328)	100.0 (238)	100.0 (530)	100.0 (145)	100.0 (61)	100.0 (1302)

1. See footnote 1 on page 261

Note: The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.



TABLE 8.5  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES INDICATING THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH THE PRESENT JOB WAS SECURED BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Means of securing job	Course followed					Total
	Profes- sional	Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)	
1. Interview/examination	75.0	67.5	57.4	74.1	75.9	65.6
2. Personal contact with employer	18.6	2.5	3.9	2.3	13.8	6.3
3. "Appointed to teaching position after filling in a questionnaire while in the University."	4.0	15.3	30.0	15.3	3.5	19.3
4. Through influence/personal acquaintance	1.6	11.1	6.7	5.9	3.4	6.6
5. Other means	0.8	3.6	2.0	2.4	3.4	2.2
<i>Total</i>	100.0 (124)	100.0 (163)	100.0 (310)	100.0 (85)	100.0 (29)	100.0 (711)

*Note* : Number responding given in parentheses.

The responses of the graduates considered in relation to the jobs presently held by these graduates, further serve to illustrate the importance of interviews/examinations as a means of securing jobs. A major proportion of graduates in all job categories had been recruited through these methods (see Table 8.6). 16.1 percent among graduates holding Directors/Heads of Departments/ Professional positions had secured their jobs through personal contact with the employer, while 11.0 percent among graduates in Junior executive/staff positions had obtained their jobs in a similar manner.

A sector-wise analysis did not bring out any variations in the methods of recruitment, as the *interview/examination* figured prominently in the recruitment of graduates to the three sectors of employment. However a high proportion of graduates in the private sector (37.5 percent) had secured their jobs through contact with personal acquaintances. This does not seem to have been an important factor for those employed by the government and semi-government sectors where the recruitment procedure is much more rigid. 26.7 percent of the graduates in the government sector had secured employment as teachers *after filling a questionnaire while in the University*.

Graduates were also asked, "*What factors were important to secure the present job*"? Altogether eleven factors were listed with an '*others specify*' category. Table 8.7 gives the degree of importance of these factors classified by course followed.

In the overall pattern, a clustering of responses over factors one to eight is observed irrespective of course followed. For a greater proportion of graduates in all course categories, 1-8 are important factors leading to selection into their present jobs. Responses vary only in regard to their ordering within each course category. However it must be observed that factors such as *personality, letters of recommendation and personal contact with employer* are not considered to have been important factors in the selection of graduates.

For the Professional and Special Science graduates, *course of study followed* is an important factor for entry into their present jobs (receiving the highest percentages among these two groups). The Special Science group had considered *knowledge of English*

TABLE 8.6  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES INDICATING THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH THE PRESENT JOB WAS SECURED BY PRESENT JOB**

Means of securing job	Present job							Total
	Directors/ Heads of Departments/ Professionals	Senior Executive staff	Academic staff	Junior Executive staff	Clerical/ Technical and allied	Super- visory/ Foremen	Teachers	
1. Interviews/Examinations ..	78.0	92.6	85.0	78.0	82.1	50.0 (01)	45.2	64.8
2. Personal contact with employer ..	16.1	3.7	7.5	11.0	1.0	50.0 (01)	2.2	6.2
3. "Appointed to teaching position after filling a questionnaire while in the University"	4.3	—	5.0	1.0	2.0	—	41.7	19.9
4. Through influence/personal acquaintances..	1.6	3.7	2.5	9.0	12.9	—	6.7	6.9
5. Other means ..	—	—	—	1.0	2.0	—	4.2	2.2
<i>Total</i> ..	100.0 (118)	100.0 (29)	100.0 (39)	100.0 (106)	100.0 (99)	100.0 (02)	100.0 (307)	100.0 (700)

Note : 1. Number responding, given in parentheses.  
 2. Categories with total frequency less than 25 have not been considered for comments in the text.



TABLE 8.7  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES GIVEN BY EMPLOYED GRADUATES REGARDING THE DEGREE OF IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS FOR SECURING THE PRESENT JOB BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Factors important in securing the present job	Professional		General Arts		Special Arts		Gen. Science		Sp. Science		Total	
	Imp.	Not Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.
1. Previous experience ..	8.9	4.0	10.0	2.2	10.6	2.4	8.6	4.5	6.7	6.1	9.4	3.5
2. Academic achievements ..	8.6	4.0	8.3	4.0	8.2	3.9	7.8	4.1	9.1	2.4	9.4	3.8
3. Distinction in extra-curricular activities ..	9.7	2.9	11.4	1.0	8.9	3.5	11.1	1.9	9.1	3.6	9.7	2.0
4. Course followed ..	10.8	2.0	9.5	3.1	9.1	3.5	9.7	2.6	10.0	1.8	9.9	2.7
5. Personality ..	7.5	4.7	7.0	4.8	6.9	5.2	5.6	5.9	7.0	4.2	7.0	5.0
6. Knowledge of English ..	8.9	2.9	9.7	3.1	8.4	4.1	9.7	3.3	10.9	1.2	9.1	3.3
7. Letter of recommendation ..	6.0	6.3	7.5	4.8	6.9	5.5	7.0	5.2	7.3	5.5	6.7	5.6
8. Personal contact with employer ..	8.5	3.4	7.5	4.4	6.5	5.4	5.2	7.0	6.7	5.4	7.1	4.9
9. Others ..	0.9	—	1.7	—	1.0	—	0.8	—	1.2	—	0.9	—
<b>Total ..</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
	(651)	(227)	(710)	(259)	(164)	(2021)						

Note : 1. Frequencies of responses given in parentheses.

2. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.

as an important factor along with course followed. Among the General Arts and General Science graduates, the highest proportions give *distinction in extra-curricular activities* as the most important factor for selection while greater weightage is placed by the Special Arts graduates on *previous experience*.

#### 8.5.4 Reasons for moving into the present job

Occupational mobility is observed to have taken place among graduates already in employment with 35.1 percent having changed their jobs after graduation (males 45.3 percent; females 18.2 percent).<sup>1</sup> In order to determine the underlying motive for occupational mobility eight reasons along with an *others specify* category were listed in the questionnaire. A clustering of responses over reasons one to eight is observed irrespective of course followed and type of employment secured (see Tables 8.8 and 8.9).

Among 15.2 percent of the Professionals, *job satisfaction* had been a motive for moving into the present job, while for 13.7 percent and 13.3 percent among them *security of employment* and *better salary* had been important reasons. An almost equal proportion (12.0 percent) had been influenced by *better promotional prospects* and *scope for use of acquired additional qualifications* respectively, while 12.0 percent and 10.7 percent among them had been attracted by ability to *continue studies while in employment*.

An equal weightage of 14.6 percent is given for *job satisfaction* and *scope for use of acquired additional qualifications* by the General Science group. Other reasons given by these graduates are—

- Better salary (12.9 percent)
- Better promotional prospects (11.8 percent)
- Job more in keeping with graduate status (10.7 percent)
- Greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired (8.4 percent)
- Better work environment (7.8 percent)

1. This figure includes all categories of employed graduates, such as casual, temporary, etc.

TABLE 8.8  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES GIVEN BY EMPLOYED GRADUATES REGARDING THE REASONS FOR MOVING INTO THE PRESENT JOB BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Reasons for moving into the present job	Course followed				Total
	Professional	Arts General	Arts Special	Science General	
1. Better salary ..	13.3	13.8	16.2	12.9	14.0
2. Better promotion prospects ..	12.2	11.4	12.1	11.8	12.0
3. Security of employment ..	13.7	15.6	13.3	16.8	14.1
4. Job satisfaction ..	15.2	12.5	13.7	14.6	14.4
5. Greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired through university education in job situation ..	10.7	9.6	10.2	8.4	10.1
6. Scope for use of acquired additional qualifications ..	12.6	13.1	12.5	14.5	13.1
7. Job more in keeping with graduate status ..	8.5	10.2	10.2	10.7	9.7
8. Better work environment ..	12.0	10.2	9.6	7.8	10.2
9. Others ..	1.8	3.6	2.2	2.4	2.4
<b>Total ..</b>	<b>100.0 (460)</b>	<b>100.0 (167)</b>	<b>100.0 (481)</b>	<b>100.0 (178)</b>	<b>100.0 (1403)</b>

Note : 1. Frequencies of responses given in parentheses.  
 2. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.



TABLE 8.9

**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES GIVEN BY EMPLOYED GRADUATES REGARDING THE REASONS FOR MOVING INTO THE PRESENT JOB BY PRESENT EMPLOYMENT**

Reasons	Present employment	Frequency of responses	Present employment					Total		
			Directors/ Heads of Departments/ Profes- sionals	Senior executive	Academic staff	Junior executive	Clerical, technical and allied		Teachers	Others
1. Better salary ..	..	191	12.7	15.6	14.5	15.5	17.7	10.8	14.3	13.9
2. Better promotion prospects ..	..	166	11.2	12.2	13.8	13.9	15.2	7.0	14.3	12.1
3. Security of employment ..	..	193	12.9	14.3	12.5	14.6	10.1	18.9	14.3	14.0
4. Job satisfaction ..	..	197	16.2	13.6	11.8	13.0	12.6	15.2	14.3	14.3
5. Greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired through university education in job situation ..	..	140	10.9	10.2	11.8	9.8	10.1	7.6	14.3	10.2
6. Scope for use of acquired additional qualification ..	..	180	13.6	12.9	11.8	12.7	8.9	15.7	14.3	13.1
7. Job more in keeping with graduate status ..	..	135	9.7	11.6	10.5	10.1	7.6	9.2	—	9.8
8. Better work environment ..	..	139	10.5	8.2	11.2	8.6	11.4	11.9	14.3	10.1
9. Others ..	..	34	2.3	1.4	2.1	1.8	6.4	3.7	—	2.5
<i>Total</i> ..		1375	100.0 (489)	100.0 (147)	100.0 (152)	100.0 (316)	100.0 (79)	100.0 (185)	100.0 (07)	100.0 (1375)

Notes: 1. Frequencies of responses given in parentheses.

2. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.

When the reasons given by the graduates for occupational mobility are related to their present employment, it is found that among those in the category of Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional occupations, the highest proportion (i.e. 16.2 percent) had moved into their present jobs for the sake of *job satisfaction*. 18.9 percent among the teachers moved into this job for *security of employment*. The highest proportions in all other occupational groups had been tempted by *better salaries*. (See Table 8.9).

*Scope for uses of additional qualifications acquired* had motivated 13.5 percent among those holding high posts as Directors/Heads of Departments/Professionals, while 12.9 percent and 12.7 percent among them had been motivated by *security of employment* and *better salary* respectively. *Better promotional prospects, scope to use knowledge/skills acquired* and *better work environment* had influenced 11.2 percent, 10.9 percent and 10.5 percent among this group. For 9.7 percent the job was *more in keeping with graduate status*.

Among the graduates in Senior executive/staff positions, 14.3 percent had moved because of *security of employment*, while 13.6 percent, 12.9 percent and 12.2 percent among them did so for reasons of *job satisfaction, scope for use of additional qualifications acquired* and *better promotional prospects* respectively. 11.6 percent of them had moved as the *job was more in keeping with graduate status*, while 10.2 percent had given the reason as *greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired*.

Among 13.8 percent and 12.5 percent of the academic staff members, *better promotional prospects* and *security of employment* respectively were factors of encouragement that led them to take up their present jobs. Almost an equal proportion among the academic staff (i.e. 11.8 percent) had been prompted by *job satisfaction, greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired, and scope for use of additional qualifications acquired* respectively and another 8.2 percent had moved into their present positions due to *better work environment* while 10.5 percent among this group had done so as it was *more in keeping with graduate status*.

Among the graduates in Junior executive staff positions, 15.5 percent indicate *better salary* and 14.6 percent give *security of employment* as reasons for moving into the present job, while for 13.9 percent among them, the reasons had been better promotional prospects. *Job satisfaction* and *scope for use of additional qualifications acquired* have been the reasons for 13.0 percent and 12.7 percent of these graduates, while for 10.1 percent of them, the present *job is more in keeping with graduate status*.

*Better salary, better promotional prospects, job satisfaction* and *better work environment* had acted as incentives for the mobility of 17.7 percent, 15.2 percent, 12.6 percent and 11.4 percent respectively, among those holding clerical/technical/allied posts which would normally be designated as non-graduate jobs. *Security of employment* and *greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired* had been persuasive factors for an equal proportion (i.e. 10.1 percent) among this group.

18.9 percent of graduates opted for teaching because these positions gave them security of employment. 15.7 percent among the graduates presently holding teaching positions had acquired these jobs, as it affords *scope for use of additional qualifications acquired* while for 15.2 percent among them, it had been *job satisfaction, better work environment* and *better salary and job more in keeping with graduate status* have been the reasons prompting 11.9 percent, 10.8 percent and 9.2 percent among these graduates.

### 8.5.5 Relative importance of different factors for making a job attractive

Table 8.10 gives the relative importance of the different factors for making a job attractive analysed by course followed. Among the Professionals, *good income* and *job satisfaction* receive equal priority, followed by *good career prospects, ability to improve competence, security of employment* and *opportunity for further studies available*. It is to be noted that *free from improper interference* is cited by 10.0 percent among this group, while it does not seem to be an important factor among graduates in other course areas.



TABLE 8.10  
**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES OF GRADUATES REGARDING FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO MAKE A JOB ATTRACTIVE BY COURSE FOLLOWED**

Factors	Course followed	Profes-sional					Total
		Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)	Science (Special)		
1. Good income	..	16.5	15.9	17.1	16.3	16.3	
2. Security of employment	..	12.7	17.6	16.0	16.1	16.1	
3. Good career prospects	..	14.3	15.0	15.1	14.2	15.0	
4. Job satisfaction	..	16.4	12.5	14.1	15.8	13.4	
5. Ability to improve competence	..	13.0	12.0	10.6	9.5	12.0	
6. Scope for use of special talents	..	7.8	8.3	7.0	7.8	8.0	
7. Others	..	19.3	17.9	20.1	20.1	19.2	
<b>Total</b>		100.0 (871)	100.0 (1535)	100.0 (602)	100.0 (190)	100.0 (5776)	

Note : 1. In all, 14 factors were identified. Only 6 of them were found to be more frequently cited. The remaining 8 have been grouped into "others" category.

2. Total number of frequencies of responses are given in parentheses.

3. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.

The highest proportions among the Arts graduates possessing General and Special degrees show more concern for security of employment while other factors given by this group in order of importance are—

- 'good income'
- 'good career prospects'
- 'job satisfaction'
- 'ability to improve competence'
- 'opportunity for further studies available'
- 'scope for use of special talents'.

Among the General Science graduates, a major proportion consider *good income* as a high priority factor while almost an equal proportion among those of the General Arts group consider *security of employment* as a factor of attraction. Among the General Science group, a significant proportion consider *security of employment* and *good career prospects* as a source of attraction to a job. *Job satisfaction*, *ability to improve competence* and *further studies available* are also given as factors of importance by these graduates. *Job satisfaction*, *good career prospects* and *opportunity for further studies available* are considered important by the Special Science group.

Among the employed group, 17.4 percent give *security of employment* as the most important factor with *good income* receiving the second highest proportion of the responses (see Table 8.11). The ordering of responses thereafter is observed to be similar as in the former group. This suggests that the employed graduates having struggled to get employed do realise the importance of *security of employment* more than the unemployed graduates. The above data when looked at in the light of socio-economic background did not highlight any salient features.

TABLE 8.11

**PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES OF GRADUATES REGARDING FACTORS THAT MAKE A JOB ATTRACTIVE BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS**

	<i>Labour force status</i>	<i>Unemployed</i>	<i>Employed</i>
<i>Factors</i>			
1. Good income ..	..	16.4	16.5
2. Security of employment ..	..	15.5	17.4
3. Good career prospects ..	..	15.8	14.8
4. Job satisfaction ..	..	13.9	12.2
5. Ability to improve competence ..	..	12.0	11.8
6. Scope for use of special talents ..	..	8.2	7.5
7. Others ..	..	18.9	19.8
	Total ..	100.0 (4130)	100.0 (1553)

Note: 1. Total number of frequencies of responses, in parentheses.

2. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.

### 8.5.6 Information on monthly salary<sup>1</sup>

The monthly salaries, stated by the graduates here correspond to their respective present occupations. A major proportion of the graduates holding positions which are designated as graduate level jobs are concentrated within the over Rs. 500/- salary group. The salaries obtained by the graduates in these jobs are found to improve with a rise in the status of the job. 32.9 percent and 40.9 percent of the graduates holding Directors/ Heads of Departments/Professional positions receive salaries of Rs. 751—1,000 and Rs. 1,001—1,500 respectively. 15.4 percent receive salaries of Rs. 1,501 and over. The proportion of graduates in Senior executive/staff positions in similar salary groups is 17.2 percent, 37.9 percent and 34.5 percent respectively. 48.5 percent among the University staff receive salaries of Rs. 501—2,000, while the bulk of the graduates in Junior executive/staff positions are within the less than Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,500 salary range, the highest proportion among them, 38.3 percent receiving salaries of Rs. 501—750 per month.

1. This discussion is subject to the limitation that salaries stated by the respondents could be any one of the following: (a) Gross monthly salary, (b) Net monthly salary, after deductions, (c) Basic monthly salary, exclusive of allowances.



Graduates in teaching positions obtain fairly low salaries compared to graduates in other graduate level jobs. 55.9 percent of the teachers receive a monthly salary of Rs. 501—750, while only 9.6 percent receive Rs. 751—1,000. The fact that 34.2 percent of the teachers receive monthly salaries of less than Rs. 500 may be explained by the fact that these graduates at the time of responding, continued to receive non-graduate salary scales. The bulk of the graduates in non-graduate level positions, such as clerical/technical/allied and supervisory positions receive fairly low salaries of less than Rs. 500, to Rs. 750.

Since salary is an important variable from the point of view of the study, a multiple regression analysis was tried using monthly salary as the dependent variable to identify as to what extent different factors and characteristics of graduates influence the salary earned by them. As a first approximation of the analysis, fifty explanatory variables, which could have an influence on the salaries earned by graduates either directly or indirectly and for which information had been obtained in the survey, were used. It was observed that the explanatory powers of many variables were quite marginal, suggesting that they had little or no influence on the monthly salary function. The analysis being one of step-wise approach it was found that only 50.0 percent of the variation could be explained by all the variables used in the exercise with as much as 44.0 percent of the variation being accounted for by the five variables used in the model. The model used is as follows :

$$Y = a + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + E$$

where  $x_1$  = present occupation

$x_2$  = sector of employment

$x_3$  = status of employment

$x_4$  = subjects offered at GCE A/Level

$x_5$  = age

The results obtained using the above model is as follows :

<i>Variables</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. error</i>	<i>F</i>
Present occupation	-.2268	.0160	228.95
Sector of employment	.5410	.0599	81.59
Status of employment	-.4664	.0729	40.97
Subjects for GCE A/Level	-.1397	.0185	57.12
Age	.0521	.0115	20.63
R <sup>2</sup> = .4408			

It should be noted that present occupation explains the largest amount of variation and age which is necessarily linked to the present occupation reflects experience, comes as the last among these five explanatory variables. In Sri Lanka in the recent past the disparity in the salary structures between the State and private sector occupations have widened so much that it is not surprising to find the sector of employment coming in as the 2nd best variable in terms of explanatory power. Status of employment which indicates whether a person is holding permanent, temporary or casual employment, contributes to a structural disparity in regard to salary.

Other statistically significant variables emerging from the exercise are—

- (a) Field of study
- (b) University attended
- (c) Marital status
- (d) Course followed outside.

### 8.5.7 Degree of usefulness of the course content in the performance of the present job

The opinions of the graduates were sought on the usefulness of their course content for the performance of their present jobs. The opinions of the graduates are found to differ when the available data was analysed in respect of course followed and type of job held.

A favourable response was received from the Professional and Special Science graduates. 67.7 percent among the Professionals consider their course content to be very useful, while 27.3 percent consider it as being fairly useful. Among the Special Science group, 63.9 percent and 25.0 percent consider their courses to be very useful and fairly useful respectively, while 11.1 percent do not find their course to be useful in the performance of their present jobs.

When analysing the responses of the General Science graduates, it is found that only 28.0 percent consider their courses to be very useful, while a major proportion (i.e. 59.0 percent) among these graduates considered it to be fairly useful. 13.0 percent among them do not find it useful.

The Arts graduates seem to be less satisfied with their course content, when compared to the other graduates, as 21.9 percent among the General Arts graduates and 22.4 percent among the Special Arts graduates express dissatisfaction with their course content, in regard to its relevance to the needs of their jobs. 38.0 percent and 40.1 percent among the General Arts graduates find their course content to be very useful and fairly useful respectively. The proportions among the Special Arts graduates expressing similar opinions are 40.8 percent and 36.8 percent respectively.

The data was also analysed in respect of the present employment in which the graduates were engaged (see Table 8.12). Among the graduates holding Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional positions, 56.6 percent find their course to be very useful, while 39.5 percent find it fairly useful. As much as 86.5 percent among the university academic staff consider their course to be useful. For 46.7 percent and 40.0 percent among the graduates in Senior Executive/staff positions the course content had been very useful and fairly useful respectively, while for 13.3 percent, it had not been useful. In the case of graduates serving in Junior executive/staff positions, a greater proportion (i.e. 47.1 percent) find their courses to be fairly useful, while 28.1 percent consider it as being very useful. The proportion of graduates among this group finding their course to be not useful is as high as 24.8 percent. The teachers seem to have found their courses to be satisfactory as 52.8 percent find it very useful, while 39.4 percent consider it as being fairly useful. A significant fact however is that as much as 60.9 percent among the graduates holding positions which may be designated as non-graduate positions (clerical/technical/allied) did not find their course content to be useful for their jobs, while 34.3 percent consider it as being fairly useful.



TABLE 8.12  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYED GRADUATES INDICATING DEGREE OF USEFULNESS OF THE CONTENT OF UNIVERSITY COURSE IN THE PERFORMANCE OF PRESENT JOB BY PRESENT EMPLOYMENT**

<i>Present employment</i>	<i>Degree of usefulness</i>	<i>No. of respondents</i>	<i>Very Useful</i>	<i>Fairly Useful</i>	<i>Not Useful</i>	<i>Total</i>
1. Directors/Heads of Depts./Professionals	..	152	56.6	39.5	3.9	100.0
2. Senior executive/staff	..	30	46.7	40.0	13.3	100.0
3. University academic staff	..	52	86.5	13.5	—	100.0
4. Junior executive/staff	..	121	28.1	47.1	24.8	100.0
5. Clerical, technical and allied	..	105	4.8	34.3	60.9	100.0
6. Teachers	..	358	52.8	39.4	7.8	100.0

### 8.5.8 Under-employed graduates

In the absence of detailed information it is difficult to make a clear differentiation between graduate and non-graduate level jobs. However, the salary structure of the graduates in teaching does point to the placement of graduates at non-graduate levels. In 1976 a crash programme was introduced for the recruitment of teachers, and all those who were recruited were placed on a salary scale less than the graduate teachers' scale.

The spill over of graduates into non-graduate level jobs is clearly seen among the Arts group, wherein 20.4 percent among the General Arts graduates and 18.8 percent among the Special Arts graduates are found to be in clerical/technical/allied occupations and in supervisory/foremen positions, which are designated as non-graduate jobs. The poor employment prospects of Arts graduates has led to these graduates offering themselves for non-graduate positions which are not commensurate with their educational qualifications and their aspirations.

In this respect it is noteworthy that for a high proportion among graduates in non-graduate level positions, (i.e. clerical/technical and allied) the Job Bank and/or Member of Parliament had been the means through which information about their present jobs had been acquired. Previous employment institutions and friends and/or relations had been the main sources of information for 13.5 percent and 12.5 percent among these groups respectively.

### 8.5.9 Self-employed graduates

Up to now there has not been any organised programmes initiated either by the Government or other private institutions to promote self-employment among graduates<sup>1</sup>. Due to resource constraints and lack of training it is difficult to motivate graduates to take to self-employment, hence the number of graduates in self-employment is found to be low. Out of the 1206 respondents in the graduate sample, only 13 are in self-employment.

1. Recently, the National Youth Services Council of the Ministry of Youth Affairs has initiated action on developing some programmes for promoting self-employment among the yet un-employed graduates. However at the time of writing this chapter not much headway seemed to have been made in this direction.

The occupational distribution of graduates in self-employment shows that the majority of the self-employed professionals are in areas related to their course of study. It is also significant that there are no Science graduates in self-employment. The Arts graduates in self-employment are found in areas such as business, farming and teaching (mostly in private tutorials). The majority of those in self-employment either possessed or had access to some form of initial capital investment.

### 8.6 Graduates' perception of university education in relation to the world of work

The socio-economic background and the labour force status of graduates were dealt with in the preceding sections. This section will attempt to highlight the perceptions graduates have on the type of education they received in the university, their experience of the world of work and their inter-relationships.

Data obtained in respect of the benefits expected by the employed and unemployed graduates reveal that irrespective of labour force status, *improvement of subject knowledge* is the most important benefit expected, (see Table 8.13). A high proportion of graduates gave *improvement of subject knowledge* as a benefit among the unemployed group and an insignificant proportion of them gave *improvement of employability* as a benefit. On the contrary only a slight difference in percentage weightage between the two benefits is observed among the employed graduates. It is to be expected that a significant proportion of the unemployed graduates consider *acquisition of social skills* as a more important benefit than *improvement of employability* since they did not yet have this benefit. A third highest rating is given to *improvement of social status* by the unemployed graduates, while among the employed group this receives fourth rating in importance.

Available data also shows that for employed graduates holding lucrative positions, as Directors, Heads of Departments/ Professionals and as Senior executives, a university education means an *improvement of employability*, the percentages for each group being 30.1 percent and 30.8 percent respectively. *Improvement of subject knowledge* receives second rating in importance



from these groups with 20.1 percent and 27.7 percent respectively. The ordering of responses in regard to the above two benefits is reversed in the case of graduates belonging to other occupational categories, excluding those in clerical/technical and allied positions for whom *acquisition of social skills* seems to be a more important benefit as opposed to *improvement of employability*. Graduates in the highest two occupational groupings give third highest rating to the *improvement of social status* while all others consider the status factor to be a fourth important factor.

Having presented the above perception of graduates in regard to the expected benefits from university education, the data on responses to questions directed to indicate the degree of satisfaction in respect of the extent to which these benefits have been met at the university, have been analysed. A general dissatisfaction with a great number of benefits listed, is observed among the Arts graduates. More than half the number in the Professional and Science groups express satisfaction in respect of the benefit, *improvement in employability*, whereas in the case of the Arts graduates a higher proportion seem to be dissatisfied that it has not been met adequately. For the Professionals, on the other hand, the proportion satisfied with *access to employment* as an expected benefit is observed to be as high as 80.0 percent. A greater proportion of graduates in each course category are satisfied with subject knowledge gained. With the exception of Professional and Social Science graduates, a very high proportion of the General Science, Special Arts and General Arts graduates had not gained proficiency in English, which is included in the 'other' category. Other significant facts emerging from the data need mention. 75.0 percent of the Professionals are not satisfied with *training in research techniques* while those dissatisfied among the Special and General Arts graduates are 60.0 percent and 50.0 percent respectively. The Professional, Science and Special graduates are not satisfied with regard to *opportunity to go abroad* as a benefit, while 53.8 percent of the General Science graduates are not satisfied regarding *opportunity for further education*. *Opportunity for serving needs of parents and/or family members* had not been met according to a greater proportion among the General Science and Arts graduates. 57.1 percent of the General Arts graduates are not satisfied that the expected

benefit in respect of *participation in extra-curricular activities* has been met. In regard to the benefit, *scope to join in the development of the country* a greater proportion of all graduates showed dissatisfaction that it has not been adequately met. (All these aspects have been aggregated in the *others* category of Table 8.13).

From the perspective of the graduates, a university education creates high employment expectations and aspirations. A university degree is not only viewed as a guarantee for a secure job in either the public or private sector, but is considered as a mechanism of social and economic mobility for most. In view of this, it is appropriate at this stage to look further into the graduates' perceptions of employment, as well as their expectations in regard to employment.

### 8.6.1 Employment preferences

The graduates were asked if they would have preferred to secure permanent employment immediately after GCE A/Level to entering the university. The responses of the graduates, when considered in relation to their present employment status, nature of employment and employment sector did not bring out any

TABLE 8.13

**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES GIVEN BY GRADUATES REGARDING THE EXPECTED BENEFITS FROM UNIVERSITY EDUCATION BY LABOUR FORCE STATUS**

Expected benefits	Labour force status		Employed	Unemployed	Total
	..	..			
1. Improvement of employability	..	..	23.0	4.9	19.0
2. Improvement of subject knowledge	..	..	29.2	41.7	32.0
3. Improvement of general knowledge	..	..	3.9	5.8	4.3
4. Improvement of social status	..	..	8.9	5.8	8.2
5. Acquisition of social skills..	..	..	12.5	21.3	14.5
6. Personality development including development of discipline, self confidence and ability to work systematically	..	..	4.1	4.8	4.2
7. Others	..	..	18.4	15.7	17.8
			<i>Total</i> ..	100.0 (1575)	100.0 (465) 100.0 (2040)

- Note* : 1. Number of frequency of responses, given in parentheses.  
 2. The question being one with provision for multiple responses, the total number of responses exceeds the total sample responding.  
 3. Only 6 categories more frequently cited have been listed. The other items (i.e. out of a total of 20) have been aggregated in 'others' category.

variations, as a major proportion of graduates in each classified group had not preferred to secure employment. Data was obtained in relation to employment preferences of the graduates. Two categories of employment were identified. Those that are (a) directly relevant, (b) not directly relevant to course followed at the university.

When the responses of those who indicated directly relevant occupations are analysed by course followed, it appears that 82.9 percent of those in Professional areas of study aspired primarily for Professional jobs in the employment market while 54.7 percent and 61.6 percent of the graduates in Science and Arts areas were attracted by openings in the teaching/technical/research fields. 17.9 percent, 14.5 percent and 12.8 percent among the Science graduates preferred university staff posts, executive positions and professional positions respectively. Among the Arts graduates 22.1 percent preferred executive positions. The employment preferences of the graduates therefore, corresponded to positions open to graduates at graduate entry point levels. This pattern when observed with references to employment status did not bring about any significant change.

Of the graduates who indicated occupations not directly relevant to course followed, 38.2 percent and 35.3 percent of the Professionals showed preference for professional and executive occupations, while 20.6 percent settled for teaching/technical/research positions. Of the Science graduates as much as 77.3 percent prefer executive jobs, while 18.2 percent show preference for teaching/technical/research positions. Among the Arts group 34.0 percent, 33.7 percent and 28.5 percent show preference for executive/teaching/technical/research/ and clerical positions respectively.

With regard to the graduates' choice of employment sector, it appears that the highest proportions among the Professional, Science and Arts graduates prefer the government sector. Of the remaining responses, almost equal proportions of graduates among each course group prefer the semi-government and private sectors respectively. It was also found that the graduates preference for employment are necessarily tied to their socio-economic back-



ground. This is to be quite expected, for the access to certain fields of education itself is tied up with the socio-economic background.

### 8.6.2 Degree of satisfaction with university education

An inquiry into the responses drawn from the graduates in relation to a question, "*Do you think the university education you received had been a waste of time*"?, reveals that a major proportion of the graduates, among the Professional, Science and Arts areas, do not think that it had been a waste of time. Among the Professionals as much as 91.4 percent answered in the negative, whereas among the Special Science graduates 86.5 percent gave negative responses while 10.8 percent answered in the affirmative. The proportion of graduates answering in the negative among the General Science, General and Special Arts graduates are 78.2 percent, 71.2 percent and 70.5 percent respectively. The pattern of responses did not vary significantly between employed and unemployed graduates.

### 8.6.3 Graduates' assessment of university education

While investigating the graduates' assessment of university education, it was observed that the university education has—

1. enhanced the ability to get on amicably with others;
2. developed the capacity for critical and creative thinking;
3. fulfilled the academic aspirations.

Looking at the responses presented alongside preference for universities, it is seen that for the Universities of Colombo, Kelaniya, Jayawardanapura, and Peradeniya, the order of the responses is more or less the same. For the University of Moratuwa, the ordering of responses is found to be different with a higher concentration of responses around the following items, which is to be quite expected, for the University of Moratuwa is a technical University. According to the graduates of the University of Moratuwa, University education has—

1. provided training for disciplined and systematic work;
2. improved professional competence;
3. developed the capacity for critical and creative thinking.

A significant proportion of graduates from the Universities of Colombo, Jayawardhenepura, Kelaniya and Peradeniya, have given *scope for developing one's talents* less importance, as against the graduates from the University of Moratuwa, who consider this factor as important.

A perusal of the data received in relation to nature of employment, status of employment, course of study followed and sex did not bring about any marked deviations from the overall pattern of responses. The relationship between these variables and the graduates' experiences of university education therefore is hard to decipher, suggesting that these variables have little or no impact on the graduates' assessment of his experiences.

#### 8.6.4 Suggested improvements in course followed :

##### (A) *Course content*

An analysis of suggested improvements in course content, classified by course followed reveals (see Table 8.14), that in the overall pattern, responses of the graduates clustered around the following factors :

1. Should revise content to give a broader knowledge of course (29.6 percent).
2. Should give more scope for practical training work experience (25.0 percent).
3. Course content should be revised in order to give job orientation (17.5 percent).
4. Should reorganise course content to relevant national needs (11.7 percent).

A closer perusal shows, that 40.0 percent among the Professionals suggest *more scope for practical training/work experience* while 15.2 percent and 7.6 percent are in favour of revising course content to *give a broader knowledge of the subject* and *reorganising course content to relevant national needs*. 6.7 percent among them ask for the *inclusion of English as a compulsory component of the Course*; the same proportion had indicated a desire for the *removal of unnecessary topics in the Course* (aggregated under the 'others' category).

TABLE 8.14  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BY SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN UNIVERSITY COURSE  
 CONTENT AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

Course followed	Suggestions for improvement in university course content				Total	
	Profes- sional	Arts (General)	Arts (Special)	Science (General)		Science (Special)
1. Should give more scope for practical training/work experience ..	40.0	16.0	22.4	32.3	12.5	25.0
2. Should revise content to give a broader knowledge of course ..	15.2	20.4	41.0	11.7	29.2	29.6
3. Course should be directed towards improving general knowledge	—	1.2	0.3	1.5	4.1	0.7
4. Course content should be revised in order to give a job orientation	3.8	30.3	15.4	16.2	8.3	17.5
5. Include English as a compulsory component of the course of study	6.7	1.2	4.7	1.5	4.2	4.0
6. Should reorganise course content to relevant national needs ..	7.6	14.8	8.2	17.7	29.2	11.7
7. Others ..	26.7	16.1	8.0	19.1	12.5	11.5
<b>Total</b> ..	<b>100.0</b> (105)	<b>100.0</b> (162)	<b>100.0</b> (371)	<b>100.0</b> (68)	<b>100.0</b> (24)	<b>100.0</b> (676)

Note: Number of respondents, in parentheses.



It is noteworthy, that the highest proportion of 30.3 percent among the General Arts graduates show interest in *revising course content to give a job orientation*, while 20.4 percent of them want a *broader knowledge of the subject*. 16.0 percent of them suggest *more scope for practical training/work experience*, while 14.8 percent ask for *reorganising course content to relevant national needs*.

41.0 percent and 22.4 percent among the Special Arts graduates are for *revising course content to give a broader knowledge of the subject* and for *greater scope for practical training/work experience* respectively. Need for *job orientation* and *reorganising content to relevant national needs* are stressed by 15.5 percent and 8.2 percent among these graduates.

Among the General Science graduates, *more scope for practical training/work experience* is suggested by 32.3 percent, while 17.7 percent, 16.2 percent and 11.7 percent suggest *reorganising course content to relevant national needs*, *job orientation* and *broader knowledge of the subject* respectively.

Almost an equal proportion (29.2 percent) among the Special Science graduates are for a *broader knowledge of the subject* and *reorganising course content to relevant national needs*, while 12.5 percent are for *practical training/work experience*. *Revision of course to give a job orientation* is given by 8.3 percent of these graduates.

When suggested improvements are classified by University, the pattern of responses corresponds to the general pattern observed in respect of course followed. However, variations in the ordering of responses within each University is noted. The highest proportion of the graduates from the Universities of Colombo, Jayawardanepura and Kelaniya want a *broader knowledge of the course*. This is followed by *more scope for practical training/work experience*. 31.8 percent among the Moratuwa graduates, and 27.2 percent among the Peradeniya graduates (the highest proportion) state, *more scope for practical training work/experience* as an improvement. Among the Peradeniya group, *revision of course content to give a job orientation* and *reorganisation of content to relevant national needs* are

given by 22.4 percent and 12.5 percent of the graduates respectively. For an equal proportion of the Moratuwa graduates (13.6 percent) *revision of content to give a job orientation* and removal of unnecessary topics are important suggestions, while an equal proportion (9.1 percent) stress the need for a *broader knowledge of the subject* and *introducing English as a necessary component of the course* respectively.

### (B) *Methods of Instruction*

Looking at the suggestions given for better methods of instruction by the graduates in relation to their status of employment, it emerges that a greater proportion among graduates in each group—employed, unemployed and self-employed, give suggestions relating to the need for some form of practical training. For example, 35.6 percent of the employed graduates and 38.4 percent of the unemployed graduates suggest practical training should bring about improvements in the present methods of instruction; 7.4 percent and 8.1 percent of the employed graduates suggest the use of *audio visual aids* and the *inclusion of field study programmes* respectively. For 5.4 percent of the employed group *use of discussion and seminars* appears to be important. Among the unemployed graduates nearly 11 percent wish the *inclusion of field study programmes*, while 6.1 percent of the unemployed want *research programmes*, and 5.5 percent ask for the *inclusion of seminar programmes with outside participation*.

The highest proportion of graduates in the Professional, General Science, Special Arts and General Arts areas of study stress the need for more practical training, while the highest proportion among the Special Science graduates state, *the need for encouraging self learning procedures and attitudes among graduates* (see Table 8.15).

For the Professionals other important suggestions in the order of importance are—

- Improve language and teaching skills of staff (10.1 percent)<sup>1</sup>
- Use of audio visual aids (9.1 percent)

1. Aggregated under 'others' category in Table 8.15

TABLE 8.15  
**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES BY SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN METHODS OF INSTRUCTION AND COURSE FOLLOWED**

Methods of Instruction	Course followed					Total
	Professional	Science (Special)	Science (General)	Arts (Special)	Arts (General)	
1. Use of audio-visual aids ..	9.1	3.9	5.0	7.9	4.3	6.8
2. Use of discussion and seminars ..	3.0	3.9	5.0	4.4	7.1	4.9
3. Include seminar programmes where experts from outside organisations could participate ..	3.0	—	5.1	7.2	2.8	5.0
4. Include field study programmes ..	6.1	3.9	11.9	9.9	7.1	8.6
5. More practical training ..	34.4	15.4	28.8	36.5	39.0	35.1
6. Better rapport between teachers and students ..	3.0	15.4	3.4	1.4	2.8	2/8
7. Encourage self-learning procedures and attitudes ..	2.0	23.1	6.8	4.4	5.7	5.3
8. Others ..	39.4	34.4	34.0	28.3	31.2	31.5
<i>Total</i> ..	100.0 (99)	100.0 (26)	100.0 (59)	100.0 (293)	100.0 (141)	100.0 (618)

Note : Number of respondents. in parentheses.



- Better library and other facilities (7.1 percent)<sup>1</sup>
- Include field study programmes (6.1 percent)
- Medium of teaching should be English (6.1 percent)<sup>1</sup>

An equal proportion of the Special Science graduates, i.e. 15.4 percent stress *more practical training* and *better rapport between teachers and students*, *include field study programmes* and *improve language and teaching skills of staff* (under *others* category) are given by 11.9 percent and 8.5 percent of the General Science graduates respectively.

Among the suggestions given by the Special Arts graduates, the following could also be considered important :

- Include field study programmes (9.9 percent)
- Use of audio visual aids (7.9 percent)
- Include seminar programmes where experts from outside organisations could participate (7.2 percent)

*Practical training/work experience* seems to be a more important factor receiving the highest proportion within each group than *gaining a broader knowledge of the subject*.

It is noteworthy that an analysis by University reveals a high proportion of graduates in each group stressing *more practical training*. An equal proportion of graduates from the Moratuwa University stress: *improve language and teaching skills of staff*, as an important improvement. Other improvements given by the graduates from the Universities of Colombo and Jayawardenepura, in order of importance are—

- Include field study programmes (9.1 percent and 9.4 percent)
- Include seminar programmes where experts from outside organisations could participate (8.3 percent and 7.7 percent)
- Use of audio visual aids (7.6 percent and 6.8 percent).

6.8 percent of the graduates from Jayawardenepura University are for encouraging self-learning procedures and attitudes.

1. Aggregated under 'others' category in Table 8.15

An equal proportion (i.e. 7.9 percent each) of the graduates from Kelaniya University suggest inclusion of *field study programmes* and *better library and other facilities* while an equal proportion (i.e. 5.3 percent each) are for the *use of discussion and seminars* and *include seminar programmes where experts from outside organisations could participate*.

*Use of audio visual aids* and *encourage self-learning procedures and attitudes* are given by an equal proportion (i.e. 9.1 percent each) of the graduates from the University of Moratuwa.

Some noteworthy suggestions given by the graduates from Peradeniya are—

- Include field study programmes (8.6 percent)
- Use of audio visual aids (7.3 percent)
- Use of discussions and seminars (6.0 percent) and
- Encourage self-learning procedures and attitudes (6.0 percent)

*More practical training* is a major concern among all employed graduates, irrespective of the type of post held.

Among graduates holding Directors/Heads of Departments/Professional positions, 9.5 percent stress the need for *better library and other facilities*, 8.3 percent want *improvement in the language and teaching skills of staff*, 7.1 percent suggest the *use of audio visual aids* and 6.0 percent are for the *inclusion of field study programmes*.

An equal proportion i.e. 9.1 percent among the senior executive staff group are for the *use of discussion and seminars provide for writing of dissertations and original essays as a basic requirement* and stress that *teaching should not be confined to coaching for exams*. 13.4 percent suggest the *removal of lecture notes*.

17.2 percent of the academic staff among the graduates suggest the *use of audio visual aids* as a method of instruction, while an equal proportion (i.e. 13.8 percent) stress the need for *field study programmes* and for *better rapport between teachers and students*.

Of those in the Junior executive/staff positions an equal proportion (16.9 percent) are for *encouraging self-learning procedures and attitudes* and for *improving the language and teaching skills of staff* while 8.2 percent are for the *use of discussion and seminars*.

12.2 percent of those in the clerical/technical/allied grades suggest the *inclusion of field study programmes* and 8.1 percent the *use of audio visual aids* both of which stress the need for a practical orientation. Among graduates in teaching positions, 10.1 percent and 7.6 percent are for the *use of audio visual aids* and for *discussion and seminars* respectively. It is also noteworthy that 6.3 percent in this group are for *encouraging self-learning attitudes and procedures*.

The importance placed on practical training by the graduates is further illustrated when suggestions for improvement are considered by sector of employment. The type of improvements suggested by the graduates distributed among the three sectors of employment—government, semi-government and private, are designed to foster the development of self-reliance. For graduates in the government sector *the need for practical training* is followed in order of importance by *the use of audio visual aids*, *use of discussions and seminars* and *include field study programmes*. For graduates in the semi-government sector, suggested improvements include among others, *the inclusion of field study programme*, *the use of audio visual aids*, *establishing better rapport between teachers and students* and *the encouragement of self learning procedures and attitudes*.

An equal weightage (i.e 8.7 percent) is given by those in the private sector for four suggestions, viz : *use of audio visual aids*, *encourage self-learning procedures and attitudes*, *provide for the writing of dissertations and original essays as a necessary requirement* and *medium of teaching should be English*.

#### **8.6.5 Exchange of academic/non-academic staff between the universities and other institutions**

The benefits, according to the graduates, accruing from this arrangement, when considered in relation to course followed show (see Table 8.16), that among the Professionals, the highest



TABLE 8.16

**PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATES GIVING REASONS FOR FAVOURING THE EXCHANGE OF  
ACADEMIC/NON-ACADEMIC STAFF BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS, BY  
COURSE FOLLOWED**

Reasons	Course	Course				Total	
		Profes- sional	Science (Special)	Science (General)	Arts (Special)		Arts (General)
1. Broadens the knowledge .. ..	.. ..	25.6	18.5	24.1	31.2	26.0	28.0
2. Supplements theoretical knowledge with knowledge in the field .. ..	.. ..	31.2	25.9	10.9	28.6	23.3	25.8
3. Makes course content relevant to country's needs .. ..	.. ..	7.2	14.8	8.4	2.2	3.1	4.1
4. Corrects shortcomings in course field (content) .. ..	.. ..	6.4	3.7	8.4	4.8	4.5	5.3
5. Improves knowledge of employment conditions .. ..	.. ..	7.2	3.7	10.8	5.8	7.2	6.8
6. Could help officials to gain some ideas of students' problems/an understanding of problems outside the University .. ..	.. ..	5.6	3.7	9.7	4.5	7.5	6.0
7. Could help to utilise educated manpower in national development work .. ..	.. ..	0.8	3.7	—	5.0	1.4	3.0
8. Would train students for employment .. ..	.. ..	0.8	—	9.7	5.8	9.4	6.2
9. Others .. ..	.. ..	15.2	26.0	18.0	12.0	17.5	14.8
	<i>Total</i> .. ..	100.0 (125)	100.0 (83)	100.0 (27)	100.0 (416)	100.0 (223)	100.0 (874)

*Note* : Number of respondents, in parentheses.

proportion (25.6 percent) feel that this would *broaden knowledge* while an equal proportion (7.2 percent) feel that this would make *course content relevant to country's needs* and *improve knowledge of employment conditions*. 6.4 percent among this group hope that this would *correct shortcomings in field*, while an equal proportion (i.e 5.6 percent) state that this would *help gain an understanding of student problems/an understanding of problems outside*, and *would help to face problems and work out solutions* respectively.

The benefits given by the Special Science graduates in order of importance are—

- Supplements theoretical knowledge with knowledge in the field (25.9 percent)
- Broadens knowledge (18.5 percent)
- Would make course content relevant to country's needs (14.8 percent)
- Would establish contact with outside organisations (11.1 percent)
- Would help to face problems and work out solutions (7.5 percent)

The order perceived for the General Science graduates are—

- Broadens knowledge (24.1 percent)
- Supplements theoretical knowledge with knowledge in the field (10.9 percent)
- Improves knowledge of employment conditions (10.8 percent).

An equal weightage of 9.7 percent is given to—*could help officials to gain some understanding of student problems/an understanding of problems outside* and *should train students for employment*, while for an equal proportion (i.e. 8.4 percent) of graduates, *to correct shortcomings in course* and *to make course content relevant to country's needs* are important benefits and these arrangements could make significant contributions.

Among the Special Arts graduates 31.2 percent favour this arrangement in the belief that this would *broaden knowledge*, while *supplementing theoretical knowledge with knowledge in*

*the field* is given by 28.6 percent from this group. An equal proportion (5.8 percent) from this group see the benefits in terms of *improving knowledge of employment conditions* and *training students for employment*. For 4.8 percent and 4.6 percent, it means *correcting shortcomings in field* and *helping officials gain an understanding of student problems and for an understanding of problems outside* respectively.

For the General Arts group, *broadens knowledge* (26.0 percent) and *would supplement theoretical knowledge with knowledge in the field* (23.3 percent) appear as most important benefits. 9.4 percent are of opinion that this arrangement would train students for employment. 7.6 percent among them give, *could help officials to gain an understanding of student problems and / or an understanding of problems outside*. A further 7.2 percent cite *improving knowledge of employment conditions* as a contribution of this arrangement.

When the responses of the graduates who disapprove (53 cases) of such an arrangement are considered, it is found that the responses of the Professionals are fairly evenly distributed among many factors which makes it difficult to decipher a significant pattern.

### 8.6.6 Post-graduate study

Graduates were asked whether they were following/intend following/or have completed a course of post-graduate study. A perusal of the data revealed that a high proportion of those from a relatively higher socio-economic background were either following or had the intention of following a post-graduate course of study. The proportion of those having completed a post-graduate course of study was marginal, irrespective of their socio-economic background.

While looking at the data in relation to under-graduate course followed, it is found that among the Special Science and Professional courses, the percentage of response is indicative of the fact that the desire to follow post-graduate courses is high for these two groups, whereas among the General Science and Arts graduates the desire is low followed by Special Arts graduates.



While looking at the employment category of graduates with reference to data, *following/intend following/completed post-graduate course of study*, it is found that among all occupational groups, 50 to 65 percent of the graduates are following a post graduate course. Around 18.0 to 27.0 percent have intentions of following post graduate study and the balance have completed such study.

### **8.6.7 Course of study outside field of graduate/post graduate/diploma study after graduation**

The data on the different courses of study followed by graduates outside their university course when analysed by university course followed, reveals that :

Among the graduates with professional qualifications following courses outside the university, 84.2 percent are following Professional courses. The corresponding percentages in respect of outside courses in professional areas are very high for all other graduates who have done Special Arts, General Arts and General Science degrees too. Among Special Science graduates, Aesthetic studies (Fine Arts) and Journalism too featured as outside courses.

While looking at the data on the type of course followed outside with reference to occupation of the employed graduates, it is found that among those who followed professional courses, 28.4 percent come from the occupational category of teachers followed by 23.7 percent from clerical/technical/allied grades and 21.6 percent Junior executive/staff. Even among those following languages, as much as 50.0 percent are teachers and another 15.0 percent are academic staff of the universities. 33.3 percent of the teachers together with another 33.4 percent in the occupational category of Directors/Heads of Departments/Professionals are among those who follow Aesthetic studies. Foreign languages are being followed by 30.0 percent of the academic staff. 20.7 percent in the category of Directors/Heads of Departments/Professionals and 17.2 percent of the teachers. Aesthetic studies are being followed by 13.8 percent of the latter and 10.0 percent of the former.

## CHAPTER 9

# THE PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC STAFF ABOUT UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

### 9.1 Introduction

The relationship between university education and employment in Sri Lanka as perceived by the students and the graduates has been dealt with in the preceding two chapters. In this chapter, we shall deal with the perceptions of the university academic staff on four specific issues related to the problem of university education and employment in the country. These issues are :

1. the extent to which the classical aim of university education to cultivate academic excellence could be reconciled with the objectives of meeting national development needs and the employment aspirations of graduates;
2. the extent to which the scope and content of university education should be diversified to have development orientation ;
3. the inadequacies of student background to make university education development-oriented ; and
4. the professional role of the academic staff to make university education more relevant.

It was attempted to obtain answers to the questions related to these issues through the administration of questionnaires, as had been done in respect of students and graduates. However, since the response rate was very low, a detailed analysis could

not be made. In all, sixty-six members of the academic staff submitted their responses to the questions on the above issues—slightly more than one out of five selected randomly from the different universities and faculties. The findings given below do not therefore reflect the opinions or the position of the entire academic staff, but only of the sixty-six respondents, and so have to be interpreted with caution.

## 9.2 Academic excellence and development needs

A majority of the Senior and Junior staff members and also of the Professional group of staff members from the Medical, Engineering and Agriculture Faculties, favoured a compromise between the two functions of university education, namely, the achievement of academic excellence and the orientation of university education to meet national development and employment needs. This indicated that the old classical concept of considering the university as a centre of learning where knowledge was pursued for its own sake was no longer regarded as relevant and was also too remote from the social reality one faces.

However, a real difference of opinion emerged in the answers to whether specific career training, apart from that for the traditional professions, would be considered to be within the orbit of university education. A Senior lecturer, perhaps, aptly reflected the attitude of the majority regarding this issue :

“The major role of the university would be to provide analytical skills that are useful for any job or profession. Operational skills may be provided if there is a proper identification of job opportunities for specific groups of graduates”.

The lack of qualified academic and administrative staff and of facilities and resources were indicated as factors that hampered universities from undertaking the training of students for careers; the lack of qualified academic staff was by far more responsible. Among Faculties, the Faculty of Arts was severely handicapped by these two obstacles. Evidently there was a dearth of Senior level staff and the Faculty could not undertake training students for careers. Inadequacy of transport facilities to work-places and lack of funds also were obstacles that hindered universities engaging in the preparation of students for employment.



Furthermore, the negative attitude of both the staff and students was another obstacle which hampered the universities from training students for specific employment. Indeed the negative attitude among the staff was the more serious hindrance to the universities that desired to train students for jobs in later life.

Organisational deficiencies too rendered it difficult for the universities to train candidates for employment. There was for instance a lack of coordination both within the university, and between universities, administrators and policy makers etc. Two additional factors, e.g.—the lack of suitable employment opportunities and anomalies in the salary structure at the national level—tended to make career training for under-graduates an uncertain and unprofitable pursuit.

Regarding the changes desirable in the university structure for overcoming these obstacles that hindered training for careers, several from the academic staff highlighted the need to reorganise the courses of study. The need for greater flexibility in organising and providing new courses of study was underscored. Some pointed out the need to rationalise courses for preventing wasteful duplication of them while others wanted job-oriented courses introduced. Some of them opined that universities needed permission for selecting students with the aptitudes appropriate for following the respective courses of study.

The need for adopting new criteria for selecting suitable staff, (academic and administrative), was expressed. Freedom from political interference and ideological domination was also desired. The reorganisation of the university curricula was urged mostly by those in the Faculties of Arts; and even in regard to changes relating to staff the demand mainly arose from this Faculty.

A majority of the staff wished that suitable arrangements should be made for furnishing career guidance within the existing framework. A Senior level staff member like a Dean and/or a Director of Studies could be charged with the responsibility for guiding students in selecting courses in relation to the job-opportunities available in the country. Some, however, denoted the need for institutional arrangements to be made outside the existing framework, some added that special units needed to be created at the universities; others stressed the importance of

establishing career guidance centres for carrying out research and publishing handbooks on career prospects aided with government funds. Other pertinent proposals were that career guidance and/or information should be an important function of the U.G.C. (University Grants Commission), and that secondary schools too should provide guidance in the selection of courses relevant to job opportunities. The overwhelming conclusion was that the universities were not playing any part in career counselling.

Several staff members recognised the need for providing general guidance on career prospects, a few advocated general guidance being given by student counsellors. A few preferred that information should be supplied on a personal basis about career opportunities with a more formalised structure and organisation, and through closer student-teacher relations and interaction. The magnitude of the employment problem was realised by teachers in the Faculties of Arts and the worst affected were graduates in Arts. Naturally, those who emphasised a need for setting up a career guidance service/unit in each university were largely from the Arts Faculties.

Some correctly pointed out that the universities could not play any useful role in providing career guidance unless relevant training facilities for jobs and suitable employment opportunities were available.

To the question on the extent to which universities have contributed towards graduate unemployment, respondents furnished a range of differing views. Over a half believed that the universities were in varying degrees responsible for creating the graduate unemployment problem. Some staff members argued that the universities accounted for graduate unemployment by having an unplanned system of education at secondary and tertiary levels and by not gearing education to national needs, thereby producing too many unemployable Arts graduates. Others contended that many graduates produced were too 'bookish' and theoretically oriented. Those who advanced this view came mainly from the Professional group, such as from the Medical Faculty.

There were yet others who felt that the employment of graduates was a problem for the State and not the universities. Moreover, the universities can do little about this problem owing to political interference and a lack of national-level planning. A few teachers were even stronger in their views—it was wrong to attribute any responsibility for graduate unemployment to the universities. The Science teachers, however, did not regard graduate unemployment as a problem because graduates in Science, Medicine and Engineering enjoyed employment opportunities both locally and abroad.

As to the ways by which universities could help in minimising the graduate unemployment problem, the majority of the academic staff indicated that the universities could usefully help by effecting major meaningful curricular reforms in their educational system; and there was a strong group convinced of the need for major curricular reforms. They advocated measures such as improving the quality of university education, admitting fewer undergraduates, and even restricting the number of degree courses and substituting lesser level diploma courses. The intention was to create less graduates and more intermediate-level qualified persons who will not expect graduate-level jobs and remuneration. A useful suggestion for reducing graduate unemployment was that universities could pay more attention to placement services by liaising with the government and the private sector. Graduate employment advisers were to carry out the planning and organisation of career opportunities in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning.

### **9.3 Scope and content of university education vis-a-vis development orientation**

A good number of the academic staff considered the proposal of introducing new courses and specialisations in keeping with changes demanded by development and recent scientific trends in the country, important. The stress was on the necessity for meeting the changing needs of society and making the best use of human resources economically, while enhancing employment opportunities.



The twin objectives of academic excellence and employment orientation were considered to be complementary in drawing out the aptitudes of students. The curricula were also to be redesigned so that the courses of study may be geared to practical needs. A significant number deemed it important to redesign all curricula so as to include a definite development component; and it was emphasised that most curricula were out-dated. They desired the provision of new courses and specialisations to keep pace with scientific change and new trends in the country.

The objective of Development Education<sup>1</sup>, some members of the academic staff felt, was to fit graduates into a developing society especially by enhancing chances of employment. However the courses of study that were introduced had failed to impart Development Education, and success achieved had been bare.

Of the reasons for the failure of these Development Studies courses, a fair number of university teachers believed that they had not been carefully planned and implemented; others opined that the society was not prepared for innovations and changes which these courses aimed at promoting. Another view was that university reorganisation had interrupted the programme of Development Education. These courses themselves had not really increased job opportunities and a lack of finances and qualified personnel for teaching the subjects in Development Studies courses also contributed towards their failure.

A few of the academic staff were of opinion that there was no case for running the Development Study programme any longer.

Some, however, commented that these courses could be continued with modifications. An analysis of the view on the Development Studies course which was considered a desideratum and vital for making university education related to national needs, indicated that there was little enthusiasm or concern among the university academic staff about Development Studies programmes.

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1. See Chapter 5 for details.

The views of university teachers were sought on the participation of specialists outside the university, both in the formulation of university curricula and as visiting lecturers, and also on the exchange of academic staff in the university with others in parallel positions in government and private sector institutions for short periods for engaging in research and teaching in the university and outside. This was indeed a major question.

More than half of the views showed that such a policy and practice would be generally useful helping to make the university aware of the real conditions prevailing outside its confines. Further, it would enable the university to draw upon the valuable practical experience which outside Specialists had acquired, while it would also furnish a means of gauging opinions from those outside regarding the calibre of the future products of the university whose services they themselves would probably utilise in time. Some academic staff members however felt that the participation of such outside Specialists for formulating curricula will be of limited value. They thought that the services of such Specialists would be useful only if they had the necessary experience and could be engaged according to the needs and exigencies that arise especially in respect of certain subjects. Furthermore, it was pointed out that such Specialists should also be strictly subject to the supervision of the university authorities. Clearly, the academics felt that 'outsiders' may usurp their own roles in university decision-making on academic affairs.

On the issue of engaging outside Specialists as visiting lecturers, a majority of those who expressed views considered such a measure generally beneficial. An important factor pinpointed was the shortage of Specialists within the universities. A few others, felt that outside Specialists as visiting lecturers would be useful to a limited extent wherever they could make a contribution provided they had the necessary qualifications, particularly in highly specialised areas. Others believed that outside Specialist personnel will be useful only after undergraduates have first had a grounding in basic principles from the academic staff already in the universities.

To the question which concerned the exchange of academic staff in the university with suitable outsiders in the public and

private sectors for short periods for the purpose of undertaking both research and teaching, a majority from the university staff indicated that the exchange of academic staff with outsiders would be useful. Through such a scheme the university will be brought into contact with the outside world and its problems. In particular areas of study, as and when the need arose, the services of competent outsiders were to be used. A few, while accepting the usefulness of such a programme, however, warned that the contemplated exchange might be difficult to be implemented, and one staff member even suggested that such a scheme needed experimental trial before regular implementation.

As to whether relevant work experience was necessary for students *prior to starting their course*, a fair number of the academics considered such experience necessary while some indicated that there was no such necessity. Here there was a noteworthy difference of opinion. Many answers indicated that a programme of work experience would increase job opportunities for graduates and a few felt it would help students to relate theory to practice. However, a few others, especially in the Science and Professional courses of study, considered such a programme of work experience not feasible.

Many believed that improvements were needed in the system of evaluation of students. A fair number of academics urged the need for a system of continuous assessment, while a smaller number postulated that a different type of examination was required. It was argued that it was necessary to emphasise the practical aspect of examinations and to have different types of questions (especially the multiple choice type), and even, perhaps, the 'open book' form of examination. A very small number of the staff advocated the need for moderating examination papers by foreign examiners.

#### **9.4 Problems of university students**

A fair number of academics thought that students were equipped for undergraduate studies when they entered, but a large number believed that they were not. No one, however, admitted that the students taken in were very well equipped. This could be a pointer to that there are significant shortcomings in the



system of secondary education within the country. Indeed this idea was evident in all the opinions that dealt with the inadequacies of students and related problems.

In regard to the inadequacies of students, a substantial number of university teachers agreed that a lack of general knowledge, experience and maturity was a marked shortcoming, while quite a few spotlighted the lack of proficiency in English as yet another handicap. To a lesser extent, the inadequacies among students were the tendency to memorise lecture notes rather than to read and comprehend, and a lack of practical skills, which was stressed by the Science and Professional course teachers who also referred to a want of analytical skills among students.

The causes for these inadequacies were mostly ascribed to the shortcomings in secondary education; bad teaching was largely responsible for students being inadequately equipped. Other reasons stated, less emphatically, were unsatisfactory methods of selection to the university, an ill-equipped home environment, the examination-oriented "cramming" habit, and a lack of interaction between schools and universities.

Financial difficulties, poor residential facilities, an insufficient knowledge of English, a shortage of academic staff and a lack of communication between students and teachers were stated by the dons as factors which were also important in handicapping students from fully enjoying the benefits of university education. It is particularly significant that the large majority of the teachers also considered these difficulties to be very grave. Moreover, an insufficient knowledge of English was reckoned to be a serious difficulty that hampered students from getting the best out of their university education.

Among the more meaningful remedial measures prescribed were the need for better teacher training, changes in the secondary school curricula, granting more financial aid to students, especially for those from rural areas, and assistance for running basic courses in the universities, particularly in English.

A decisive majority admitted that it was possible for students to participate in research activities relevant to their studies. Such participation in research activities could instil in students an

inclination for research and practical work, and improve their ability to apply their theoretical knowledge in the analysis of concrete problems. However, some staff members felt that the students most likely to benefit from participation in research activities would be the Final Year students. There was also a belief that the scope for such participation was limited in the case of students following courses in Arts; large numbers made it difficult to involve them in research activities.

A number of the members of the staff favoured seminars, guest lectures and other similar activities that would bring the students into an enlivening contact with outsiders capable of making a useful contribution towards learning. Group research projects, especially as part of a national service, were suggested by some others as a valuable academic exercise. A few proposed educational tours, field trips and similar activities as alternatives or supplements to teaching. Other suggestions, again by a few, were to organise student societies in the different disciplines; to use video tape programmes for teaching; to get students to contribute to publications; to promote student exchanges with foreign countries; and to have foundation courses. Two Senior lecturers in the Arts Faculty proposed the provision of inter-disciplinary courses for superior quality students. Another opinion, from Senior Science lecturers, suggested that the history of a subject with its perspectives should be taught. Cumulatively, it is salient, these suggestions implied that the existing conventional teaching programmes were too narrowly confined to formal syllabuses, too 'bookish' and generally providing insufficient intellectual stimulation to under-graduates. Alternative methods of instruction were essential for supplementing the conventional orthodox forms of teaching.

To the question, how effective the formal and non-formal education programmes in the university have been in inculcating in students the attributes of general competence, initiative, discipline, creativity, leadership qualities, national consciousness and adaptability, a substantial majority of the university staff of all categories felt that general competence had been effectively imparted. A fair number also considered that adaptability had been inculcated, while a reasonably sizeable group, on the contrary, considered the inculcation of this attribute had been



ineffective. The dons were sharply divided on the question referring to discipline—almost half the staff said that a sense of discipline was effectively imparted, while about a half disagreed. In respect of qualities like creativity, leadership, initiative, except for that of national consciousness, about a little over half the university teachers felt that these qualities had not been effectively engendered among the students. Engineering and technical students were attributed with the capability of developing and displaying more initiative than the others. Opinion was almost equally divided among the staff regarding the effectiveness in inculcating the attributes of creativity and leadership qualities among undergraduates. Regarding the provision of a sense of national consciousness, there was a clear, though not decisive, majority of teachers who felt that university education had ineffectively imparted this quality among students.

Evidently the views of the staff leads to the inference that university education in the country has been generally ineffective in inculcating among students a number of attributes eminently desirable for the products of any university. Unfortunately, the academic staff were however generally unable or unwilling to suggest, to an appreciable extent, any new or worthwhile programmes for remedying such an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

With regard to the role and functions of student bodies in the university and their effectiveness, the number of views expressed was encouraging. A fair group of teachers stated that dealing with student problems was one of the main tasks of university student bodies, while another reasonable number emphasised the role student bodies could take in the organisation of extra-curricular activities. Student bodies were also considered to be a sort of forum for the free expression of opinion. A few felt that student bodies should enable students to be involved in decision-making at all levels. Other roles and functions envisaged for these bodies were, acting as advisory bodies to the university and discouraging disruptive student activity. Also, a function of such bodies was to be the promotion of staff-student dialogue, the creation of an interest in social problems and the promotion of group study.



A fair number of teachers concluded that these student bodies, as a sort of forum for the discussion of student problems, had been effective. But a slightly smaller number expressed the view that they had been ineffective, some emphasising that this had been owing to the intrusion of party politics at the cost of eclipsing student problems. A relatively more satisfactory number of teachers pronounced their views regarding the effectiveness of these bodies as a mechanism to link them closely to the university administration for the discussion of issues related to the improvement of the general conditions of student life.

The effectiveness and strength of these student organisations was vouched for by the replies received from a small group of academics. But regards these bodies in promoting social consciousness, leadership qualities and other socially useful attributes, it was once again clear from the views of dons, that their effectiveness was very limited. Indeed, quite a few asserted that they had been ineffective, a point underlined by some being that once again the intrusion of party politics accounted for causing this weakness. A lesser number of teachers however argued that these bodies had played an effective role in the universities. Evidently, by and large, the effectiveness of the student bodies in the various areas, which were specified, was considerably limited.

To the vexed problem of whether politics should be permitted to be one of the activities in university life, since it is generally accepted that universities should produce future leaders of society, a considerable number of teachers contended that politics should be a permissible component of university activities. Only a few teachers disagreed. However, many who were for not precluding politics from university life, also made it clear that there should be no party politics, and no political fanaticism which could breed violence and intimidation in university political activity.

### **9.5 The professional role of the academic staff to make university education more relevant**

A majority of teachers felt that meaningful and active participation by staff in activities such as curriculum development, teaching, evaluation and research was permitted by the prevailing university framework, while some considered that though partici-

pation was permitted there lay certain handicaps. Noteworthy points made were the lack of funds and incentives especially for research. Poor levels of language proficiency of those in the infrastructure of universities, the heavy teaching loads and administrative tasks were also handicaps.

As to whether the above mentioned staff activities were taking place in isolation, a majority mentioned that they were not. However, it was stated that there was too much political interference. There also was a tendency for such activities to be hampered by the persistence of traditional attitudes and too many regulations, besides the lack of funds, which particularly hindered staff research as mentioned above.

The majority of the academic staff, however, favoured a periodical evaluation of the objectives of higher education in the universities and of the performance of university, to be conducted by themselves. They were emphatic that such periodical evaluations were desirable. It was cautioned by some academics that this exercise had to be done in a relevant and meaningful way geared to realities, and for clarifying the needs and aims of a university. But there were two different views expressed on this by some teachers. Some favoured an independent Commission for this purpose, and others insisted that the evaluation should be executed through student-staff collaboration, through workshops.

The main constraint restricting the desire of the members of the staff to do their best in their profession was the poor remuneration received by the academics, especially by those in the Arts Faculties. This was also felt to be a problem, but to a lesser extent, by the teachers in the Science and Professional categories. The Arts Faculties also particularly pointed out as constraints the lack of aid for research, the prevalence of irksome political patronage and interference, the practice of consulting foreign agencies and experts (who had no knowledge of local conditions) in preference to using local resources, and the lack of proper residential facilities for teachers. The Administration, both outside and inside the universities, was also found fault with for undue interference, incompetence and malpractices. Additionally, apathy, especially on the part of degree students, was referred to by teachers of the Faculties of Arts while they also pinpointed the

inadequacy of senior level staff as restraints which hindered teachers from playing a far more useful role in the universities. Poor library facilities were underlined by those from the Arts, Science and the Professional group of academics, who also mentioned the lack of regard and consideration for academic activities, especially by governments, as disincentives to their contributing more of their effort towards the better functioning of universities. The Science and Professional categories of teachers made the special observations that there was no liaison between industry and the universities; and there was a poor appreciation of the application of science and technology to the task of national development.

The analysis of the "constraints and problems" which members of the academic staff considered as impediments to their optimum performance clearly demonstrates that the large majority of the university teachers are far from being satisfied with the existing conditions of life and work in the universities. Quite a few even appear to be frustrated, especially those from the Faculties of Arts, within the universities.



## CHAPTER 10

### EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION OF THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF GRADUATES

#### 10.1 Introduction

It has been stated before that for an analysis of the relationship between university education and employment the functioning of the labour market has to be taken into account, as well as the employers' perception of university education. The employers are the users of the 'product' of the university system and they are in an advantageous position to judge if the university system is serving the cause of the employment needs of society. The functioning of the labour-market is characterised by the recruitment and promotion practices of the employers for different jobs. The wage policy has been dealt with before. In respect of the assessment of university education, the work performance of university graduates and the adequacy of the university courses in providing the skills for performing the tasks have been examined in the following paragraphs.

The opinions on the above two aspects have been sought from employers in 36 enterprises (comprising government, semi-government and private sector establishments). As in the case of the university academic staff, the sample of views from the employers is far too small to elicit firm conclusions. Hence it is reiterated that the discussion and the conclusions that follow should be interpreted with caution.

Among the 17 private sector respondents were two large multi-nationals engaged in the manufacturing industries; four local manufacturing and engineering firms; three service organi-

sations such as hotels and air lines; two large foreign banks; three large local firms engaged in finance and trade, and one newspaper combine. Thus, they somehow do comprise a representative although a strictly limited cross section of the private sector enterprises. However, the private sector in Sri Lanka, as a rule, has never been a substantial recruiter of graduates. Generally private sector organisations favour young GCE O/Level or A/Level candidates and train them in service for executive positions, especially of an administrative nature.

Among the semi-government organisations were one large bank, two corporations engaged in the manufacturing industry, three organisations engaged in scientific research and two institutions dealing with management services. The seven government departments that responded included some engaged in highly technical and professional work and others engaged in activities of a highly specialised public service nature. Banks and Corporations take in graduates, but again to a limited extent. An interesting feature in some of the State owned banks is the employment of graduates at non-graduate positions. Given the sample size, the same precautions are to be applied to the findings as to those related to the academic staff.

## 10.2 The recruitment procedure

The employers indicated that there were very few positions reserved exclusively for graduates. Graduates were generally dispensable. Most of the positions taken up by graduates were of such a nature that they were also open to non-graduate employees through avenues of promotion. In the state sector, generally the number of places thus available for direct recruitment of graduates from outside the service was fixed as a percentage of the total number of vacancies. This may be because the trade unions of the existing employees had obtained a right to be promoted to a certain number of the higher positions. In a few government departments a limited number of positions are exclusively reserved to be filled by graduate recruits. This would be because of the specialised technical nature of the jobs available which those in the lower ranks of a service may not be able to perform. In marked contrast, however, in some large technical departments as much as 50% of the positions, for which graduates were recruited directly, were

reserved to be supplied by the promotion of technical officers from lower grades. Certainly, some of the engineering positions are being filled by promoting middle-level qualified people. In the semi-government sector, the relative proportion of graduates directly recruited to various positions has been comparatively larger. This was perhaps owing to the fact that these were relatively new establishments and therefore do not have large cadres in the middle rungs with long service, and those eligible for promotion to the higher grades were limited.

Reasons given by the semi-government employers for recruiting graduates direct, by and large, stand in contradiction to the poor assessment they make of present day graduates coming up for interviews. However, it has to be stated, in government and semi-government establishments procedures and practices of recruitment of employees are rigid and seldom reviewed in the light of new developments.

In the private sector, too, positions exclusively reserved for graduates are very few. However, there were two rather unusual cases—both in large high prestige establishments paying unusually high salaries. In one, it was reported that 'marketing' and 'marketing support' positions were reserved exclusively for graduates. Reasons given were that.

"a degree implies above average intelligence, ability to apply energies to meet objectives and good general knowledge of degree subject."

Marketing and higher level of salesmanship are now, with greater sophistication in managing business establishments, becoming rather specialised functions. Evidently graduates provide good material to be subsequently trained in those areas after recruitment.

The other company reserved general management trainee positions exclusively for graduates, while it threw open engineering management trainee and technical management trainee positions for non-graduates. The reason given for this was—

"the potential they have to develop within the..... organisational structure."



Once again, obviously, the managerial skill needed is of a more sophisticated nature and graduates are better able to gain the requisite knowledge later than non-graduates recruits.

Still another private sector establishment with unusually high salary scales said :

"We consider graduates to be better equipped to adapt to changing situations. We require people who are decisive and can handle problems competently without having to refer to superiors all the time. We further feel that graduates are good leaders and can command the respect of their subordinates."

This is no doubt true. While a promoted official is generally informed and diligent, he does not usually really break away from tradition and in his actions and decision-making, remains inhibited. Very often he is conservative, cautious and diffident.

It was clear from the responses that there was a top notch of graduates even from the Social Science and Arts Faculties who could measure up to quite exacting standards. Evidently these were the ones that were attracted by these few prestigious companies. What goes to make the difference between these few and the large majority that stand more or less condemned is one key issue that has to be settled. Graduation is after all the culmination of a long process beginning with the early home environment, and later primary and secondary school education. Perhaps those who do catch the eye were those who had been advantaged in respect of their domestic and school environments, especially with schools in the Island differing so much in quality.

### **10.3 Work performance of graduates and relevance of university education**

On the work performance of graduates, some representative responses were as follows :

"The general performance is good since we also make an effort to match the correct people to the correct job at the time of making our selection. However, we have noted with regret a deteriorating trend in the overall qualities of the graduates who present themselves for our interviews."

The latter observation significantly shows the growing sense of disappointment in selecting graduates for jobs. Even with care exercised to avoid misemploying graduates, the newer recruits were failures.

"Those who got selected—their performance is very satisfactory. There have been instances where we have not made any selections due to the poor overall standards or because they cannot be fitted into our requirements."

This answer again gives no cheer to the graduates. In spite of a large turnover, the employer has not been able to choose a suitable graduate for a job. This is noteworthy.

"Generally we find that a graduate could grasp a new subject and learn a new job faster."

This opinion of course is complimentary to graduates, but is not positively indicative of the extent to which the services of graduates were being utilised as shown by the statements of employers, given below :

"The Engineering graduates have proved to be very effective and they have made a very useful contribution. Most of the new recruits fresh from the university are very enthusiastic and keen to learn."

Generally the employer's opinion, as seen in the responses, of the technically or scientifically qualified graduate has been good.

"Other recent recruits in General Science and Arts are making a firm effort to fit into the set up, but limitations with regard to general knowledge and poor knowledge of English are main constraints in their progress."

This is certainly a telling remark, and indicate clear shortcomings in the content of university education. Graduates lack general knowledge and cannot handle work in English. These two attributes are today essential for management; and, devoid of these, graduates are unemployable. Even those recruited have to strain themselves to play a useful role in an establishment.

"Our company has been concerned largely in the promotion of marketing and export of agricultural produce. In both the

industrial and training fields, management staff in the past, have been chosen on their records at secondary school levels with emphasis not only on examination success, but also in the participation in extra-curricular activities. We are fully aware of the shortcomings in such recruitment and have in the last few years reserved places for graduates. However, we find that with too much emphasis on specialisation and little participation in other university activities, in extra curricular fields, graduates have found it extremely difficult to adapt to the training and employment needs in the commercial sector of this country. It is important that universities should establish a closer relationship with this sector and perhaps sandwich courses and part-time studies may be usefully incorporated in the university curriculum."

This view shows another weakness in the quality of the graduates. They are narrowly specialised and cannot easily broaden their outlook or understanding. They are not omnicompetent generalists, who can be better and more widely used.

"In the majority of present day graduates recruited to the Bank, the general work performance has been exceedingly poor. They are also handicapped by a lack of English knowledge."

The want of a knowledge of English is at least understandable in the light of the changes in the media of instruction, but that graduate recruits generally perform poorly exhibits the want of a sounder training and discipline at the undergraduate level.

"They grasp problems and make quick good decisions and develop for better positions within a few years."

Here again, clearly, it is on the job training that brings out the shine in graduates. Direct from the university they are not sufficiently suitable for responsible employment.

"Engineering graduates from Peradeniya and Colombo are far superior in knowledge, ability and general performance to graduates from U.K. universities....."

This opinion strengthens the general trend that the technical training and knowledge imparted at Sri Lankan universities have been of an evenly high standard.



"Arts graduates tend to be more outward-going than Science graduates and often have better personal rapport."

It is interesting to note from this observation that the Science graduate, it is hinted, has his limitations perhaps because he is too narrow and restricted as a specialist confined to his particular field of study. Hence, he cannot, unlike the Arts graduate, undertake general administration equally easily and ably.

#### 10.4 Relevance of course content to specific job needs

In response to inquiries about the relevance of course content to specific job needs, the following statements could be noted :

"In most instances the course content is irrelevant to the jobs they perform but this is so because we do not attach much importance to course content in making selections."

Obviously no specialists were needed in this establishment; the need was for personnel who have had more education than GCE A/Level candidates.

"In Science and Engineering, course content relevance is high."

This is yet another supportive view of the generally favourable opinion about Science and Engineering specialist graduates.

"..... we feel that graduates should be more involved in extra curricular activities as well during their university education to make them fit into the outside world when they finish their course. It may be pertinent to mention here that a large majority of graduates who turn up for our interviews are more bookworms which makes the selection procedure rather tough."

To a fair extent this view is plausible. Undergraduates, in recent years, faced with stiff competition in seeking jobs owing to the large numbers that graduate spend their days in "cramming" to score in the "rat-race" and miss a lot of extra-curricular activities.

"We are aware that Degrees in Development Studies are awarded in the specialised fields of Banking but we have no experience with such graduates. We would however wish that all university students reading for General Degrees are instructed in the basics of Management and Administration since the vast majority of these students will eventually hold positions of management where their duties have relation to the subjects studied by them in the university."

"Introduction of courses in business methods, emphasis on creativity, case studies, etc."

Both views given in these two paragraphs indeed highlight what has for long been a serious shortcoming in Sri Lanka university education—the lack of adequate courses in Management Studies.

"University education in this country has been purely academic and in our view has ignored the fields of specialisation particularly in technical and vocational areas which are useful for training supervisory and management levels in an organisation. There must be greater stress on managerial education in general. New professions such as Accountancy must be supported by universities through encouragement at research level."

This is a valid comment. Sri Lanka has lagged behind, as admitted earlier, in the area of Management Studies and today's business establishments would like a specialist graduate manager instead of having to train any graduate to do management.

"A university social science course is quite relevant for general administrative jobs in this corporation."

The need in this case on the contrary was obviously for general non-technical and non-specialist supervisors, and a social science degree has sufficed.

"Highly relevant in relation to our specific major function of scientific research for the.....industry."

Once again a view which reinforces the fact that Science graduates do possess the specialisation to supply the need for narrow specialists in the industrial sector.

"Not relevant except in specialised technical fields. I would suggest that arrangements be made for undergraduates to undergo training/study during their vacation in any particular field they may be interested in."

A valuable suggestion. Undergraduates will certainly mature and become better informed if they were meaningfully deployed in related areas for training during vacations.

"Will have to include more down to earth modules in subjects like economics, statistics, sociology, geography."

A criticism of the highly abstract and theoretical teaching to which students have been subjected. A fair criticism in general that calls for rethinking among university circles about the course content in different disciplines at the university level.

The preceding comments highlight the problem of the methods and objectives of non-technical, non-professional university courses vis-a-vis the competencies expected by the employers of these graduates. This is an extremely complex issue and needs very careful examination from dons and university planners alike, especially when formulating course content for disciplines or when teaching undergraduates. The criticism made carries with it fair justification and a correction of the deficiencies is certainly needed.

On a related issue, the employers appear to think that while general competence and responsibility are attributes that have been generated by university education, on the other hand creativity and leadership are attributes that have suffered neglect. Obviously, undergraduates have been passive learners. They have not been given opportunities to take an initiative, to think and act independently. There has been no attempt to draw out their latent talents. By and large passive learning has been true of school and higher levels of education.

## 10.5 Conclusions

Almost all employers were quite impressed with the quality of the Engineering graduates. Similarly, in regard to Science graduates too, the employers were generally satisfied with their



quality. Thus, it appears that science, technical and engineering education in the universities in Sri Lanka are of an acceptable and useful standard both in content and quality.

In the areas of Social Sciences and Arts subjects, while a few employers, who pay distinctly higher wages than the others, were quite impressed with the quality of graduates even for managerial work, the large majority complained of the poor quality and falling standards of university products. They appear to attribute this to three causes. First, the dearth of co-curricular activities in the universities. It is asserted that these activities would help in building up qualities of leadership, initiative and other personality traits which are so necessary in managerial jobs. Second, the over-academic 'bookish' type of learning that apparently seems to prevail among most university students failed to impart the qualities of intellectual curiosity and breadth of outlook that were wanted in managerial jobs. Third, the lack of knowledge of English which acted as an obstacle to their merging with other managerial cadres both inside the workplace as well as outside.

The absence of co-curricular involvement and the undue disproportionate immersion in book learning to the exclusion of all other activities can be understood. After all, there has been a proliferation of graduates chasing a limited number of jobs and as this entails severe competition, the one who fares best at the degree examination benefits. University evaluation generally is also based apparently on the amount of information a student can reproduce. The whole assessment system needs revision if any change for the better in the quality of the graduates is to be effected. The lack of English knowledge is owing to the de-emphasis on English and the elevation of the local languages as media of instruction in schools and universities in the recent past.

Quite a number of the employers have suggested the inclusion of Management Studies for most General Degree courses. Some, of course, have decried the over-specialisation that features in many degree courses. They also recommend that arrangements need be made for university students to obtain "work experience" in suitable places during vacation time. As to how valid or/and feasible these suggestions are, will be quite a debatable issue. Many employers bemoan the lack of relevance in course content

to the work graduates are called upon to undertake after employment. But, in general, one is inclined to agree that what the employers state, after, all, are evidently and seemingly true. Sri Lanka has to catch up on Management Studies especially with management becoming a specialist's job. Practical experience will no doubt make graduates become more mature and also endow them with a practical bent. They will be more down to earth, less theoretical, and less unrealistically abstract. Courses of study, of course, have to be revised to meet the needs of employers if education is to be more employment-oriented.

Almost all employers are of the view that a knowledge of English is a high priority requirement for adequate performance in their establishments. This is understandable since practical executive and managerial work certainly calls for a good knowledge in the use of English.

Employment of graduates in positions not in keeping with their educational attainment does not appear, at least from this small sample study, to be as high as it is often made out to be. The private sector employers do not generally appear to employ graduates in non-graduate job positions. They were of the opinion, with acceptable reason, that such a course of action would lead to frustration and also a rapid influx of such employees. But even this conclusion is tentatively made. Since the responses received had been from those who could reasonably be considered to have been the relatively more interested among the employers in this sort of survey their opinions do merit some serious consideration. After all, they have taken time and trouble to reply, and they had not been indifferent.

## CHAPTER II

### PRINCIPAL FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING

#### 11.1

An attempt will be made under section 11.2 of this chapter to summarise the principal findings of this study in terms of the objectives laid down in Chapter 1. Some of the implications of these findings for planning education and employment, as related to the central theme of this study, will be briefly discussed in section 11.3.

#### 11.2 A summary of principal findings

##### 11.2.1 The socio-economic variables influencing the relationship between education and employment

- (i) "An unparalleled achievement in world demography" occurred in Sri Lanka between 1946 and 1950 when the death rate declined from 19.8 to 12.6, infant mortality from 140 to 82 and maternal mortality from 16.5 to 5.6. By 1980 the crude birth rate, which was 39 in 1950 and 33 in 1965, had fallen to 27.6 per thousand. Infant mortality was 37 and population growth, which was an average of about 2.5 percent per annum between 1950 and 1965, had dropped to 1.7 percent. Life expectancy which had been about 43 in the early Forties rose to about 65 for males and 64 for females in the second half of the Sixties and to 67 for males and 69 for females by the mid Seventies.



- (ii) The population doubled between 1946 and 1973. This resulted in a massive expansion of the dependent population, particularly in the 0-14 age group, with consequent pressure on the social welfare programmes and the country's limited resource base. However, the share of the young age groups in the total population did not increase although their size increased rapidly. The 0-14 age group which was 42.2 percent of the total population in 1901 was 39.2 percent in 1971. The 15-24 age group was 20.8 percent in 1901 and 20.5 percent in 1971. In contrast, the over-50 group was 7.5 percent in 1901 and 12.4 percent in 1971.
- (iii) Assuming that the economically active population as those in the age group 15-65, the share of the dependent population increased as the age specific death rate for the over-65 age group continued to decline. This factor, combined with high birth rates, continued to increase the dependency ratio of the population from approximately 68 in 1946 to 76 in 1971. This dependence factor in turn contributed to processes which were depressing the rates of savings, investment and growth of output and employment, as a result of which a massive backlog of unemployment was accumulating.
- (iv) The total workforce had risen from 2.993 million in 1953 to 4.369 million in 1971, an increase which was less than that for the population as a whole. While the share of the 25-49 age group had declined from 29.5 percent to 27.7 percent in 1971, that of the 15-24 group had increased from 25 percent to 31 percent. Of this group the 20-24 component had increased its share from 15.4 percent to 19.6 percent. Their rate of participation in the workforce had also increased significantly for the group, rising from 55 percent to about 67

percent. The major portion of this increment was contributed by the participation of the female population.

- (v) The mounting pressure of population on land was relieved by policies of planned internal migration from the congested south-west and central regions to the sparsely populated north-western, north-central and eastern parts of the Island, thereby preventing a major rural-to-urban shift in population. The rural population still comprises about 75 percent of the total. Besides the land policies that were linked to the spatial distribution of population, the location of industry in the public sector together with the relatively slow growth of the urban industrial sector combined to produce a demographic and economic structure which promoted a rural-urban balance of a somewhat unusual character for a developing country.
- (vi) Even before Sri Lanka achieved political independence, the base for a major set of public initiatives in social development had already been laid. From the early Thirties there was a limited form of responsible government based on adult franchise, which even within its constraints responded to the felt needs of the constituencies by the provision of improved transportation and communication, educational and health facilities and the settlement of the rural poor on state land. A welfare-oriented ideology had emerged and the main elements of the social welfare package that had been developed immediately prior to independence were elaborated in a nation-wide programme to which more than a third of the government budget was allocated.
- (vii) The developments related to welfare policies were accompanied by far-reaching changes of a qualitative character, particularly in education. The education system together with other developments, besides changing the motivations and aspirations

of youth, created a new climate of social mobility which was radically different from the social stratification of the prevailing social order. Free education has introduced a small but significant element of meritocracy into the system which was offering prospects for children from the low-income strata to compete for occupations with higher income and social status. The pattern of employment and the occupational structure, in particular the rapid expansion of state activities, were creating job opportunities for both males and females. Consequently, the expectations of the younger generation were linked increasingly with the state sector, and the security and prestige it provided.

- (viii) The free education system had been specially beneficial to female children whose participation in the education system at all levels led to a rapid rise in the rate of female participation in the workforce. Besides, the co-educational system in the majority of schools and the university would have helped in transforming the traditional values and perceptions regarding the role of women. However, the female population had a much higher proportion of the unemployed in the 15-24 age group.
- (ix) The pace and quality of the socio-economic improvements during this period exerted increased pressure on the available resources and on government commitments to the welfare programme. As a result, major improvements in the quality of the services could not be effected and the resources were spread thin by the Sixties. The inherent limitations of the system were manifest during the latter half of the Sixties and in the early Seventies.
- (x) The younger generation, who had been the beneficiaries of the system, found that ready integration into the productive workforce was difficult. The economy had been unable to generate employment adequately, and the education system had raised the



level of job expectations to an extent that could not be matched by the occupational profile. In addition, since the development of technical and vocational skills had received scant attention, school-leavers were ill-equipped for self-employment. Furthermore, although primary and secondary education expanded, there was no commensurate expansion at university and tertiary levels. Consequently, a large number of students, eligible for university education, were shut out because of the limited facilities.

- (xi) The fundamental disequilibrium in the country's economy was one which was created by the growing imbalance between population and productive capacity. Between 1950 and 1975 real per capita incomes had grown at only 1.1 percent, while population had grown at an annual rate of 2.5 percent between 1958 and 1971. But the economy had been able to generate new employment only at an average annual rate of 1.1 percent. Between 1963 and 1971 the total workforce increased by approximately one million, almost all of whom were new entrants to the workforce in the age group 15-29. But only about 430,000 were able to find jobs. The massive backlog of unemployment grew to an estimated 24 percent in 1973, i.e. over one million unemployed, most of them in the 15-24 age group.
- (xii) It is significant, however, that in the Fifties and Sixties when welfare programmes were most vigorously pursued, growth rates were maintained at an average of 4.5 percent. During the period 1971-76 the economy took a sharp downward trend and the rate of growth averaged between 2 percent and 3 percent. Among the causes were disruptive internal developments and a sequence of international crises which included the devaluation of the dollar, the world food shortage and the energy crisis. Sri Lanka's efforts at combining fairer

income distribution with growth took place in an external environment which persistently depressed the real national income. The decline in the terms of trade since 1960 was briefly reversed only in 1977 and 1978. The foreign exchange constraints were severe in the early Sixties, and it was only after the mid Sixties that the country was able to mobilise a considerable volume of development assistance.

- (xiii) This period also witnessed a severe cutback on imported consumer goods. The economic regime tended to lower the living standards of the middle classes and undermine the incentive system for professional and highly educated manpower. These conditions also contributed to the outflow of professional and other high-level skills. By the beginning of the Seventies there was a considerable backlog of unemployment among university graduates, particularly among those from the non-science disciplines. During this period the employability of the student population as a whole was reduced by the neglect of English in the education system. Lack of proficiency in English among a large majority of graduates also severely curtailed the job opportunities for them in the modern sector as well as opportunities for further professional training.
- (xiv) The new policy package which was implemented in 1977 was aimed at the liberalisation of the economy to enable the market system to operate more freely and efficiently, and thereby produce a structure of prices and incentives which could promote growth, employment and production for export. Its chief features include—
  - (a) A substantial relaxation of exchange controls.
  - (b) Modification of the previous policies of subsidies and administered prices by allowing

international prices to take effect and by confining the food subsidy to households with incomes below Rs. 300 per month.

- (c) Concentration of the development effort on a selected number of programmes—
  - (i) an export-oriented free trade zone in manufacturing, planned to attract sizeable foreign investment and generate employment for the urban workforce.
  - (ii) The Mahaweli Development Scheme.
  - (iii) A major urban development and housing programme.
- (d) Mobilisation of external resources at a significantly higher level than in the past in order to finance the development programme.
- (xv) The liberalised economy while promoting growth and investment has also resulted in adverse trade balances and massive deficits in the balance of payments. However, rapid expansion has witnessed a major spurt of growth in employment in the modern urban sector thereby increasing job opportunities for middle and high-level manpower. The improved socio-economic conditions are also conducive to a small reverse flow of Sri Lankan expatriate professionals. The environment is favourable for mobility in both directions. However, graduates in the non-science and non-technical disciplines who have little or no proficiency in English remain unable to benefit from the increased economic activity.

### **11.2.2 Inconsistencies in the development of the formal school and university education system**

Some of the principal characteristics and inconsistencies in the formal education system of Sri Lanka could be identified as follows:



- (i) The country has a very large and a widespread network of schools working out to an average of one school per 1501 of population and area-wise, a school for every 2.6 square miles (6.6 sq. kms.). The system which is predominantly State controlled, contains about 3.3 million pupils and over 140,000 teachers, and has contributed to the growth of a literacy rate of about 87 percent. State expenditure on education uses up nearly 3 percent of the GNP (1980).
- (ii) Successive governments, since 1945, have attempted to transform the elitist-oriented system in the colonial times to its present mass participation pattern, by introducing a number of important measures designed to democratise education. Among these measures are—
- (a) the introduction in 1945 of the Free Education Scheme at the formal school level, extending up to the university ;
  - (b) the change to the National Languages (Sinhala and Tamil) as the media of instruction, staggered between the period 1945 to 1970;
  - (c) the abolition of the denominational school system in 1960; and
  - (d) the qualitative improvement of education through periodic changes in the structure and content of education in an attempt to relate education to the needs of society. The curricular reforms which were introduced for this purpose and started on a systematic basis in the early 1960s, were continued in the 1970s in a major way.
- (iii) Despite the significant gains of education resulting from its quantitative and qualitative expansion and the improvements effected, particularly during the post-independence decades, the massive school system continues to suffer from a high wastage rate.

A sizeable proportion of the school-going age population does not come into school at all; during 1970–79, the no-schooling category has averaged nearly 15 percent of this age group. Overage admissions to schools are not quite uncommon, and in 1979 as much as 18.8 percent of the pupils entering school in the Lower Kindergarten were overage, being over 6 years of age. Dropouts from schools and repetition of grades, both occurring right from Grade 1 onwards, are other disturbing features of the school system. School census data (1979) indicates that only 73 percent were able to cross Grade 5, 51 percent passed Grade 9 and sat the GCE O/Level Examination and 2 percent were able to enter university and receive a higher education.

- (iv) Furthermore, data indicates that school attendance is heavily dependent on the income of the household. There is evidence to show that poverty is one of the main contributory factors which make children leave school early or keep away altogether.
- (v) In addition to the inconsistencies stated above, there appears to be many regional disparities and inequalities, as evidenced when the two aspects of utilisation and provision of educational facilities up to GCE A/Level grades are considered. In this respect, three categories of districts could be broadly identified :
  - (a) districts in which participation rates are relatively high but where facilities are insufficient to meet the demand;
  - (b) districts in which participation rates are below average but do not have sufficient facilities to cope with even existing enrolments; and
  - (c) districts in which participation rates are below average but seem to have adequate facilities to cope with the *present* level of enrolment.

- (vi) Although university enrolment has expanded drastically from a meagre 904 in 1942 with one university, to over 16,000 in 1980, with 6 universities and 1 university college, the student enrolment ratio for the relevant age group has remained at 2 percent in 1980, one of the lowest in the South-Asian region. In respect of annual admissions, growth has been very marginal, and the percentage of those admitted out of the total number considered eligible had been declining at an alarming rate, from about 34 percent in 1970 to about 13 percent in 1980.
- (vii) The current admission policy being followed by the University Grants Commission is based on 3 tiers :
- (a) all-Island merit (30 percent),
  - (b) district merit (55 percent), and
  - (c) an underprivileged district merit (15 percent).
- The special privileges given to educationally disadvantaged groups and district-wise admission to universities, particularly since 1970, had aroused complaints from racial minorities and influential groups in urban localities. The restrictive admission policies at the university have been creating severe discontent among school educated youth. On the other hand, job opportunities have not been increasing to the extent to cater to an increased number of graduates.
- (viii) The ratio of Arts based students to Science based students has increased from 4:5 to 9.4:6 during the period 1942-1979. However, a significant part of this increase is due to an increased number of students reading Management/Development Studies—Arts-based disciplines, needed for the country's development.
- (ix) Female participation in university education has increased from a meagre 10 percent in 1942 to 39 percent in 1980, and is one of the highest in the region. The pattern of distribution of women students among



different disciplines seems to indicate a greater preference for Arts, Medical studies and Science over Agriculture and Engineering.

- (x) While Sri Lankan universities produced approximately 14,000 graduates during a period of 23 years, since the first university was established in 1942, during the subsequent 15 year period (1965–1979), the total number of graduates produced was nearly 50,000. Also striking is the decreasing trend of graduates per year, during the period 1969 to 1976. When compared with the increasing trend of admissions with the proper time lag, there appears to be a high rate of wastage in the university system too.
- (xi) The Arts based graduates (i.e. Arts, Education, Management Studies and Law) have averaged 72 percent of the total graduates per year for the period 1965–1979, reaching a peak of 85 percent in 1969 and the nadir of 58 in 1975. This maldistribution has been a major cause of considerable unemployment among Arts graduates, and resultant social and political tensions. Though there has been a deliberate attempt to achieve a better distribution of students between Arts-based and Science-based courses since 1975, graduate output among external candidates too has continued to be dominated by Arts graduates.
- (xii) Sri Lankan universities enjoy a comparatively comfortable student-teacher ratio, the highest ratio of 20.6:1 being observed in Sri Jayawardenepura University while the lowest ratio of 5.7:1 is in Moratuwa University for the year 1980. This raises the question of optimum utilisation of staff time.
- (xiii) Since 1945, university education has been wholly financed by the State. Of the total annual government expenditure, the grant for the universities has been very meagre, being often under 1 percent, except for 1980 (1.11 percent), even though the grant itself has been steadily increasing in numerical

terms. The distribution of government funds among universities reflects many imbalances and disparities. In 1975 Peradeniya University received as much as 37.7 percent of the total budget on recurrent expenditure, while Colombo University could only claim 23.2 percent. The shares of Sri Jayawardanepura and Kelaniya Universities were 10.8 percent and 11.2 percent respectively, and 12 percent for Moratuwa University. Jaffna University was at the bottom with 5.2 percent. The current expenditure on students in different disciplines ranges between an average of Rs. 1,250 for Arts and Rs. 5,800 for Engineering Studies, while the figures for the other disciplines are Rs. 3,850 for Agriculture, Rs. 4,100 for Science and Rs. 4,700 for Medicine. Financial provision also has a direct bearing on staff-student ratios, and here again the picture has not been one of consistency or even distribution either between universities or between different disciplines.

### **11.2.3 Problems of implementing employment-oriented education programmes at university level**

- (i) By 1970 there were a large number of unemployed graduates, especially in Arts. This graduate unemployment was ascribed to the defects prevalent in university education. Therefore university education was to be changed to suit a developing country's employment needs. It was with this view that several "job-oriented" courses of study were begun at the university after 1972.
- (ii) These courses were created largely in response to government requirements. The courses in Public Finance and Taxation, Estate Management and Valuation, Library Science, Education and Mass Communication were some of these courses meant to provide more suitably qualified graduates to fit into employment schemes then envisaged. Help from professional experts outside the university was

obtained to draw up and teach the new courses. Representatives from Ministries and government departments also participated in formulating these new courses, and practical work was an essential component.

- (iii) Problems of running these courses smoothly and satisfactorily arose *ab initio*, due to a number of factors, which collectively contributed to the failure of the programme:
- (a) Firstly, these courses were introduced in a hurry and without adequate preparation. Suitable teachers for many of these courses could not be found within the university. Visiting lecturers were used, but it was unsatisfactory to run regular courses relying heavily on visiting staff, who were themselves too busy and could not devote sufficient commitment to teaching.
  - (b) These courses were, in fact, imposed from above on the respective Faculties through directives. The response of the academic staff at Faculty level to directives was lukewarm, and therefore neither efficient nor substantial coordination could be ensured.
  - (c) These courses did not appeal to many of the university teachers who were asked to handle new and unfamiliar subjects. Some of these courses were interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary. Consequently, there arose difficulties because the courses were still conducted within a traditional framework of semi-autonomous departments of study in near autonomous Faculties. In this context, it was difficult to organise the practical programmes due to lack of sufficient funds and the unduly large number of students enrolled for these courses.



- (d) Furthermore, there was insufficient coordination of the contributions from specialists in different fields; these specialists belonged to different departments of study or Faculties or Campuses; and collaboration was inadequate or reluctant. Conservative academics tended to be unconcerned with innovations in the curricula.
- (e) Initially, students took to the new courses eagerly, as a high expectation of jobs had been aroused. However, it became evident soon that too much specialisation on a specific profession without precise knowledge of the relevant manpower needs restricted job opportunities for these graduates. The problem of graduate unemployment now appeared to be more owing to economic causes at national level rather than to educational or curricular deficiencies in any of the University Faculties.
- (f) Finally, the very same Ministries and government departments which vigorously promoted these courses at the outset, subsequently appeared to grow indifferent to the important issue of creating jobs for the new graduates. This indifference could have been owing to budgetary restrictions and lack of proper information about possible future job vacancies in relevant fields. The situation was aggravated by most employers, both in State and private sectors, generally displaying a reluctance to accept the new degrees on par with the traditional Arts and Science degrees. This situation evoked disappointment among those students who had opted to follow these courses.

#### 11:2.4 The problems in the employment situation of university graduates

- (i) University graduates, from varying academic backgrounds and disciplines, comprised only about 0.8

percent (1971) of the total labour force of the country. There is an imbalance in the graduate labour market which has arisen mainly because of the shortages in a demand for labour at a time when supply has been increasing steadily. In 1971, 88.5 percent of the university graduates were employed while the balance 11.5 percent were unemployed. The unemployment rate among women graduates was very high (23.8 percent) as compared to male graduates (6.5 percent). However, the amount of unemployment among graduates had been varying since 1970, owing to the introduction of state sponsored special programmes, the Graduate Training Scheme, the Job Bank and the Graduate Placement Scheme—all designed to alleviate this problem. Despite the consequent drop in graduate unemployment as a percentage of the workforce, the present labour market situation indicates that unemployment among graduates will continue to be a serious problem in the future.

- (ii) Unemployment among university graduates in Sri Lanka appears to be a structural problem. The mismatch between the demand and supply factors in the graduate labour market has caused two types of imbalances—
  - (a) a surplus of Arts and Social Science graduates in relation to prevailing employment opportunities; and
  - (b) a shortage of graduates in the scientific and professional fields, e.g. doctors and engineers.
- (iii) The employability of Arts graduates with Special Degrees or those who have earned classes (Honours) is greater since they form a small fraction compared to the General Arts graduates, and therefore, have a better chance of securing employment. Graduates specialising in Commerce subjects are also in a relatively better position, consequent to the increase in the demand for these graduates in the labour

market. Employability of the graduates specialising in most of the "job-oriented" studies continues to be at a low ebb (as already noted).

- (iv) On the other hand, the excess demand is mostly limited to the graduates who have followed Professional courses. In 1979, 814 posts of engineers remained vacant. The present shortage of medical doctors is around 800 to 850. It is also observed that there is an overall shortage of about 2,700 graduate teachers in Languages, 930 in Commerce and 800 in Science.
- (v) A fair proportion of these shortages are due to an outflow of graduates to developed and developing countries, particularly to African and West Asian countries. Between 1971 and 1974, 1705 professionally qualified personnel migrated abroad, and among them were 558 doctors and 275 engineers. Nearly 80 percent of university teachers migrating are from the Sciences. Between 1976 and 1978, 266 persons, representing high level manpower, migrated to the West Asian countries. In 1979, 166 persons obtained employment in these countries. This category included doctors, engineers, managers, accountants and scientists. This emigration has worsened the manpower situation in critical areas related to the development efforts of the country.
- (vi) With regard to other categories of graduates such as dentists, veterinary surgeons, agriculturists and architects, there is no evidence of a mismatch between demand and supply. Most of these graduates secure employment in the government or the private sectors or take to self-employment.
- (vii) Two possible consequences of rising unemployment among graduates are :
  - (a) qualification escalation (educational inflation) and



- (b) the spill over of graduates into non-graduate positions (under-employment).

The expansion in the supply of graduates in Arts-based disciplines has inevitably led to these graduates offering themselves for sub-graduate positions which are not commensurate with their educational attainments or expectations. Limited employment opportunities, and the supply of these graduates over and above labour market needs, have reduced their market value leading to under-employment and a spill over into clerical, technical and supervisory positions in the non-graduate labour market. The government clerical service employs around 1,500 graduates in clerical positions and another 1,000 are believed to be distributed among semi-government institutions (1981). The survey of unemployed women Arts graduates (1980) revealed that 60 percent of the employed graduates held positions, such as clerical and secretarial posts, police constables, sewing instructors, nurses, research assistants, statistical investigators and development assistants—for most of which the formal normal entry qualification is generally the G.C.E.

- (viii) Even government supported employment programmes appear to aggravate this problem of graduate under-employment. In 1976, the crash programme for the recruitment of assistant teachers with university degrees offered appointment at salaries which were below the normal graduate teachers' salary scales. Though the Job Bank (1978) was introduced to find intermediate level placements for non-graduate level unemployed persons, who are socially and economically under-privileged, by 1981, over 400 graduates had registered themselves with the Job Bank, seeking lower level positions in the employment hierarchy, perhaps, for want of a better alternative. Some of the under-employed graduates hold Honours Degrees in Economics, Statistics, Public or Business Administration and in Develop-

ment Studies. The prospects of these graduates to seek better employment are grim, because most schemes designed to absorb unemployed Arts graduates, do not seem to take into account the under-employed graduates.

- (ix) The public sector is the largest employer of university graduates, and within the public sector the Ministry of Education employs the largest number of university graduates. Employment in the public sector is generally preferred by the graduates because it offers prestige, security and prospects for promotion. In this respect, the Sri Lanka Administrative Service (SLAS) is a vital field of employment open for graduates in the country. Generally, the entry points to the SLAS are well defined. However, the cadre for graduates in the SLAS is presently known to be saturated. Moreover, the position of university graduates seeking graduate entry positions in the SLAS is further hampered by the selection process, whereby graduates are compelled to compete with those already in employment in the public service. By contrast to the selective process followed in the past, which led to the selection of young graduates fresh from the university, the emphasis at present is not on academic performance alone. In 1976, 60 percent of the intake to the SLAS was from officers already in the government service. A recent study (1977) on the present recruits to the SLAS reveals that 95 percent of the recruits had been previously employed in position ranging from clerical and technical positions to academic posts.
- (x) The demand for graduates in the private sector is very small, if not negligible. Most private sector organisations stress fluency in English, as a major requirement, in addition to such factors as personality, social and school backgrounds. For the average Arts graduate therefore, a number of constraints seem to prevent entry into the private sector.

In the high level category the demand in the private sector has been for engineers. Present indications are that the growth in new employment opportunities, owing to the 'package of economic policies' offered to the private sector by the present government, may not necessarily lead to a substantial growth in graduate employment in the private sector.

- (xi) Only a very few graduates embark on self-employment ventures. Presently, the majority of self-employed are graduates in Law. Though there are a large number of Arts graduates in different fields (Linguistics, History, Development Studies) the lack of resources and skills keep them away from finding suitable self-employment. The Graduate Placement Scheme (under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Employment) attempted to identify a few Arts graduates willing to embark on self-employment, presumably with some government support, but this scheme has not met with much success. The number who have been found self-employment under this scheme is small, and the majority in this category have started private tutorials, while a few are involved in tailoring, orchid-growing and the manufacture of leather products and surgical gauze. A few graduates were willing to take to agriculture, but only if land and capital could be provided.

### 11.2.5 Students' perceptions of university education and prospective employment

- (i) It is evident from the data that the entry into the Professional disciplines and the Sciences in the universities is dominated by those in the top bracket of the socio-economic hierarchy. The basis for the above trend may be traced to the level of secondary education itself, where it is evident that access to Science education at the district or regional level is unevenly distributed. Despite the



measures taken by successive governments to minimise regional disparities in access to education, the facilities provided for Science education are apparently inadequate to bring about a significant impact on the entry pattern into universities.

- (ii) Most students appear to have anticipated, at the time they entered the university, that their university career would help to better their employment prospects. This expectation is an important reason advanced by students for pursuing university education. This suggests that the classical concept of the university as a place of academic excellence and that the pursuit of knowledge as an end by itself is fast vanishing, at least from the university entrants' point of view.
- (iii) However, it appears that, irrespective of the reasons prompting students to pursue higher education, their views tend to change, once they are in the university. For most students now, the expected benefits are essentially academic-oriented with *improvement of subject knowledge* being the most prominent factor, followed by *acquisition of social skills, improvement of employability and improvement of general knowledge*.
- (iv) Having almost completed their courses of study, and having had the type of expectations as stated above, it is disturbing to note that only about 53 percent of the final year students feel satisfied with their courses of study, whereas nearly 47 percent appear to be dissatisfied. Among the reasons attributed for dissatisfaction by the latter are, *inadequate knowledge of the subject, poor practical skills, inadequate knowledge of English, shortcomings in course content and course content is not relevant to the needs of the country and/or life*. A course specific analysis reveals that both for the Professional and Arts students, *inadequate knowledge of the subject* emerges as the most important reason for dissatisfaction.

- (v) Nearly 95 percent of the final year student population feel that the present course content and methods of instruction need to be improved. Judging by the many suggestions from the students for such improvements, it is evident that they are very sensitive to this issue. With regard to the improvement of course content, there is a general consensus that such revision should be aimed at making content more relevant to national needs and providing a broader knowledge of the subject areas. The Science-based students, particularly, desire the improvement in the practical components of their different courses of study. Another important suggestion is to give more scope for subject-based practical training and work-experience. In relation to methods of instruction, students have suggested that the appropriate inclusion of practical training, use of audio-visual aids, field study programmes, research programmes and self-learning procedures would result in the overall improvement of the courses.
- (vi) It was also seen that a high proportion of the students are in favour of the introduction of appropriate work-experience programmes at the pre-university level, and of the periodic exchange of academic / non-academic personnel between universities and other specialist institutions in the country; the reasons being that such an arrangement not only would broaden the horizons of knowledge but also would help to supplement theoretical knowledge with practical experience in the field. Besides, they also feel that these arrangements would enable them to get an insight into employment conditions.
- (vii) It was observed that the majority of the students (72 percent) in Professional courses would prefer to have a professional job relevant to their training, and those in Science courses would prefer to have a teaching, technical or research oriented job directly

related to their courses. Among the Arts based students, preferred jobs were in the categories of executive, teaching, technical and research positions.

- (viii) The government sector is the popularly preferred sector of employment by all categories of students. Material benefits appear to be the most important factor for making a job attractive. Professional and Science students consider that their specialisation (or course of study followed) would be the main factor that would help them to secure a job while the Arts-based students opine that they would have to depend on many other factors, of which the most important is their level of proficiency in English. However, a self-assessment by students on the level of proficiency in English points to a very low level of proficiency among a majority of the Arts-based students, while a higher proportion of students in the Professional areas of study, claim a 'high' proficiency level.
- (ix) The anticipated waiting period to secure the first job after graduation, is highest (over 3 years) for Arts-based students, while it is *less than 6 months* for Professional students and *1 to 2 years* for Science students. A high proportion of students (43 percent) who did not anticipate a waiting period of more than 6 months, have parents belonging to upper brackets in the socio-economic hierarchy, while the highest proportion of those who anticipated longer periods of waiting have parents belonging to the lower socio-economic strata.
- (x) Employment preferences of students, irrespective of whether they were directly relevant to the courses of study followed or not, does seem to suggest that the aspirations are more related to the socio-economic background of the students, than to the outcome of their university life and career. This evidently indicates that the socio-economic back-



ground as a factor pervades throughout the entire career of the university students, making it unable to decipher clearly the trends and patterns during the transitional process so as to establish a link between university education and its impact on bringing about social mobility.

### **11.2.6 Assessment of the graduates' experience in university life and its relevance to working life**

- (i) By and large, the findings in respect of the graduate sample seems to corroborate those related to the final year students. In the case of the graduates too it is clear that the entry into the universities' courses of study have a strong relationship to their socio-economic background. Furthermore, the graduate sample appears to have been from a secondary school system with greater regional disparities, particularly in respect of the provision of facilities for Science education, than the sample of final year students.
- (ii) Labour force-status of the graduate sample reveals that about 27 percent are unemployed and indicates that the socio-economic background of graduates plays an important role in the securing of employment. A closer perusal of the data shows that the bulk of the unemployed graduates are from the Arts stream, particularly from those who have followed the "job-oriented courses of study" introduced in 1972. A fairly large proportion of this group had graduated in 1979, but had failed to secure employment till December 1980. It appears that the average waiting period for most of these Arts-based graduates to secure first employment after graduation is 3 years or more. The data also reveals that the number of females entering the universities had increased over the years and their entry into the labour force had effected a net increase in the unemployment component of the labour force.

- (iii) A large proportion of those in employment, who had followed Professional and Special Science courses of study, are in jobs which could be considered as "graduate-level" occupations. However, the majority among the Arts and General Science graduates are in the teaching profession, and a significant number are in "non-graduate level" positions in clerical, technical and allied categories. The proportion of women in the teaching profession is quite high, whereas in other professions, higher up in the hierarchy, the proportion appears to be relatively low. This raises the issue of a possible prevalence of discrimination against women (direct or otherwise) in the employment structure. The government sector is the largest employer of graduates, and this is to be expected with a very large proportion of graduates being absorbed into the teaching profession of the formal school system.
- (iv) Most employed graduates emphasise *security of employment* as a major factor which makes a job attractive to them, whereas it is predominantly a *good income* which makes a job attractive for unemployed graduates. Most Arts and General Science graduates (who also happen to belong to the lower levels of the socio-economic hierarchy), appear to place greater reliance on political forces, such as the Member of Parliament, in their attempts to secure employment. However, in the case of other categories of graduates (e.g. Professional), the avenues open to secure employment are more direct and manifold. Nevertheless, it was also noted that irrespective of the course followed and the type of occupation held, the chief and the final means by which most graduates had secured their employment was the *interview/examination* method.
- (v) Occupational mobility has been a feature among all categories of graduates, with about 35 percent of them having changed jobs after graduation. This, however, includes the movement from not only

permanent employment but temporary and casual employment as well. The main reasons that graduates had given for changing over to their present jobs are, *job satisfaction, security of employment, and better chances of obtaining jobs abroad.*

- (vi) A high proportion of graduates among the Professional and Special Science categories are of the view that there is a high degree of usefulness of the content of their respective courses of study in the performance of their present jobs. In respect of the Arts graduates, the degree of such usefulness seems to be rather low. The reason for this could be that the degree of absorption into non-graduate level jobs is high among Arts graduates (and even General Science graduates) and the course content does not play a significant or a meaningful role in the performance of many of the routine tasks associated with such jobs.
- (vii) Suggestions by graduates to improve course content and methods of instruction did not vary significantly from those made by the final year students. Even a comparison by labour force and employment status of the graduates did not bring to light any marked deviations.
- (viii) A large proportion of unemployed graduates (particularly in the Arts category), have opined that the major constraint to their entry into permanent employment is the lack of or insufficient knowledge of English. Besides, a high proportion of graduates in all course groupings apparently believe that discrimination in terms of party politics, race, religion and caste, has hindered them from entering into permanent employment commensurate with their university education and aspirations.
- (ix) Due to resource constraints and lack of training it is difficult to motivate graduates (particularly of the Arts category) to take to self-employment; hence



the number in self-employment was found to be very low. The majority of those in appropriate level self-employment happen to be the professionally qualified graduates.

### **11.2.7 Assessment of the education system in respect of its relevance by the university academic staff and employers**

#### *(A) University Academic Staff:*

- (i) In regard to the issue as to whether the classical aim of university education to cultivate academic excellence could be reconciled with the objectives of meeting national development needs and the employment aspirations of graduates, the majority of the university academic staff favoured a compromise between the two. The precominant view appeared to be that the major role of the university should be to provide analytical skills that are useful for any profession rather than to give specific career training. However, even if the universities were to embark on specific career training programmes, there were severe constraints (though not that grave in respect of the traditional professions such as medicine, engineering etc.) that hindered the universities from doing so. Among these constraints are the lack of qualified staff, inadequate funds and deficiencies in the organisational infrastructure. Regarding the role of the universities vis-a-vis the employment of graduates, some university teachers took the position that employment of graduates was purely a matter for the State and not for the universities, and that universities cannot do much in this respect, anyway, owing to undesirable political interference and lack of national level planning. Another view expressed was that the root-cause of the problem lay in the unplanned system of

education at secondary and tertiary levels, and that most of the graduates, particularly those from the Arts Faculties, were too 'bookish' and 'theoretically oriented' that it is difficult to find suitable employment for them. Teachers of the Science, Medicine and Engineering Faculties were of the view that their graduates had no problem in finding suitable employment, either internally or abroad.

As solutions to the problem of graduate unemployment, there was a group of teachers who advocated the qualitative improvement of university curricula, restricting the intake into degree courses, setting up of a career guidance service within the university framework and paying more attention to placement services through a collaboration with government and private agencies.

- (ii) Concerning the scope and content of university education, vis-a-vis the need for development orientation, a good number of the academic staff was in favour of an overall curriculum reform that would also facilitate the introduction of new courses and specialisations in keeping with the demands made by the changing needs of society, including the enhancement of employment opportunities. On the subject of the job-oriented courses in the Arts Faculties, particularly of the courses on Development Education, many teachers felt that though they were important from the above mentioned point of view, they were badly planned and implemented — which were the main causes for their failure. Others opined that neither the society nor the universities were prepared for the changes these courses aimed at. However, some of the academics expressed the view that these courses could be continued with modifications.

Regarding the proposal that specialists outside the university should participate in university activities, such as curriculum development and teaching, and also that the academic staff should be exchanged with others in parallel positions in government and private sector institutions for short periods of time for purposes of research and teaching in the university and outside, the majority view was that such a policy and practice would generally help the university to become more aware of the conditions prevailing in the society at large. Furthermore, it was opined that such a policy would help the university to draw upon the experience and expertise available outside, which may help to reduce the shortage of specialists within the universities. However, some academics feared that "outsiders" may usurp their own roles in university decision-making on academic affairs. Many academics also opined that improvements were needed in the present system of evaluation. Among the suggestions made by them in this connection are : continuous assessment, practical examinations and moderation by foreign examiners.

- (iii) A fair number of university teachers surveyed agreed that among the marked inadequacies of students were, a lack of general knowledge, inexperience, immaturity, insufficient proficiency in English, and a lack of analytical and/or practical skills. The causes for these inadequacies were ascribed to the shortcomings in the secondary school education. Financial difficulties, unsatisfactory residential facilities, shortage of academic staff and a lack of communication between students and teachers were also identified by academics as factors hindering the students from fully enjoying the benefits of university education.



Among the more meaningful remedial measures suggested by the academics were the improvement of teacher-training facilities, the re-designing of the secondary school curricula, granting more financial aid to students, and conducting basic courses, as in English, at the universities.

A decisive majority of the university teachers surveyed admitted that student participation in research activities relevant to their studies, would instill in students a taste for research and practical work and improve their ability to apply their theoretical knowledge to the analysis of concrete problems. However, some of the teachers thought that scope for such participation, especially in regard to the Arts students, was severely restricted. In order to stimulate a greater interest among students, in the academic life of the university, a number of teachers suggested a variety of activities such as seminars, guest lectures, group research projects (especially as a part of national service), educational tours, field trips, organisation of student societies in the different disciplines, the promotion of student exchanges with other countries and foundation courses.

A substantial majority of the teachers were of opinion that general competence and adaptability were qualities that were inculcated through the total educational programme of the university, whereas, qualities like creativity, leadership and initiative were not being effectively inculcated among the students.

Regarding the role of the student bodies in the university, a fair number of teachers thought that student bodies could effectively deal with student problems in the university. Another group were of the view that these

bodies could act as advisory bodies to the university and thus prevent disruptive student activity. Student bodies could also promote better staff-student relationships. Their assessment, of the existing student bodies, was that they are rather ineffective in achieving these objectives.

A considerable number of the teachers supported the view that politics should be allowed to form a part of university activities, but that caution must be taken to prevent narrow party politics and political fanaticism to dominate.

- (iv) The majority of the teachers felt that they could meaningfully participate in activities such as curriculum development, teaching, evaluation and research under the existing university framework, while some considered that such participation was impeded by a number of constraints. There was a strong view-point among the staff that they could not render their academic functions adequately, due to far too much political and administrative interference, persistence of traditional attitudes, lack of adequate funds and facilities for research and poor salaries.

They were much in favour of periodical evaluation of the objectives, processes and outcomes of university education, provided this is executed in a meaningful way. Some thought that this evaluation should be carried out by an independent Commission while others thought that it could be done through staff-student collaboration.

The Science and the Professional categories of teachers observed that a lack of liaison between industry and the universities, and a poor appreciation by the authorities of

the need for the application of science and technology to the task of national development largely hindered their professional work and progress. The majority of the university teachers appeared to be quite unsatisfied with the existing conditions of life and work in the universities, while even quite a few appeared to be frustrated, especially from the Arts Faculties.

*(B) Employers*

- (v) From the point of view of the employers, it appears that Professional, Science and Engineering education in the universities are of an acceptable and useful standard. In regard to the Social Sciences and Arts areas, a large proportion of employers complained of the poor quality and falling standards of university products. This, they attributed to three causes :
- (a) The dearth of co-curricular activities in the universities. They asserted that these activities would help in building up qualities of leadership, initiative and other personality traits which are necessary in managerial jobs.
  - (b) The over-academic and 'bookish' type of learning that apparently prevails among most university students. This too inhibits the development of the qualities of intellectual curiosity and breadth of outlook essential for most high level jobs.
  - (c) The insufficient knowledge or a lack of proficiency in English, which makes graduate employees less competent in their jobs.
- (vi) Employers are critical of the lack of relevance of the course content to the type of work that



graduates (Arts-based graduates in particular) are required to undertake after employment. Some employers have suggested the inclusion of a *management studies* component in most General Degree courses. It has also been suggested that arrangements need be made for university graduates to obtain *work experience* in suitable work places during vacation time in order to make graduates 'more mature,' 'practical' and 'less theoretical' in outlook.

- (vii) Almost all employers emphasised that a good knowledge of English is a high priority requirement for adequate performance in their establishments.
- (viii) The employers also commented that most university examinations seemed to measure only the amount of information a student could reproduce during a specified time. From the point of view of employers, this type of evaluation schemes do not provide an adequate measure of the different but important attributes of a prospective employee. Hence, they suggest that university evaluation schemes should be revised in order to include more modern and appropriate techniques of assessment.

### 11.3 Some implications for planning university education and graduate employment

The foregoing chapters have attempted to provide a set of answers to the questions raised in chapter 1, on the central theme of the relationship between university education and graduate employment in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the study has furnished a broad data base on many of the aspects of this study. A perusal of the principal findings, summarised in the preceding section of this chapter should be able to give us a composite idea of the extent, complexity and the magnitude of the problem at issue. At this

stage it is pertinent that we turn our minds to the aspect of considering the implications of these findings on planning education (particularly at university level) and employment, relevant to university graduates. However, it must be cautioned that it is beyond the scope of this study, to provide a detailed and an analytical discussion of this very important aspect of the problem. Nevertheless, the study itself may appear incomplete, if some reference is not made to it, at least in relation to some of those vital issues which have surfaced, and to which policy-makers and planners may consider it appropriate to give priority in attention. Needless to emphasise that these and any other implications will have to be comprehensively studied further, in their sectoral and holistic contexts, before arriving at final policy decisions and concrete proposals for action. In this context it is hoped that the ensuing brief discussion on implications would provide some useful guidelines for planners.

In its simplest form relating education to employment may seem to involve the two tasks of planning of education and the planning of employment. However, in the context of a rapidly developing Third World country, such as Sri Lanka, the task of the planner is becoming increasingly complex and difficult. Today education at all levels is expected to play a diverse and a complex role in the socio-cultural and economic development of the country. There is a wide consensus today that the purpose of education is not only to bring about a total development of the individual, physically, intellectually and spiritually, but also to equip him with the skills necessary for the material well-being of himself as well as for the socio-cultural and economic development of society as a whole. Rarely do young people today pursue education for its own sake. Even the universities are being increasingly looked upon as places where one could increase one's chances of employability, rather than solely as fountains of academic excellence. Thus, the employment oriented objectives of education, at university level, are becoming more and more pronounced and significant for the planner. On the other hand, the concept of employment too is growing in complexity, gathering manifold interpretations, varying spatially and with time. While manpower forecasting techniques, which are widely used tools for employment planning, are being questioned today, no alternative techniques or

methods of planning employment have yet become fully acceptable to most planners. In this context, the task of the planner of relating education to employment has indeed become a formidable one.

An important problem area to which the planner has to address his mind, with greater immediacy, is in regard to the glaring mismatch that currently prevails between the demand and supply of university education in Sri Lanka. We have been observing over the years the rapidly declining rates of admissions to the universities, as against the ever increasing numbers who obtain the stipulated minimum qualifications to enter. The current enrolment ratio of 2 percent for university education in Sri Lanka is one of the lowest in the South Asian region, despite that over the last few years the university intake had been increasing in numerical terms. The development processes, while generally improving the living standards of the people, has also had the inevitable effect of increasing and raising the levels of aspirations and expectations in education and in employment in particular, for more and more young people than it was a decade ago. With an expanding base at the primary and secondary levels in the educational pyramid, the social demand for university and higher education is bound to increase even further in the current decade. An inability to take a realistic view of this situation could result in social unrest and instability, and consequently in slowing down the development process itself. Therefore it would be in the national interest to make a positive attempt to meet this escalating social demand without any further delay.

For this purpose, hope seems to lie more in the direction of creating a dynamic and a flexible higher education system, based largely on the philosophy and principles of "life-long education" rather than in the physical expansion of the present traditional type university sector, which is largely based on the concepts of "terminal education." The broad basing of the aims and objectives and the scope of the Open University and other tertiary level institutes, with a view to making their courses even more attractive to aspirants of higher education, and the provision of enlarged facilities (for example by maximising the use of the under-utilised existing infra-structure resources of the secondary school system) for external and part-time first degree courses, largely aimed at



reaching towards the in-career candidates, would contribute to some extent in reducing the pressure on existing universities. Needless to reiterate here, that confronted with severe resource constraints, the planners' present dilemma is how to achieve simultaneously, the twin objectives of quantitative expansion of the university sector and the qualitative improvement of university education without causing an undue hardship to the national economy. Adoption of strategies to postpone one objective in favour of the other would not be possible without a price to pay.

The afore-mentioned mismatch regarding the demand and supply of university education appears to get heightened when reckoning the university output itself in relation to the labour market situation, where one observes a surplus of Arts based graduates as against a deficit of Science based and Professional category of graduates. This problem gets further aggravated by the fact that fair numbers of the latter group, i.e. those who are in short supply in the local labour market, leave for more lucrative overseas employment. This should necessarily be another area of concern for the planner. The origins of this problem, as shown in this study, seeps down to the secondary school level. Most aspirants to university education are becoming increasingly sensitive to the better prospects that Science education offers, in the labour market, but the resultant high demand at secondary school level cannot be met adequately, again, owing to severe constraints in resources, both human and material. The only alternative left for those who fail to enter the Science stream is to pursue an Arts based university course, in the hope of *improving their chances of employability*, but to an almost certain eventual disillusionment.

In this respect it is important to plan the university intake strategies to provide Science based education to a larger proportion of students than at present. While noting that recent university admission patterns show a trend along these lines, it would not be possible to make a substantial increase if priority is not paid to the expansion and improvement of facilities for Science education both at school and at higher levels on a planned basis. More incentives, such as scholarships, offered at school level and continued thereafter, may help to promote promising students from the low-income brackets to pursue Science education. University

admission policies and schemes too should take an account of this need for expanding the Science based output of the Universities, and hence, should make suitable modifications to absorb maximum numbers for Science-based courses, although not at the expense of those qualified to follow other courses. The possibilities of regulating the admissions into universities according to the need for trained manpower in the different disciplines should be explored. For this purpose, governments may have to give due emphasis to conducting constant reviews of the graduate-level manpower needs of the country, and to the improvement of the existing machinery and resources. The Planning and Research Division of the University Grants Commission could also carry out similar studies related to university education and could liaise with the State machinery.

When considering the relationship between the content of university education and its relevance to employment, it appears, that a mismatch prevails largely in the Arts based courses of study, when compared with the Science courses. This would be another problem to which planners may have to address their minds seriously. Evidently most of the Arts based graduates do not rank high in regard to employability compared to the Science based graduates. The alleged "fall in the educational standards" with regard to Arts graduates is generally attributed to the increased intake of Arts undergraduates during the last two decades, but this diagnosis may be rather perfunctory. Many factors, including the over-supply of Arts graduates and education inflation (or qualification escalation) have contributed to the overall devaluation of the Arts degrees. "Academic Standards" are relative and not necessarily absolute. Nevertheless, the fact remains that most graduates of all categories of disciplines, have foremost in their minds, the acquisition of useful knowledge and skills relevant to employment and the needs of the country, as one important expectation out of a university educational career. It is also evident that the curricula of some of the traditional university courses (particularly in Arts and Humanities) have remained unchanged relatively or with very little change over the years, and hence seem to have been rather oblivious to the explosion in knowledge, and to the new developments in educational theory and practice, so much so that not only the content but even the



instructional methodologies and evaluation techniques have become obsolete. There is a great desire, indeed, on the part of many university students, graduates, academic staff and employers that this situation should be expeditiously rectified.

Curriculum renewal, in respect of all university courses, should be a pivotal and an on-going activity carried out on a planned and an organised basis within the respective Departments/Faculties of the universities. The updating of content and the appropriate adoption of instructional and evaluation methodologies should be essential features of such an on-going curriculum renewal process, which, undoubtedly, could contribute immensely to the maintenance of consistently high academic standards all-round.

However, *ad hoc* changes of courses, imposed arbitrarily from above and with little or no direct consultation with the academic staff directly involved in the teaching of such courses, should be avoided. Experience has shown that such changes have very little chances of success, however necessary or reasonable such changes may appear to be. It is important to carry out careful studies, particularly before commencing new courses; and these studies should focus on the feasibility, practicability and the utility of such prospective courses. In this respect it should be an important function of the curriculum development process to carry out such studies with a view to exploring and identifying new and potential areas of study at the university level (both undergraduate and post-graduate), particularly applicable to agriculture, industry, commerce, natural and human resources, etc., which are vital to the country's development. This could result in a diversification and an expansion of areas of study and research related to the pure, applied, medical and social sciences, but it is vital that this process should be meaningfully related to the development processes of our society, so that such developments in the university education system could lead to increased production, more employment, and an overall improvement of living standards.

While dealing with the university curriculum and its renewal and reform, it may be pertinent to consider the relationship between academic education and the world of work, which has considerable implications for planning education and employment. Should



work form an essential part of education? This has been an issue engendering debate and controversy, and unless there are firm and unambiguous policy decisions on this subject, it would not be possible for planners to make satisfactory progress. Of course, in regard to the Professional areas of study, such as Medicine and Engineering, "work" or "practical training" is considered so essential that without it the courses of study would be virtually worthless. But how relevant is "work" to most of the other traditional academic courses in Arts and Science?; and even if it is considered relevant, how feasible is it to introduce any work-experience or practical training components in such courses? These are questions which would need an in-depth and cautious examination before formulating policies and plans for implementation.

However, it cannot be gainsaid that there has been considerable dissatisfaction among both graduates and employers regarding the degree of employability of a fair proportion of the Arts and Science graduates. One of the main observations regarding these graduates had been that they are "very bookish" and "lack adequate knowledge and experience of the world of work around them." Whatever be the philosophical stance taken by planners and educationists in regard to this question of education and work, the above situation, however, cannot be ignored any further. One method of rectifying this situation may be by providing opportunities for students, both at the university and secondary school levels, to gain useful knowledge, practical skills and experience in work situations, by providing sufficient and suitable exposure to the world of work. In this instance, the long and anxious period of waiting by prospective undergraduates (which is about an year or even more), after sitting the GCE A/Level Examination and before entering the university, could be put into productive use, if suitable opportunities and avenues could be found in the public and private sectors for students to gain practical skills and experience in actual work situations. "Compulsory national service" and "pre-university work-experience" are two options which might be of great benefit to students and the university on the one hand and to employers and to the country on the other, if properly conceived, planned and implemented. A further extension of this programme may be also

possible during the long vacations of the universities. Such well organised work-experience programmes could provide students with much-needed skills and experience, and increase their levels of maturity which would help them through their academic careers and employment. In this connection, specific job-orientation for Arts and Science students may not be appropriate, but wherever it is considered necessary, should be provided outside their normal courses, preferably in the form of sandwich programmes.

Furthermore, it would also be necessary to plan suitable examination reforms, both at the upper secondary and university levels, in order to give credit to work-experience and preferably to other extra-curricular performances. Special evaluation techniques would have to be designed and trial-tested in order to determine their feasibility and acceptability. In this context, the universities could enlist the active support and co-operation of experts working in outside agencies in the public and private sectors, wherever possible and necessary, in order to infuse new and varied experiences and expertise into such activities as curriculum renewal and development, teaching, work-experience and evaluation.

It has been realised by students and graduates that a high proficiency in English is vital to improve their academic performance and to secure lucrative graduate-level employment, whether in the public or private sector. It has also been found that the general level of proficiency in English of the Arts-based graduates, who are in excess supply, is comparatively rather low, which is one reason why most of them end up in 'sub-graduate' positions. The need to improve the levels of proficiency in English has been strongly felt, not only by all categories of students and graduates but also by the academic staff and employers. Though the universities could do much to meet this felt need of students, it is obvious that the beginnings would have to be made in the school system itself. However, the English teaching programmes at school level have been incessantly running into problems and criticism for the reason that the strategies adopted appear to be, by and large, ineffective. Effective teaching of English is an important aspect to which planners would have to pay sufficient attention, both at the school and university levels. In the development of strategies for this purpose, the production of text books graded according



to the different learning environments and degree of exposure to English is a basic requirement. Since the methodology of teaching English has to be diverse and would require a teaching cadre with different skills, the periodical re-training of English teachers in another imperative.

Another issue which has considerable implications for planning education and employment is the void that currently exists in regard to the provision of useful information services to prospective employees on their career preferences and prospects. Except in the case of the professional categories of graduates, others do not appear to have adequate information on relevant employment prospects, with the result that many tend to experience anxiety and frustration by pursuing job aspirations, little realising that they are unrealistic and remote in their particular contexts. Priority should be given to the setting up of a well organised Careers Information Service, directed towards, more specifically, the clientele in the upper secondary school and the university. This should be supported by Career Counselling Services, set up at school and at the university, which are manned by professionally qualified personnel. This is important because more damage can be done by bad counselling than by a lack of it.

Herein it would be worthwhile considering the possibilities of setting up a suitable machinery for Job-placement Services, with the cooperation and collaboration of the public and private sector employers, for the benefit of graduates. If all these suggested services are to operate meaningfully, it is imperative that they maintain close liaison, particularly with those agencies dealing with all aspects of manpower planning in Sri Lanka. This would also facilitate the expeditious collection and dissemination of information on any new avenues of employment open to graduates, arising from the major Development Projects of the country, such as the Mahaweli Project, the Free Trade Zone, the Housing Projects, etc. If it is possible to identify a significant increase in demand for graduate level positions in these sectors, it would undeniably have implications for the planning of university education as well.

Finally, it would be pertinent to mention briefly the White Paper on Education (1981) with reference to the discussion on



the implications for planning. As referred to elsewhere, the White Paper contains reform proposals aimed at the improvement of education in the formal school system as well as in the tertiary and university systems. These proposals have now been widely discussed, both in Parliament and in public fora. However, it is not within the scope of this section nor is it our intention to elaborate on the different views which have been expressed in regard to the relevant White Paper proposals. Perhaps planners are now contemplating the task of translating some of these proposals into action. The findings of this study should, undoubtedly, be of considerable interest and relevance to them, since these findings are bound to have important implications for their tasks, to some of which we have referred already. It should be noted that some of the White Paper proposals, aimed at the improvement and the expansion of the secondary and tertiary levels of education, hold much promise, and the thinking contained therein seem to converge with most of the views expressed in these paragraphs. But, in instances where there appears to be a divergence in the thinking, it would be appropriate to examine further the proposals which tend to have a bearing on the relationship between university education and the employment of graduates, in the light of the findings of this study and their implications for planning.

**Appendix:**

**QUESTIONNAIRE NO. 1**  
**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (Final Year) 1979/80**

1. (1) Name : .....
- (2) University : .....
- (3) Year of Admission : .....
- (4) Faculty : .....
- (5) Course : .....
2. Present Address : .....
- .....
- .....
3. Permanent Address : .....
- .....
- .....
4. (a) Date of Birth : .....
- (b) Age as at (1.1.80) ..... Years ..... months
- (Mark X in correct bracket)
5. Sex :    Male    (        )                          Female    (        )
6. Race (Mark X in the correct bracket)

Low Country Sinhalese	(        )
Kandyan Sinhalese	(        )
Ceylon Tamil	(        )
Indian Tamil	(        )
Ceylon Moor	(        )
Indian Moor	(        )
Malay	(        )
Burgher	(        )
Other (        ) Specify	.....

7. Religion (Mark X in the correct bracket)

Buddhism	(        )	Hinduism	(        )
Roman Catholicism	(        )		
Non R. C. Christianity	(        )		
Islam	(        )		
Other (        ) Specify	.....		

8. Particulars of Parents' and Siblings :  
(as at the time you entered the University)

Names of Siblings and Parents (including respondent's) in order of birth	Sex		Age (yrs.)	Marital Status	Education Level	Occupation, if any
	M	F				
1. Father .. .. .	M			Married		
2. Mother .. .. .		F		Married		
3. ....						
4. ....						
5. ....						
6. ....						
7. ....						
8. ....						

9. Annual Household Income.

	Wages	Other Income	Total
1974			
1979			

10. Location of Permanent Parental Home :  
(Give the address and Revenue District)

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11. State the schools you have attended in chronological order with the following particulars :

Name of School	District	Government/ Private	Period	
			From	To
1. ....				
2. ....				
3. ....				
4. ....				
5. ....				
6. ....				



12. Were the following facilities available in the School in which you studied for your G.C.E. O/Level.

Subjects	Upto G.C.E. O/ Level	Upto G.C.E. A/ Level
Science .. ..		
Arts .. ..		
Commerce .. ..		

13. (1) What is the field of study you followed in Grade 10? (Mark X in the correct bracket)  
 Arts ( ) Science ( ) Commerce ( )  
 (2) Give the Subjects.
14. How important were the following as reasons for choosing Science subjects at the G.C.E. O/Level?  
 (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the responses)

- I liked science. .. ..
- My parents wanted me to study science.
- Science education has better employment prospects.
- My school advised me to do science.
- Any other (specify) .. ..

V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.

15. How important are the following as reasons for *not* choosing science subjects at the O/Level. (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the responses)

- I did not like science. .. ..
- I was not selected to study science.
- My school had no facilities for the study of science. .. ..
- I did not realise that there were better employment prospects in science .. ..
- Any other (specify) .. ..

V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.

16. (1) What was the medium of instruction? (Mark X in the correct bracket)  
 Sinhala ( ) Tamil ( ) English ( )
- (2) (a) Did you sit the English Language paper at the G.C.E. O/Level examination?  
 (b) If yes, indicate grade obtained.

17. Give details of your G.C.E. A/Level examination

No. of sittings	Year of examination	Subjects offered	Grades obtained
1st. Sitting			
2nd. Sitting			
3rd. Sitting			

18. Describe extra-curricular activities in school :  
(Give details of activities participated in, posts/responsibilities held/awards won etc.)

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.....

19. If you were employed before entering the University, please give the following particulars :

- (1) Type of occupation (Post) : .....
- (2) Status of employment (Delete what is inapplicable)  
Permanent/Temporary/Casual
- (3) Period of employment : ..... Yrs..... Mths.....
- (4) Monthly salary : .....

20. After A/Level if you had been able to find permanent employment, would you have preferred that to entering the University ?  
 Yes (        )        No (        )        Cannot say (        )

21. (1) Reasons for pursuing higher education (Mark in order of importance).
- (a) Chances of obtaining employment better with a degree (        )  
 (b) Inability to obtain employment with only G.C.E A/Level qualifications (        )  
 (c) Academic interest (        )  
 (d) Persuasion by parents and members of the family (        )  
 (e) Status considerations (        )
- (2) Any other (Specify)

22. How important were the following career guidance sources, in influencing your choice of course. (Rank in order of importance).

- (1) Staff of school (        )  
 (2) Parents (        )  
 (3) Friends (        )  
 (4) General information sources (books, newspapers etc.) (        )  
 (5) Other students (        )

23. (1) In which university are you presently studying ? .....
- .....
- (2) Was this your first choice ? Yes (        )        No (        )
- (3) If no, what was your first choice ? State the name of the university .....
- .....
- (4) Which factors made this university your first choice ? (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the responses).

	V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.
(a) Desired course was available only at this university. ..			
(b) Content and teaching methods of the desired course are superior in this university. ..			
(c) A degree from this university is more prestigious. ..			
(d) This university is nearer your home.			
(e) This university has residential facilities. ..			
(f) Any other reason (specify). ..			



24. Indicate numerically, in order of preference, the courses you applied for, on entrance to the university. What is the course of study you are following now ?

Names of Courses you applied for	Name of Course you are following now
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

25. (1) Reasons for choosing the course you marked as first preference. (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the following reasons given)

- (a) Pure academic interest  
 (b) Better employment prospects  
 (c) Parents' wish  
 (d) Status considerations  
 (e) Any other (specify)

V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.

- (2) If the course you are following is not the same as your first preference, why did you change it ?  
 (Mark X in the appropriate bracket)

- (a) You were not qualified for your first preference ( )  
 (b) You were offered a scholarship to follow the present course ( )  
 (c) Financial reasons ... .. ( )  
 (d) Any other (specify) ... .. ( )

26. How proficient are you in English ?  
 (Mark X in the appropriate bracket)

High ( ) Average ( ) Weak ( ) Nil ( )

27. In what medium did you follow your degree course ?

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

Sinhala ( ) Tamil ( ) English ( )

28. (1) Are you satisfied with what you have gained during your university course ?  
 Satisfied ( ) Fairly satisfied ( ) Not satisfied ( )

- (2) Give reasons for your answer

.....  
 .....  
 .....

29. (1) Can you think of some work experiences which would have made your university course the richer, had you gone through the work experiences prior to starting the university course.

Yes (     )     No (     )     Cannot say (     )

- (2) If yes. Give reasons for your answer, by indicating (along with the type of institution, occupation etc), a few work experiences you would like to undergo.

.....

.....

.....

.....

- (3) If "no" or "cannot say" give reasons for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

30. (1) How important would you consider the following proposal for improving the curricular content and teaching methods related to your course of study:

Periodical exchange of academic personnel between the university on the one side and government/semi-government/private sector institutions engaged in related fields on the other.

Very important (     )     Important (     )     Not important (     )

- (2) Give reasons for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

31. (1) What benefits did you expect from university education and have they been satisfied. (List benefits and mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the responses).

	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Fully Satisfied</b>	<b>Fairly Satisfied</b>	<b>Not Satisfied</b>
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

- (2) Do you think that the university education you are receiving is a waste of time.  
Yes (     )     No (     )     Cannot say (     ).

32. Your experience of university education has—(mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the responses).

- (1) Fulfilled your academic aspirations
- (2) Developed your capacity for critical and creative thinking
- (3) Provided training in disciplined and systematic work
- (4) Given scope for developing your talents
- (5) Improved your professional competence
- (6) Enhanced your ability to get on amicably with others
- (7) Has improved your ability to secure employment
- (8) Any other ( ) specify

V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.

33. Do you think that your university course can be improved? If Yes, state briefly the improvements you would suggest in terms of—

- (1) Content of course :
- (2) Methods of instruction :

34. Give particulars about your performance at the last exam. (Results) :

Subjects	Grades
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

35. What class do you expect to obtain at the Final Degree Exam ?

First Class/Second Upper/Second Lower/Pass

( ) ( ) ( ) ( )



36. To what extent were your expenses for university education met from the following sources? (Mark X in the appropriate column).

	Fully/Largely	Marginally	Nil
Parents			
Brothers/Sisters			
Others (State)			
Scholarships			
Bursaries/Loans			

37. Please give the following particulars regarding your employment preferences.

- (1) What post would you prefer to secure on graduation?

- (a) A post, where course content is directly relevant ( )  
Name the post.....
- (b) A post, where course content may not be directly relevant ( )  
Name the post.....

- (2) Sector of employment (Rank in order of preference)

- (a) Government ( )
- (b) Semi-Government ( )
- (c) Private ( )

- (3) Location (Rank in order of preference)

- (a) Home town village ( )
- (b) Colombo ( )
- (c) Other urban ( )
- (d) Rural area ( )
- (e) Any part ( )

38. After graduation how long do you think you will have to wait to get a permanent job acceptable to you?

(Mark x in the correct bracket)

- (a) Less than 6 months ( )
- (b) 6—12 months ( )
- (c) 1—2 years ( )
- (d) 2—3 years ( )
- (e) More than 3 years ( )

39. In your opinion how important are each of the following factors for making a job attractive? (Rank in order of importance).

- (1) Good income ( )
- (2) Security of employment ( )
- (3) Good career prospects ( )
- (4) Job satisfaction ( )
- (5) Ability to improve your competence ( )
- (6) Use of special talents ( )
- (7) Work environment ( )
- (8) Further studies available ( )
- (9) Any other (specify) ( ) .....

40. Indicate what you think are the jobs available to a graduate who has followed your course.

- (1) .....
- (2) .....
- (3) .....
- (4) .....
- (5) .....
- (6) .....

41. Which factors do you think, are relevant to secure a job?  
(Mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the responses).

	V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.
(1) Academic achievements (Class)			
(2) Distinction in extra-curricular activities			
(3) Course followed			
(4) Experience			
(5) Personality			
(6) Knowledge of English			
(7) Letters of recommendation			
(8) Personal contact with employer			
(9) Political patronage			
(10) Status of the school			
(11) Sex			
(12) Any other (specify)			

42. Do you intend following a post graduate course?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Not sure ( )

43. (1) Are you presently following a course of study which is outside your field of graduate study?

Yes ( ) No ( )

(2) If yes, please name the course you are following :

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....

44. Are you presently employed? If yes, state—

- (1) Occupation (post) : .....
- (2) Period of employment : Years..... Months.....
- (3) Monthly salary : .....
- (4) Status of employment : Permanent/ Temporary/Casual  
(Delete what is inapplicable).

**Appendix :**

**QUESTIONNAIRE No. 2**  
**UNIVERSITY GRADUATES (1974—1979)**

1. Name : .....
2. Present Address : .....
3. (a) Date of Birth : .....  
(b) Age as on 01.01.1980—Years..... Months.....
4. Sex : Male ( ) Female ( )
5. Marital Status : (Please state).....
6. Race (Mark X in the correct bracket)  
Low-Country Sinhalese ( )  
Kandyan Sinhalese ( )  
Ceylon Tamil ( )  
Indian Tamil ( )  
Ceylon Moor ( )  
Indian Moor ( )  
Malay ( )  
Burgher ( )  
Other ( ) (State).....
7. Religion : (Mark X in correct bracket)  
Buddhism ( ) Non-Catholic Christianity ( )  
Hinduism ( ) Islam ( )  
Roman Catholicism ( ) Any other ( ) State.....
8. Employment Status :  
(1) Employed ( ) Unemployed ( )  
Self-employed ( ) Not seeking employment ( )  
(2) If employed, state whether your employment is permanent/temporary/casual : .....



## 9. Particulars of Parents and Siblings at the time of Graduation (Please state).

Names of Siblings (including respondent's) in order of birth	Sex		Age (Years)	Marital status	Education level	Occupation (if any)
	M	F				
1. Father	M			Married		
2. Mother		F		Married		
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						

## 10. Occupation of Parents and Annual Household Income as at—

	A/Level		1st Year of University		At time of Graduation		At present	
	Occu- pation	Annual house- hold income	Occu- pation	Annual house- hold income	Occu- pation	Annual house- hold income	Occu- pation	Annual house- hold income
Father								
Mother								

## 11. Was/is your Father a Member of any of the following Organisations? (Please state)

Organisation	Name of Organisation	Membership	
		Holding Office	Ordinary Member
Political Organisation			
Religious Organisation			
Special Service Organi- sation			
Cultural Organisation			
Sports and Recreation Club			
Trade Union			

12. Location of Permanent Parental Home :

Give the address and state if town/village with revenue district.....

13. State the schools you have attended in chronological order with the following particulars :—

	Name of School	District	State if private or Govt.		Period	
					From	To
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						

14. Were the following subjects taught in the school in which you studied for your G.C.E. (O/L) ? :
- 
- (Mark X in the appropriate cage)

	Upto G.C.E. (O/Level)		Upto G.C.E. (A/Level)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Science				
Arts				
Commerce				

15. (1) Which field of study did you follow at Grade 10 ?

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

Arts ( ) Science ( ) Commerce ( )

- (2) Give the subjects.

.....

.....

.....

16. How important are the following as reasons for your choice of Science at the O/Level? (Mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the responses)

- (1) Because I liked science .....
- (2) My parents wanted me to study science .....
- (3) Science education has better employment prospects .....
- (4) My school advised me to do science .....
- (5) Any other reason (specify) .....

V. Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.

17. How Important are the following, as reasons for not choosing Science subjects at the O/Level? (Mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the responses)

- (1) I did not like science .....
- (2) I was not selected to study science .....
- (3) My school had no facilities for the study of science .....
- (4) I did not realise the better employment prospects in science .....
- (5) Any other (specify) .....

V. Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.

18. What was the Medium of Instruction?

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

Sinhala ( ) Tamil ( ) English ( )

19. Did you sit the English Language paper at the G.C.E. (O/Level) Examination?

Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes indicate Grade obtained .....

20. Give details of your G.C.E. (A/Level) Examination :-

No. of sittings	Year of Examination	Subjects offered	Grades obtained
1st Sitting		(1) (2) (3) (4)	
2nd Sitting		(1) (2) (3) (4)	
3rd Sitting		(1) (2) (3) (4)	



21. Describe extra-curricular activities in school.  
(Give details of activities participated in, posts/responsibilities held, awards won, etc.)
- .....
- .....
- .....
22. If you were employed before entering the University, please give the following particulars :—
- (1) Type of employment (occupation) : .....
- (2) Status of employment : Permanent/Temporary/Casual.  
(Delete what is inapplicable)
- (3) Period of employment : ....., Years : ....., Months : .....
- (4) Salary (monthly) : .....
23. After A/Level if you had been able to find permanent employment, would you have preferred that, to entering the University?  
Yes (    ) No. (    ) Cannot say (    )
24. (1) Reasons for pursuing Higher Education :
- (Rank in order of importance)
- (1) Chances of obtaining employment better with degree. (    )
- (2) Inability to obtain employment with only G.C.E. (A/ Level) qualifications. (    )
- (3) Academic interest. (    )
- (4) Persuasion by parents and members of the family. (    )
- (5) Status considerations. (    )
- (2) Are there any other reasons? (please state) .....
- .....
- .....
25. (1) In which University Campus did you study?
- .....
- .....
- .....
- (2) Year of entering the University : .....
- (3) Year of Graduation : .....

26. Indicate numerically in order of preference the courses you applied for on entrance to the University. What is the course you followed?

*Name of Courses you  
applied for*

*Name of course you followed. If  
general or special degree, state  
the subjects*

- (1) .....  
 (2) .....  
 (3) .....  
 (4) .....  
 (5) .....  
 (6) .....  
 (7) .....  
 (8) .....

27. Reasons for choosing the course you marked as first preference. (Please state).

.....  
 .....  
 .....

28. (1) In what medium did you follow your degree course?

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

Sinhala ( ) Tamil ( ) English ( )

- (2) How proficient are you in English?

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

High ( ) Average ( ) Poor ( ) Weak ( )

29. Detailed Results of your Final Degree Examination :

(Mark X in the correct bracket)

1st Class ( ) 2nd Class Upper Division ( )

2nd Class Lower Division ( ) 3rd Class/Pass ( )

30. Post Graduate Degree/Diploma Qualifications :—

(Mark X in the correct bracket).

- (1) You are following ( ) intend following ( ) completed ( ) a post-graduate course.

- (2) Name the post-graduate course you are following/hope to follow/have completed.

.....  
 .....  
 .....

31. (1) Have you followed/are you following any course of study which is *outside* your field of graduate/post-graduate/diploma study? (Mark X in the correct bracket).

Yes (     ) No (     )  
If Yes, please state.

.....  
.....  
.....

- (2) Do you think it is more useful than your University course?  
(Mark X in the correct bracket)

Yes (     ) Somewhat (     ) No (     )  
Give reasons

.....  
.....  
.....

32. (1) What benefits did you expect to derive from University education and have they been satisfied? (List benefits in order of importance, and mark X in appropriate cage).

Benefits	Fully satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied
(1)			
(2)			
(3)			
(4)			
(5)			

- (2) Do you think the University education you received has been a waste of time?  
Yes (     ) No (     ) Cannot say (     )

33. Your experience of university education.— (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the responses given).

- (1) Has fulfilled your academic aspirations.  
(2) Has developed your capacity for critical and creative thinking.  
(3) Has provided training in disciplined and systematic work.  
(4) Has given scope for developing your talents.  
(5) Has improved your professional competence.  
(6) Has enhanced your ability to get on amicably with others.  
(7) Has improved your ability to secure employment.  
(8) (Any other (specify)

V. Imp .	Imp.	N. Imp.



34. Do you think that your university course needs improvement? If yes, state briefly the improvements you would suggest in terms of—

(1) Content :—

(2) Methods of Instructions :—

35. (1) Can you think of some work experience which would have made your university course, the richer, had you gone through the work experience prior to starting the university course.?

Yes ( ) No ( ) Cannot say ( )

(2) If Yes, give reasons for your answer by indicating (along with the type of institution, occupation, etc.) a few work experiences you would like to undergo.

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.....

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.....

(3) If 'no' or 'cannot say,' give reasons for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

.....

36. How important would you consider the following proposal for improving the curricular content and teaching methods related to your course of study.?

(1) Introducing arrangements for exchange of academic staff between the university and specialist and research staff, working in related fields in the government, semi-government and private sector institutions.

Very important ( ) Important ( ) Not important ( )

(2) Give reasons for your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

37. If you were employed, whilst following the degree course, state—

(1) Type of employment (Occupation) .....

(2) Period of employment : .....

38. Please give the following particulars regarding your *employment preferences* at the time of graduation (Rank in order of importance).

- (1) (a) A post where course content is directly relevant (      ).  
Name the post :  
(b) A post where course content may not be directly relevant (      )  
Name of post:
- (2) Sector of employment (Rank in order of preference)  
(a) Government (      )  
(b) Semi-Government (      )  
(c) Private (      )
- (3) Location : (Rank in order of preference)  
(a) Home town/village (      )  
(b) Colombo (      )  
(c) Urban area (      )  
(d) Rural area (      )  
(e) Any part of the country (      )

39. (1) In your opinion, how important are each of the following factors for making a job attractive? (Rank in order of importance)

- (1) Good Income (      )  
(2) Security of employment (      )  
(3) Good career prospects (      )  
(4) Job satisfaction (      )  
(5) Improvement of your competence (      )  
(6) Use of special talents (      )  
(7) Work environment (      )  
(8) Further studies available (      )

(2) Any other factors (state)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Note**

- If *employed*, answer questions 40 — 47  
If *unemployed*, answer questions 48 — 57  
If *self-employed*, answer questions 58 — 62

**FOR EMPLOYED GRADUATES**

40. (1) Name of organisation and post held

.....  
.....  
.....

(2) Sector of employment (Mark X in correct bracket)

Government (      ) Semi-Government (      ) Private (      )

(3) Location of place of employment :

Colombo (      ) Other Urban (      ) Colombo Sub-urban (      ) Rural (      )

(4) Monthly salary Rs. ....

(5) Nature of employment :

Permanent (      ) Temporary (      ) Casual (      )

41. Date of appointment to present job : .....
42. If this is not your first job since graduation, please give details of previous employment in chronological order.

Occupation (Post)	Sector of Employment			Nature of Employment			Period		Reasons for leaving, if any	
	Govt.	Semi- Govt.	Pri- vate	Perma- nent	Tempo- rary	Casual	Salary	From		To
(1)										
(2)										
(3)										
(4)										
(5)										
(6)										



43. (1) How did you get to know about your present job? (Mark X in appropriate cage)

	V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.
(1) Newspaper advertisement .. ..			
(2) Government Gazette .. ..			
(3) Personal contact with employer .. ..			
(4) Other employees .. ..			
(5) Friends/Relations — .. ..			
(6) University .. ..			
(7) Any other (specify) : .. ..			

(2) How did you secure your present job?

44. In your opinion, how important were the following factors in securing the present job? (Mark X in appropriate cage for each of the factors).

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
(1) Previous experience .. ..			
(2) Academic achievements .. ..			
(3) Distinction in extra-curricular activities .. ..			
(4) Course followed .. ..			
(5) Personality .. ..			
(6) Knowledge of English .. ..			
(7) Letters of recommendation .. ..			
(8) Personal contact with employer .. ..			
(9) Political patronage .. ..			
(10) Status of the school .. ..			
(11) Sex .. ..			
(12) Any other (please specify) .. ..			

45. If this is not your first job, how important were the following reasons for moving into the present job? (Mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the given responses).

	V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.
(1) Better salary .. .. .			
(2) Better promotion prospects .. .. .			
(3) Security of employment .. .. .			
(4) Job satisfaction .. .. .			
(5) Greater scope to use knowledge/skills acquired through University education in job situation			
(6) Uses my acquired additional qualifications			
(7) Job, more in keeping with graduate status			
(8) Better work environment .. .. .			
(9) Any other (please specify) .. .. .			

46. (1) How satisfied are you with your present job? (Mark X in the correct bracket).  
 Very satisfied ( ) Fairly satisfied ( ) Not satisfied ( )
- (2) Give reasons for your answer.
47. (1) How useful is the content of your university course, in the performance of your present job? (Mark X in the correct bracket)  
 Very useful ( ) Fairly useful ( ) Not useful ( )
- (2) How useful is what you have acquired in the university, *outside the course of study* in the performance of your present job? (Such as sports, cultural activities, union activities etc).  
 Very useful ( ) Fairly useful ( ) Not useful ( )

**FOR GRADUATES PRESENTLY UNEMPLOYED**

48. (1) Are you presently seeking employment?  
 Yes ( ) No ( )
- (2) If not, give reasons for not seeking employment

49. If you have been in casual and or temporary employment, since Graduation, please give the following particulars in chronological order :-

	Employer ( Give name of Dept/Agency, Firm, etc )	Occupation (Post)	Casual	Temporary	Salary (monthly)	Period	
						From	To
(1)							
(2)							
(3)							
(4)							
(5)							



50. If you have been self-employed give details regarding the following :—

(1) Employment type (please state) :

.....  
 .....

(2) Monthly income :

(3) Period of self-employment :

51. (1) Have you applied for any permanent posts?  
 (Mark X in correct bracket).

Yes ( ) No ( ).

(2) If Yes—please give the following information :—

	Posts	Month and Year of application		Whether called for the interview (Mark X)	
		Month	Year	Yes	No
(1)					
(2)					
(3)					
(4)					
(5)					
(6)					

52. What were the means by which you learnt about the jobs you applied for? (Mark X in the appropriate cages for each of the responses).

- (1) Newspapers .. .. .  
 (2) Govt. Gazette Notifications .. .. .  
 (3) Personal contacts with employers .. .. .  
 (4) Through friends and/or relatives .. .. .  
 (5) Through other employes .. .. .  
 (6) Through the University .. .. .  
 (7) Any other (specify) .. .. .

	V. Imp	Imp.	N. Imp.

53. Have you declined any permanent jobs for which you applied? If yes, specify the jobs, and give reasons for declining.

*Jobs*

*Reasons*

- (1) ..... (1) .....  
 (2) ..... (2) .....  
 (3) ..... (3) .....  
 (4) ..... (4) .....  
 (5) ..... (5) .....

54. (1) Since graduation were there any vacancies appropriate to your qualifications for which you did not apply? (Mark X in correct bracket)

Yes ( ) No ( )

- (2) If yes, list the jobs and give reasons for not applying.

- (1) ..... (1) .....
- (2) ..... (2) .....
- (3) ..... (3) .....
- (4) ..... (4) .....
- (5) ..... (5) .....

55. In your view why have you failed to obtain permanent employment? (Mark X in appropriate cage for each of the reasons given below).

- (1) Poor performance at the degree exam. ..
- (2) Poor performance at tests/interviews. ..
- (3) Low standard of English. ..
- (4) Sex discrimination. ..
- (5) Discrimination in terms of race, caste, religion, politics (strike off what is inappropriate). ..
- (6) Low status of school. ..
- (7) Family background. ..
- (8) Any other reasons (please specify) ..

V. Imp.	Imp.	N. Imp.

56. (1) Do you think your chances of getting employment would have been better, had you not gone into the university? (Mark X in the correct bracket)

Yes ( ) No ( ) Cannot say ( )

- (2) If Yes — give reasons for your answer.

57. Are you in receipt of a regular income that makes you self-reliant financially?

- (1) Yes ( ) No ( )

- (2) If Yes, give the following details :

(a) Source of income :

(b) Average monthly income :

- (3) If no, who supports you? (Mark X in the correct bracket)

(a) parents ( )

(b) brothers ( )

(c) sisters ( )

(d) relatives ( )

(e) spouse ( )

(f) others ( )

(please specify)

## FOR SELF-EMPLOYED GRADUATES

58. Give the following information regarding self-employment :
- (1) Type of self-employment :
  - (2) Initial capital investment :
  - (3) Source of initial capital investment (Mark X in correct bracket)
    - (a) family ( )
    - (b) personal income from previous employment ( )
    - (c) private assets ( )
    - (d) loans ( )
  - (4) Income (average monthly-gross income) .....
59. Besides your University degree do you possess any occupational skills or professional qualifications and expertise which helped you to establish and manage your own enterprise?  
 Yes ( ) No ( )  
 If yes, give details :
60. If you are offered permanent employment, either in the Government or private sector, would you accept? (please mark X in the appropriate cage for both sectors)

	Yes	No	Undecided
Government sector .. .. .			
Semi-Government .. .. .			
Private Sector .. .. .			

61. What factors prompted you to go in for self-employment :



62. (1) If you have been previously employed, give details of your employment in chronological order.

Occupation (Post)	Sector of Employment			Nature of Employment			Period		
	Private	Govt.	Semi-Govt.	Perma- nent	Tempo- rary	Casual	Salary	From	To
(1)									
(2)									
(3)									
(4)									
(5)									
(6)									
(7)									
(8)									

2. Give reasons for giving up your last job:

**Appendix:**

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 3

**UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC STAFF**

**Part I**

1. Name : .....
2. Address (Official) : .....
3. University & Dept : .....
4. Designation : .....
5. Academic and/or professional qualifications : .....
6. Past/current additional posts held in the University : .....
7. Period of Service : ..... (a) From : ..... To : .....  
(b) Number of Years : .....

**Part II**

1. "One of the major problems the universities are faced with today, is to reconcile the classical aims of university education with the present day demands of designing university education to meet national development needs."

Focussing your attention on the problem posed above, please comment with regard to each of the following :—

- (a) In your opinion should the universities of Sri Lanka compromise on the classical aim of cultivating intellectual excellence?

- (b) Is there a possibility of reconciling these two aims within a single institution?

(c) Would you consider specific career training (apart from the traditional professions) to be within the orbit of university education?

(d) If the answer to part (c) above is in the affirmative, what are the obstacles that you would envisage in attaining this end?

(e) What changes in the University structure, would you advocate to overcome these obstacles?

2. (a) What should be the role of the universities in the provision of career information/guidance with regard to course selection and employment possibilities? Please state briefly.

(b) Are the present universities performing this function? (Mark X in the appropriate bracket)

Yes ( ) No ( ) To some extent ( )

(c) If not, in your view how can the universities play an active role in career guidance?



3. (a) In your opinion to what extent have the universities contributed to the problem of graduate unemployment in the country?

(b) How can the universities help minimise this problem?

### Part III

1. How important are the following proposals put forward with the intention of diversifying the scope and content of university education? (Please respond with reference to your own field of study by marking X in the appropriate bracket and giving reasons for each of your responses).

(a) Introduction of new courses and specializations in keeping with changing development and scientific trends in the country.

Very Important ( ) Important ( ) Not Important ( )

Reasons for your answer :

(b) Re-designing of curricula in order to achieve the twin objective of—(i) Imparting of an academic discipline and (ii) An employment-oriented training.

Very Important ( ) Important ( ) Not Important ( )

Reasons for your answer :

(c) Re-designing of curricula in all courses to include a definite development component.

Very Important ( ) Important ( ) Not Important ( )

Reasons of your answer :

2. In the light of the experience gained from conducting Programmes of Development Studies in two of the University Campuses, please comment on the following :

*N.B.* Please repond if this question is directly related to your field of studies. Others may respond if they wish to.

(a) What were the objectives of Development Education ?

(b) Were these objectives realised ?

(c) To what extent did these courses provide a Development Education ?

(d) If you think that the Deveopment Study Courses have failed, please give reasons for their failure ?

(e) Is there a case for continuing these Courses ?

3. What consequences will the following arrangements have on the theoretical and practical content of university education, and on the position of your university, vis-a-vis the larger community? (Please comment with regard to each of the following proposals).
- (a) Participation of specialists outside the university in the formulation of university course curricula.
- (b) The exchange of academic staff in the university with others in parallel positions in government and private sector institutions for short periods, for purposes of engaging in research and teaching in the university and outside.
- (c) Engaging qualified specialists from outside the university as visiting lecturers.
4. (a) Do you consider it necessary that students selected to follow a specialised course should go through a period of relevant work experience prior to starting their course.  
(Mark X in the appropriate bracket.)  
Very necessary ( ) Necessary ( ) Not necessary ( )
- (b) What are the advantages/disadvantages of such a programme, its feasibility for courses in your department and its implications for employment? Please comment :
5. (a) Do you believe that the present system of evaluation adopted by your university needs improvement?  
Yes ( ) No ( )
- (b) If yes, comment briefly on the shortcomings (if any) of the present evaluation procedures and suggest alternative procedure applicable to your discipline to overcome these deficiencies.



## Part IV

- 1 (a) At the time of entry into the university, are the students adequately equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to cope with the demands of their courses of studies? (Mark X in the appropriate bracket).  
Very well equipped (     ) Satisfactorily equipped (     ) Not equipped (     )
- (b) If not, what are these inadequacies?

(c) State what you think are the reasons for these inadequacies.

- (d) Suggest any improvements that can be made both at the secondary school level and in the universities to alleviate these inadequacies.

2. (a) How important would you consider each of the following problems facing university students today, which are likely to hinder the full enjoyment of the benefits of university education.

(Please mark X in the appropriate bracket).

- (i) *Financial difficulties*. Very important (     ) Important (     ) Not important (     ).
- (ii) *Unsatisfactory residential facilities*.—Very Important (     ) Important (     ) Not Important (     )
- (iii) *Insufficient knowledge of English*.—Very Important (     ) Important (     ) Not important (     )
- (iv) *Shortage of academic staff*.—Very Important (     ) Important (     ) Not Important (     )
- (v) *Lack of communication between students and teachers*.—Very Important (     ) Important (     ) Not Important (     )
- (vi) Any other problems — please specify,

- (b) Please comment briefly with special reference to your Faculty/Department, on any one or all of the above problems, indicating the magnitude of the problem(s) and the measures that are being taken/should be taken by the University authorities to overcome them.
3. (a) Is there a possibility of Final Year undergraduate students participating in research activities related to their course of studies?
- (b) Would such participation instil in them a taste for research and practical work and improve their ability to apply their theoretical knowledge in the analysis of concrete problems? Please comment :
4. (a) Apart from the conventional teaching programmes what other academic programmes would you suggest in order to stimulate interest among students for greater participation in the academic activities of the university?
- (b) Do you think that, in your own way, you have been able to stimulate such interest among students, during your career as a University teacher? Please elucidate.

5. (ε) How effective have been the existing programmes under formal and non-formal education sectors in the university, in inculcating in students the following attributes? (Mark X in the appropriate cage).

Attributes	Very effective	Effective	Not effective
(i) General Competence ..			
(ii) Initiative .. ..			
(iii) Discipline .. ..			
(iv) Creativity .. ..			
(v) Leadership qualities ..			
(vi) National Consciousness ..			
(vii) Adaptability .. ..			
(viii) Any other — please specify ..			

- (b) If you consider the existing programmes ineffective, what other programmes would you suggest to inculcate these attributes in the students. ?
6. (a) What should be the role and functions of student bodies in the university ?

- (b) How effective have they been —  
 (i) As a forum of discussion of student problems ?



- (ii) As a mechanism for establishing close links with the university administration, for discussion of issues related to the improvement of general conditions of life in the University?
- (iii) As a medium of promoting social consciousness, leadership and other socially useful attributes?
7. Since it is generally accepted that universities should produce the future leaders of society, should politics be precluded from the activities of the University? Please comment.

#### Part V

1. (a) Does the existing Departmental and Faculty framework, permit your participation, both meaningfully and actively in the following academic activities?
- (a) Curriculum Development
  - (b) Teaching
  - (c) Evaluation
  - (d) Research
- (b) Do you think that the above mentioned academic activities are taking place in isolation-
- (i) without any awareness of developments related to these areas taking place in other universities either in our country or abroad?
  - (ii) without due reference to developments taking place in the socio-economic, political and cultural scene in our country?

2. Do you think that your university should conduct periodical evaluations of its own objectives of higher education and performance in relation to national aims and needs? Please comment.
3. Are there any constraints and problems which in your opinion tend to restrict your desire to give your best to your profession? Please state.

Signature : .....

Date : .....

**Appendix :**

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 4  
**EMPLOYER'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Part I**

1. Name & address of organization : .....
2. Nature of activities : (Mark X in the appropriate bracket/brackets)  
Service (    ) Sales (    ) Production (    ) Research (    ) Any other (    )  
Please state .....
3. Is your organization — (Mark X in the appropriate bracket)  
Private (    ) Semi-Govt. (    ) Govt. (    )
4. Total number of employees in your organization : .....





6. Give the approximate number of university graduates of the different fields in the following occupational categories :—

Occupational Categories	Professional	Science	Arts
Directors/Heads of Departments			
Senior executives/staff			
Junior executive/staff ..			
Clerical & allied grades..			
Supervisory ..			
Any other (please specify)			
.....			
.....			
.....			

7. (a) Do you have any graduates in posts which *do not* need the degree as a minimum qualification? (Mark X in the appropriate bracket)

Yes ( ) No ( )

- (b) If Yes, please give the following information with regard to these graduates.

Post held	Degree (Course)	Number	
		Male	Female

8. Does employment in a post below graduate level affect the work performance of those graduates? Please comment.

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. The percentage of Graduates in your organization who are proficient in English is—  
(Mark X in the appropriate bracket)

Less than 25% ( )

25 to 50 % ( )

50 to 75 % ( )

Over 75% ( )





13. (a) When graduates apply for posts for which lower educational qualifications are stipulated do you give preference to graduates?

Yes ( ) No ( )

- (b) Give reasons, specifying posts to which your answer is relevant.

.....

.....

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.....

.....

14. What are the sources used to advertise vacancies for university graduates by your organization? (Rank in order of importance).

Newspaper notices ( )

Govt. Gazette ( )

Consultation with university staff ( )

Personal contacts with potential

employees ( )

Through other employees ( )

Any other ( )

(Please specify) : .....

.....

15. (a) What are the chief methods by which you select university graduates for employment in your organization. (Please rank in order of importance).

Interview ( )

Written test ( )

Public Service Commission ( )

Job Bank ( )

Recommendations of University staff ( )

Recommendations by Ministers/politicians ( )

Any other ( )

Please specify : .....

.....

- (b) In case you combine more than one method please indicate, which of the above methods are combined.

.....

.....

.....

.....

16. How important are the following criteria for the selection of graduates for professional/administrative jobs? (Mark X in the appropriate cage for each of the given responses)

Selection Criteria	V. Imp.	Imp.	Not Imp.
(1) Subject of degree ..			
(2) Academic performance ..			
(3) Experience ..			
(4) Knowledge of English ..			
(5) Personality ..			
(6) Status of school ..			
(7) Status of the family ..			
(8) Letters of recommendation ..			
(9) Sports and other extra-curricular activities			
(10) Age .. ..			
(11) Sex .. ..			
(12) Religion .. ..			
(13) Ethnicity .. ..			
(14) Performance at test/interview ..			
(15) Any other (specify) ..			
.....			
.....			

17. (a) What criteria do you take into consideration when making *promotions* among *graduates*?

Please specify: .....

.....

.....

.....

- (b) (i) When *promoting* persons to posts for which both *graduates* and *non-graduates* are eligible, do you give *preference to graduates*? (Please mark X in the appropriate bracket).

Yes ( ) No ( )

- (ii) Please give reasons for your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

18. (a) Do you have any in-service training programmes for university graduates?

Yes (    ) No (    )

(b) If yes, describe briefly, stating the type of training given, posts for which graduates are trained etc.

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19. (a) Do you offer *vacation employment* to university students?

Yes (    ) No (    )

(b) If Yes, specify to which category of students you offer vacation employment.

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**Part iii**

20. As an employer of graduates or as one who is in contact with graduates, what can you say about the general work performance of graduates employed in your organization? (Some comments evaluating the performance of different categories of graduates will be useful).

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21. On the experience gained by you from employing university graduates, how effective do you think are the Formal and Non-formal educational programmes in the university, in inculcating in the graduates the following attributes? (Mark X in the appropriate cage in respect of each of the given responses).

Attributes	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Not satisfactory
(1) General competence ..			
(2) Initiative ..			
(3) Discipline ..			
(4) Creativity ..			
(5) Leadership ..			
(6) National consciousness ..			
(7) Adaptability ..			
(8) Responsibility ..			

22. What are your views on the *relevancy* of the *Course content* to the specific job needs of your organization?

.....

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.....

.....

.....

23. If you are of the view that there is very little correspondence between *course content* and *job needs*, what reforms in the content and teaching methods of university education would you suggest to make them more responsive to the job needs of your organization?

.....

.....

.....

.....

24. From your experience of employing university graduates, please comment on the statement "*Good performance at exams does not necessarily lead to better work performance?*"

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## Part IV

25. Please indicate below in the appropriate columns, the numbers of university graduates from the following course groupings which (i) *your organization employed during the last 5 years* and (ii) *hopes to employ within the next 5 years*.

Courses	Last 5 years	Next 5 years
(1) Engineering		
(2) Medical		
(3) Dentistry		
(4) Veterinary		
(5) Architecture		
(6) Agriculture		
(7) Law		
(8) Science (Bio)		
(9) Science (Physical)		
(10) Social Sciences		
(11) Public Finance & Taxation		
(12) Estate Management & Valuation		
(13) Commerce		
(14) Education		
(15) Humanities		

Signature : .....

Name &amp; Designation : .....

Date : .....

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# UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT IN SRI LANKA

This study was undertaken jointly by the IIEP/Unesco Paris and the Marga Institute, Sri Lanka, within the framework of an IIEP research project, which under the direction of Bikaš C. Sanyal of IIEP, seeks to explore the relationship between the development of higher education and employment of graduates.

The task of educational planning today is becoming more and more complex. Perceptions, attitudes and expectations, not only of students but also of employed graduates, academic staff and prospective employers, play an important role in the relationship between education and employment, and require more of our attention if we are to understand better the dynamics of the relationship between education and work. Ideological factors, shifts in developmental priorities and changing attitudes and expectations of society require that the planning methodology incorporate techniques which are sensitive to these aspects and ensure constant adaptation to them.

This study attempts to provide an exploratory basis for various dimensions of the linkage between higher education and the employment of university graduates. The informative and methodological base which is thus created would, it is expected, allow for better guidance of planners and policy-makers in the future development of higher education programmes.