

TEACHING STAFF EMPOWERMENT AND THE CONCEPT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM: THE PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

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Unemployment among university graduates has been highlighted recently, and given much publicity by the media. In particular, the unemployment rate is very high among graduates in the Social Sciences. Undoubtedly, there could be a large number of reasons for this situation. However, one of the main reasons is the low degree of empowerment of academics in the Social Sciences. This paper presents an empirical investigation of the degree of the teaching staff empowerment and the academic freedom contributed to the relevance and quality of undergraduate education to mitigate graduates' unemployability in Sri Lanka.

Institutions of higher educations are maintained for the common good and not to further interests of either the individual teacher or the institution as a whole. The common good depends on the free search for truth and its free expression. Academic freedom and empowerment of the mind are essential to these purposes, and apply to both teaching and research. In knowledge based socio-economic environment, it has been recognized that empowerment is an as intrinsic motivational factor that enhances work performance and value creation processes. In addition, theoretically academics are given a much higher level of academic freedom in executing their duties; hence academic freedom is regarded as a core concept in universities. Present studies emphasize mainly two areas: the management practices of empowering perceived by academic staff, and the current issue of the concept of academic freedom.

The degree of empowerment and the academic freedom have been measured in terms of five factors: power, information, knowledge, resources, and rewards passed on for university performance. Data was gathered through the distribution of a structured questionnaire among fifty academics. This questionnaire was analyzed by using descriptive statistical methods. It was concluded that academics of the Social Sciences are relatively empowered with power, information, and knowledge, while they lack resources and rewards.