

LINK BETWEEN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT AMONG THE RECENTLY RECRUITED GRADUATES IN THE PROVINCE OF SABARAGAMUWA

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The relationship between university education and employment is the most frequently discussed issue of higher education today. The task of planning education in terms of the needs of the labour market is becoming more and more complex for many developing countries. Higher education in this context is being challenged as it has failed to respond to the demands expressed by the employment systems. In Sri Lanka, with the introduction of free education in 1945, investment in higher education started to grow, with the expectation that it would yield sound returns. But during the last two decades the job prospects for graduates have been bleak and the return for investment in University education has remained relatively stable. At the same time, a mismatch is felt to be on the rise between certain fields of studies and the demand for graduates of certain profiles.

This study on the link between university education and employment among graduates recruited after 1999, under the graduate recruitment scheme in the province of Sabaragamuwa, tries to show how a mismatch is on the rise between university education and employment opportunities. The objective of the investigation was to explore and express the link between university education and the suitability of present occupations of the newly recruited graduates. In doing so, the study attempted to investigate the following questions. What benefits have been achieved through higher education in terms of employment? What problems are faced by graduates in their current jobs? How do job requirements and employment opportunities change for graduates in the area? What is higher education expected to deliver?

The study was based on primary and secondary data on the subject. Primary data was collected through interviews, discussions and questionnaire surveys of samples selected from the graduates recruited after 1999, in the province of Sabaragamuwa. Interviews and discussions were conducted with relevant officers too. Secondary data was collected from published and unpublished materials. Data was analyzed and presented using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Finally, this study suggests some measures which can be adopted in the future when planning university education in terms of opportunities for employment.