

## Employment prospects of graduates from selected Sri Lankan Universities

The employability of our graduates as well as the linkage of university education to employment has been questioned. Hence the aim of the research was to

- a) assess the extent of unemployment and under employment (if any)
- b) find the employment pattern of graduates of different academic streams.

A structured questionnaire was administered during 1996 to 1998 to newly passed out graduates in Engineering faculties at Peradeniya, Moratuwa, Physical/Biological graduates at Colombo university and Arts graduates at Kelaniya university to collect details regarding their academic performance such as aggregate marks at the GCE AL examination, entry attempt, type of degree, degree result and personal data (sex, ethnicity etc.). The respondents of the 4 different surveys were 189 Engineering graduates from Moratuwa, 146 Engineering graduates from Peradeniya, 266 Arts graduates from Kelaniya and 259 Science graduates from Colombo.

The unemployment rate varied among different academic streams. The lowest was 10.0% for Colombo university Biological science graduates while the highest was 68.0% for at Kelaniya university Arts graduates. The percentage of Physical science graduates unemployed was 10.7%. Out of the two Engineering faculties Peradeniya (18.5%) reported a higher unemployment rate than Moratuwa (15.9%). The extent of underemployment of graduates was revealed by their being employed in clerical and allied grade- jobs among Arts (1.2%), Biological science(2.2%) and Physical science (3.6%) graduates.

The unemployment rate of Engineering and Physical science students entered in their first attempt was lower than that of repeats. The lowest (Biological Science: 2.6%) and the highest (Arts: 79.6%) unemployment rate was reported for students entered in their second attempt. Moreover, a degree with a class has helped the students of all the science based academic streams. However, the acquisition of a class made hardly any difference in the case of Arts students.

The Engineering graduates from Moratuwa and Science graduates from Colombo were employed as private sector executives more than the Perdeniya Engineering graduates and Kelaniya Arts graduates.

The findings suggest that Science students were more employable than the Engineering students on graduation even though the latter enter the university with a higher mark.