

The impact of education reforms on students selected for admission to University Programmes and abandoning the courses subsequently

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The non-registration and de-registration at the university selection which termed as student selected but abandoning the programmes subsequently is a common phenomenon in Sri Lanka. The education reforms introduced in the period of 2000/2001 to 2002/03(A) academic years was meant to regularize the university admissions process and thereby synchronized the academic years in all universities while in keep face with the reforms that were taken place in the general education since 1994. Reduce the GCE (AL) subject combination from 4 to 3, introduce Z score as the base for university selection and shifting of examination dates from April to August were some of the important changes that can be highlighted.

The objective of this study is to explore the situations of students selected but abandoning the university programmes subsequently, before and after the reforms period to ascertain whether there is an impact of educational reforms and highlights any specific reasons related to the abandoning the university programmes. The findings of this study will helpful to assess the outcomes of the educational reforms and review the university admissions policy.

According to the statistics recorded in the UGC, it was seen that about 9.6% of students selected to the universities are abandoning subsequently the university programmes. Indraratna et al. (1992) who conducted a similar study 20 years ago reported that this was between 10% to 14%. Studying the pattern of student abandoning the university programmes over the years reveals that though at the inception of the reforms, it was suddenly increased by about 28% but at the end it has been able to dropdown by about 17% than before the reforms.

It was further revealed that students abandoning programmes are very common in Physical & Biological sciences, Agriculture, General Arts etc. in the universities while most of the programmes in the new universities such as Rajarata, Sabaragamuwa, Wayamba and South Eastern.

The most common reasons that account for about 50% of the abandons are related to labour market demand for university programmes. 28% are economic reasons and 13% are related to internal problems of students, staff and the university management that have been negatively accepted by the society.