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**Employer's perception on Science and Technology graduate employees in public and private sector institutions in Sri Lanka.**

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A study was conducted to investigate the perception of employers who employed Science and Technology graduates passing out from local universities during the period of January 2003 to December 2005. The main objectives of the study was to investigate the perception of these employers of the abilities of the S&T graduates employees in carrying out tasks assigned to them in their jobs and the knowledge and skills they possess. The direct interview method and the questionnaire mailing method were employed to collect data. The study included 216 institutions that comprised of 43% public sector institutions, 55 % private sector organizations and 2% non government organizations. These institutions employed B.Sc. agriculture (161 local and 02 foreign degree), B.Sc. engineering (134 local and 33 foreign degrees), B.Sc. special science (327 local and 145 foreign degree) and B.Sc. general (182 local and 41 foreign degree) graduates during the survey period. Most of the private sector employers (39%) stated that they preferred to employ graduates below 25 yrs as it was easy to train them and those who have less family responsibilities. The employers in the public sector organizations mentioned that they preferred to employ graduates of ages between 25-35 yrs assuming that they have a greater sense of responsibility. Gender showed no significant value for selection during the recruitment. Other than the academic qualifications, during recruitment, preference was given by 31 Bhikkhuni Waskaduve Suvimalee

% of employers to graduates with additional professional qualifications, 30% to knowledge in English, 27% to computer literacy and 12% to previous job experience. The perception of employers on S&T local graduates skills and qualities compared to S&T graduates with foreign degrees, other local non-S&T graduates, other professionals and A/L qualified employees was investigated. Accordingly, 40-50% ranked "very good" for S&T local graduates with respect to their commitment to work, problem solving skills, analytical skills and generation of innovative and creative ideas. However, the communication skills, knowledge in English, computer literacy are said to be high in the S&T graduates with foreign degrees. Punctuality was ranked high (38%) in graduates with foreign degrees and team work was ranked high (24%) for locally graduated employees. Both graduates were evaluated to be weak in decision making abilities, management skills and the willingness to receive advice when compared to other professionals.

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