

Youth and Their Search for Decent Employment: Attitudes and Aspirations of Arts Undergraduates in Sri Lanka

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This study focuses on themes related to the issues regarding employment prospects of local Arts undergraduates that continue to require the attention of all stakeholders. The primary objective of the research is to explore the basic factors that affect Arts graduates when seeking employment. Consideration was given to both external factors such as socio-economic dynamics and internal factors such as motivation and interests of the students.

Students of Bachelor of Arts degree programme have different aspirations regarding their studies and job prospects. This study was conducted to assess; their level of satisfaction of being Arts undergraduates; job preferences and problems they face when getting decent employments.

250 students of who entered the Colombo University in 2011 to follow BA degree programme were selected randomly according to admission register. Data was gathered using an interviewer administered questionnaire and focus group discussions; 223 students belonging to all ethnic groups from different socio-economic backgrounds responded and four focus group discussions were carried out during a three month period with their consent.

Majority of the Arts undergraduates (79%) aspire to join in local as well as government employments. 21% are interested in private sector jobs and intend to migrate for any job. However, poor proficiency in the English language and lack of soft skills limit their academic and career opportunities.

Thus, it is important to develop attitudinal changes in them regarding employments in other sectors while encouraging acquiring the necessary technical, soft skills and language proficiency. It would be a significant step to minimize under-employment and un-employment situation among them.

Key words: Undergraduate, Interest, Attitudes, Aspiration, Employment