

6.9 A study of attitudes among undergraduates about the contribution of professional education towards their career advancement

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ABSTRACT

Some philosophers believe that proactive success in various educational fields has been responsible for creating a new world outlook for a modern man. Manpower planning is an important issue, which aims at development, utilization, improvement and preservation of the knowledge stock of human resources. When finding suitable employments the biggest obstacle faced by graduates is the lack of professional education qualifications sought by employers (Science and Technology Policy Research Division, 2004).

Due to the less demand for the academic degrees in recent years, undergraduates show an increasing interest to follow various professional educational programs offered by different professional bodies. On the other hand, graduate unemployment or underemployment is attributed to a mismatch between the aspirations of graduates and employment opportunities available for them (Ehrenreich, 1989). So, with a flood of new graduates individuals are having a tough time in finding jobs in an increasingly competitive labor market (Gilbert, 1998).

In this setting, the specific objective of this study is to identify whether those selected professional educational programs would really contribute to undergraduates' career advancement. The study was based on preliminary and secondary data collection. As the sample size, 100 employed B.COM students from the Kelaniya University were selected from various business organizations in Colombo District. Primary data was collected based on a depth interviewing two parties of Professional bodies and Management executives.

70% of respondents believed the fact that skills and knowledge obtained by the professional programmes that they followed will help greatly for the career achievement.

Thus, the study recommends that on one hand, professional programmes should introduce entrepreneurial training and development as a compulsory area into their educational programs. On the other hand, "interprofessional education" should be introduced to professional and university education in order to mitigate the mismatch between job aspirants' desires and job opportunities.

Key words: Undergraduates, Professionalism, Professional education, Professional development and Career advancement

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