

## **6.17 Skills Mismatch and Identification of Job Skills Expected by Employers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In analyzing the unemployment problem confronted by the educated youths in Sri Lanka, 'skills mismatch' hypothesis, first articulated by the ILO Mission to Sri Lanka in 1971 is still highly emphasized as a major reason. Those who stress the orthodox view of the mismatch hypothesis believe unreservedly that although the economy has employment opportunities jobs expected by a large amount of job seekers are not adequately found or they do not fit to the prevailing jobs. Particularly, the private sector business leaders ascribe this mismatch primarily to weaknesses of the system of university education of the country.

Taking these criticisms into consideration, the university authorities have taken a number of steps to develop skills of undergraduates. Dassanyake and Karunaratna (1996) emphasised that there was a great need for a change in the existing methods of teaching, particularly for Commerce and Management undergraduates proposing to introduce a number of steps. Among them the following recommendations are worth mentioning: arranging staff development programmes for lecturers; adopting continuous evaluation methods with the introduction of course unit system; providing opportunities for students to evaluate their lecturers and making collaborations with the industry. Anecdotal evidence shows that within a period of less than a decade from making these recommendations they have been successfully put into practice by almost all the Commerce and Management faculties in the university system.

However, research attempts have not yet been directed sufficiently to find the kinds of skills expected by employers from job aspirants in the Sri Lankan labour market. Such assessment of skills is important for the university authorities as a kind of feedback to formulate their courses of study to narrow down the skills mismatch gap among undergraduates so that they can be readily employable.

For this purpose, this study carried out a survey of 1360 news paper advertisements based on Sunday Observer and Sunday Times News Papers for a period of one month starting from 27th of July 2008. This gave a good snapshot situation of the skills expected from job aspirants with higher education by the employers. According to this survey, 38 % of job advertisement expect fluency / excellent / good communicational ability in English, 19 % of computer literacy, 8 % of excellent interpersonal skills, 4% of ability to work independently, 6 % of ability of having team work, 4 % of achieving targets, 4 % of willing to work long hours, 3 % to have leadership skills, 4 % of personal relations skills, 3 % of analytical skills, 1 % of customer relationship skills and 6 % to have motivated, young and energetic persons.

In this scenario, it is vitally important to examine how far the current university education system has been successful in inculcating these skills among graduates for make them readily employable by carrying out a more comprehensive research study.

**Key words:** Skills Mismatch, Employment Opportunities, Job Aspirants and Communication Abilities.