

Entrepreneurship Development as a Strategy for Expansion of Employment Opportunities in the Rural Sector (With Special Reference to Kurunegala District)

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Despite the fact that the past successive governments of Sri Lanka have been attempted to address the issue of rural unemployment through different strategies, unemployment and underemployment rates as well as the dependent population are still high in the rural sector of Sri Lanka. The salient feature of this problem is that the rate of unemployment and underemployment among the educated youth is higher than that of other groups. It is widely believed that Entrepreneurship development is a strategy that could support to overcome the persistent problem of unemployment in rural economies. Therefore, the present study focuses on the matter of how far successful Entrepreneurship Development programs that are being operated in Sri Lanka in coping with the problem of rural unemployment.

The objectives of this study were, to identify the nature of unemployment in the rural Sri Lanka and to make a methodical assessment of the contribution of Entrepreneurship development programs with regard to the reduction of rural unemployment and underemployment. The relevant primary data for the study were collected through a field survey. Two structured questionnaires were employed to collect primary data from the selected sample. Secondary data were collected through a number of sources; mainly from the official publications of government departments and institutions. The sample was selected from the Kurunegala District and the sample included both unemployed and underemployed persons as well as young educated entrepreneurs who are in the Kurunegala District. Collected data were analyzed with the help of basic statistical methods such as percentages, tables, graphs and measures of central tendency.

The study reveals that though there are many Entrepreneurship development programs have been implemented by the government of Sri Lanka, such programs have not been successful in dealing with the problem of rural unemployment due to lack of having proper awareness of the concept and insight into the matter. Therefore, Entrepreneurship Development programs should be designed in order to meet the needs of young, unemployed persons in the rural sector.

Keywords: Rural Sector, Unemployment, Under Employment, Dependency Rate, Entrepreneurship Development

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