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පටුන / CONTENTS

	පිටුව/Page
Irrigation Research Possibilities in Sri Lanka : A Challenge to Social Science by M. M. Karunanayake	1-10
Test of Equality between Sets of Coefficients in two Linear Regressions after a Preliminary Test of Equality of Variances .. by W. A. Jayatissa	11-14
Some Thoughts on <i>Camperaliya</i> and <i>Viragaya</i> from the Point of View of Realism and Modernism by A. V. Suraweera	15-21
From Synoptic Tale to Long Fiction : Some Forms of Early Modern Fictional Narrative in Sinhalese (1860-1910) .. by Sarathchandra Wickramasuriya	22-43
The Character of Mrs. Moore in A Passage to India by D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke	44-51
Fertility and Female Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka .. by P. Wilson	52-67
විද්‍යම නිමියන්ගේ සමාජ දර්ශනය ගනාච්ච මමමපාල නිමියන් විසින්.	68
Biological Study of <i>Silana Farinosa</i> (Coleoptera : Chrysomelidae), A Pest of <i>Murraya koenigii</i> (Sinhala: <i>Karapincha</i>) .. by D. Y. S. Talagala and D. Manawadu	75-85
Development of <i>Trichomasthus frontalis</i> Alim (Hymenoptera: Encyrtidae) and Its Behaviour in Relation to Its Host <i>Creenisca Placida</i> (Green) (Homoptera ; Coccoidea ; Ericocidae) by Daya Manawadu	86-91
Observation of Solar Eclipse in Sri Lanka by D. Manawadu	92-93
Solar Cell with Chlorophyll Cuprous Iodide Electrode .. by K. Tennekone	94-98
A Study of the Choice of Degree Courses Selected by Students Admitted to the University of Sri Lanka in the Arts Stream : 1974 - 1976 by S. Abeysekera, Indralal De Silva, V. K. Samaranyake	99-110
A Statistical Analysis of Admission and Performance of Science Students at Vidyodaya University by G. Y. L. Fernando and S. Weerahandi	111-122

A Study of the Choice of Degree Courses Selected by Students Admitted to The University of Sri Lanka in the Arts Stream: 1974 to 1976

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The choice of degree courses by students admitted to the University of Sri Lanka in the Arts Stream was analysed using the data available at the Central Agency for Admissions. Data for the three years 1974, 75, 76 were used and a clear change of the popularity of courses among those seeking admissions was seen during the three years. The results are analysed against the background of the job orientation of courses and employment prospects.

I. Introduction

During 1975, a sample survey was planned, executed and results analysed by students following the Statistical Services job range of the Development Studies degree as an exercise in conducting sample surveys. The population considered was all students following the Development Studies degree course at the Colombo Campus and one of the many aspects investigated was the choice of degree courses at the time of seeking admissions to the University. The findings of the survey were published⁽¹⁾ and the nature of the results made us continue the study for the whole University population that were admitted in the 'Arts' stream from 1974 to 76.

One of us (I. de S.) selected this topic as the project for the Development Studies degree and with the assistance and guidance of the other two authors carried out the survey which produced the results reported here. Further details would be found in the dissertation submitted for the degree.

In Section II we describe the process used for University admissions in Sri Lanka, and go on to describe the reorganisation of courses introduced after 1972 and each of the new 'job oriented' courses introduced. Section III deals with the methodology used for the survey and the results are given in Section IV. An analysis of the results in Section V is followed by an attempt (in Section VI) to explain the changes in popularity of the various courses together with some suggestions for improvement of the present Arts courses, and University admission procedure.

II. University admissions and job oriented courses

Any student who obtains three passes and over 25% in the fourth subject at the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) Examination at one and the same sitting within his first three attempts, is eligible to be admitted to the University of Sri Lanka. Of these only a fraction could be admitted to

1. De Silva, Indralal, 'What students think of the Development Studies course—A Survey carried out at the Colombo Campus.' Proceedings of the WUS Asian Regional Workshop on Non-Formal Education, Colombo (1976), 224.