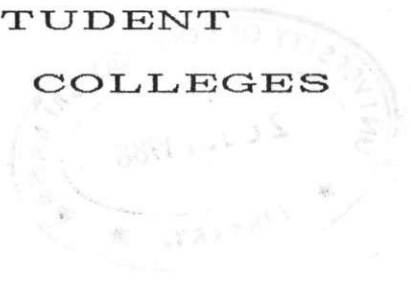


A CRITICAL SURVEY INTO THE FACTORS
CONTRIBUTING TO THE STUDENT
DROPOUT FROM TECHNICAL COLLEGES
IN SRI LANKA



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ABSTRACT

This study focuses attention on the problem of student dropout with special reference to technical education under the Ministry of Higher Education. Despite the rising demand for technical and vocational education and an increase in job opportunities for trained personnel, it has been observed that there is a high rate of dropouts from technical colleges. The main objective of this study is, therefore, to identify the courses of student dropout from technical colleges. It is further expected that this study would create an awareness among the technical education authorities, of the acuteness of this problem and what remedial measures could be taken to bring down the rate of dropout.

The population for the study consists of the 11 Grade I technical colleges and 12 Grade II technical colleges under the Ministry of Higher Education, Sri Lanka. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of technical colleges from which the sample was drawn. Thus six technical colleges spread out in different districts were selected and the sample was drawn from these colleges. However, the sample does not comprise representation of technical colleges established in Tamil speaking areas and also other areas which are affected by the ethnic problem.

Three questionnaires were developed and administered to 3 samples drawn from the 6 technical colleges selected. The first sample consisted of 300 dropouts, the second consisted of 600 students following full time day classes while the third comprised 30 administrators and teachers. Questionnaire I was mailed to 300 dropouts and questionnaires II and III were

administered to the respondents personally by the researcher.

Percentages for the 14 causes for giving up technical courses indicated in questionnaire I were calculated. The frequencies recording the causes which might influence the withdrawal decisions of students were worked out, in accordance with the degree of agreement. Graphical illustrations were made and correlation matrix using Rank correlation coefficient formula were prepared. One tail t values of significance were computed to determine the significance of inter major factors group association with each other on the withdrawal decisions of students. Chi square values were computed on the distributional percentage of each major factor in questionnaire III.

The respondent dropouts adduced more than one reason for their dropping out. Most important of all was financial difficulties and the factors classified under socio economic group were given highest ratings. The respondents for the second questionnaire rated the highest degree of agreement in respect of the statement, " 'Parents/guardians want the student to find a job to support the family' ". It is evident that even in the case of these respondents, socio economic factors will have a significant influence on their persistence/withdrawal decisions.

It is recommended that a stipend be provided to technical college students and also residential facilities at least in areas where board and lodging fees are high. The duration of technical courses should be reviewed and the curricula revised. The system of evaluation, certification and accreditation need be investigated.