

A STUDY OF THE PRESENT UNIVERSITY ADMISSION
PROCEDURE IN SRI LANKA WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO ITS EFFICACY AS A SCREENING
DEVICE AND A MECHANISM OF SOCIAL EQUITY

C₂ - 09

H.P.R. GUNAWARDANE
B.A., Dip. in Ed., M.A.

CR

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Faculty of Education, University of Colombo.
February 1992

UCLIB



437649

437649

A B S T R A C T

This study has attempted to assess the effectiveness of the present university admission procedure on its ability to select students who possess academic merit while ensuring a democratization of access to university education.

With this purpose recent admission policies and procedures were considered in relation to political and social changes that occurred in the country. An overview of the different schools of thought on access to university education is also briefly examined followed by a review of admission strategies used by other countries.

A sample of two batches of students from three major university courses was used to examine the differences in academic performance of students from different categories at entry level and final degree level. This was supplemented by a questionnaire survey of a sub sample of students and interview of a group of university teachers.

The analysis revealed that the problem of selection to universities has surfaced increasingly in recent decades mainly due to the increasing demand for higher education and the uneven distribution of educational facilities and resources resulting in regional and ethnic disparities. The changes carried out in the admission policy to democratize education have not been entirely successful in implementation. Students from disadvantaged districts still represent a small proportion of the university population. Although they had progressed academically during the period of university education, the entry level performance pattern



was replicated in the final examination. This indicated that G.C.E. (A.L) examination is effective as a predictor of later examination performance.

The analysis also revealed an absence of social equity with regard to provision of educational facilities in disadvantaged areas. This has affected the secondary education and academic performance of students in these areas. Insufficient knowledge of English and financial difficulties continue to hinder them at university level. These findings indicate that the admission policy which envisaged a reduction of disparities is effective only at entry level and ceases to be so at process level.

The study highlighted that a single policy implemented only at the entry level would not suffice to rectify the problem of inequity existing at the school level and the university level. Experiences of other countries also showed us that the advantage of using a variety of measures in conjunction with examination for selection. A major change in the present admission policy is not indicated by our study until the disadvantaged areas are developed and provided with sufficient educational facilities. Education policy must entail additional strategies to ameliorate the initial handicaps of students from these areas.