



SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTIVENESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA:

A STUDY OF A COHORT OF ARTS GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

This study has examined the extent to which higher education has been effective in achieving three important goals, (1) economic development, (2) social equity and (3) political socialisation in Sri Lanka. Each of these aspects of education have been attributed significance in prior research but discretely and not in its entirety.

The study was carried out on a cohort of Arts graduates, two years after graduation. It is based on an individualistic point of view of higher education, that the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the individual members of a society fashion its total development. Interviews and a questionnaire were utilised for data collection. The interview was the major instrument as the approach of the study was mainly qualitative.

The analysis revealed an absence of social equity, both at the level of secondary schooling and in achieved socio-economic status. They confirmed the first four hypotheses, that social origins continue to influence the educational and occupational careers of the graduates.

As indicators of the effectiveness of higher education in contributing to economic development, the levels of employment, unemployment and mal-employment were examined. The findings indicated a relatively high degree of ineffective gearing of higher education to economic development, thus confirming hypothesis five.

Effectiveness in achieving the goal of political socialisation was evaluated by examining the responses of the graduates against the anticipated political outcomes of education. The findings revealed a high degree of political alienation, which supported hypothesis six.

In all the three aspects evaluated, Arts higher education in Sri Lanka appeared to have failed to achieve its goals and therefore was ineffective.

Finally, the significance of the above findings for educational policy was discussed and their potential for future research was explored.