



A STUDY ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SRI LANKAN ARTS GRADUATES EMPLOYED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

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One of the major challenges that the Sri Lankan government faces is creating a large number of employment opportunities in the public sector for university graduates. After receiving a free tertiary level education, most of the graduates feel that it is the obligation of the government to find public sector employment for them. Even though this expectation is quite high among Arts graduates, there are few who prefer employment in the private sector. The objective of this study is to identify the characteristics of Arts graduates who prefer the private sector over the public sector for employment. This study was based on a survey that was conducted in year 2016 on a random sample of Arts graduates from Sri Lankan universities who had graduated in 2012 to identify the changes in their employment over time. Among the 469 graduates who responded, 12% (56) of them indicated that their first employment was in the private sector. This paper focuses on these graduates who were employed in the private sector. The results show that the majority (70%, 39) of them had moved to the public sector, while only 23 % (13) of them had remained in the private sector during the study period (2012 to 2016). When comparing these two groups it can be seen that gender, civil status, parent's highest education, English literacy skills are the main characteristics that differentiate them. The study also reveals differences in certain aspects of their first employment, the ones who opted the public sector and the others. These aspects were the Economic benefits of employment, job satisfaction and the retirement benefits they had received in their first job. As a solution to reduce this high demand for public sector jobs by Arts graduates, the authorities could focus on enhancing the student's English literacy skills, conducting awareness workshops that provide knowledge about employment opportunities in the private sector and also showcasing the benefits of private sector over public sector employment at the beginning of the university life can bring about a change in attitudes among Arts graduates in general.

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