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Shifts in the Educational Structure of Sri Lanka following Economic Liberalisation

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Preface

This research report is one of a series completed within the DFID-funded research project 'Globalisation, Qualifications, Livelihoods and Youth'. The research examines the impact of globalisation on livelihoods, education and qualifications, and on the aspirations of youth for education, qualifications and livelihoods.

The research arises from the need to monitor the impact of globalisation – operationalised via policies of economic liberalisation – on the access of the poorest social groups to livelihoods, education and qualifications in different country contexts. Economic liberalisation is changing the nature of the livelihood structure and the economic demand for skills and qualifications. It is also changing the types of educational and qualifications provision within specific national settings. These in turn impact on the aspirations of youth for livelihoods, education and qualifications. The realisation of those aspirations is increasingly conditioned by the ability to pay, as policies of economic liberalisation encourage private sector, market driven provision, especially at the post-primary level. This research explores the impacts of economic liberalisation on the structure and volume of livelihoods, education and qualifications on the one hand, and on the aspirations of youth, on the other. In particular it seeks to explore differential impacts of economic liberalisation on members of different social groups.

The fieldwork has been undertaken mainly in Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. A smaller study was undertaken in Zhejiang Province, China and a study of UK suppliers of qualifications to Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe was undertaken to explore the interdependent, cross border nature of qualifications supply.

Research Report no 3, by Siri Hettige of the University of Colombo, examines shifts in the education structure of Sri Lanka following the policies of economic liberalisation introduced from 1978. Because of the focus on impact and change the study necessarily examines the education structure in the period prior to liberalisation. This study is based mainly on analyses of secondary sources.

This research was supported by DFID. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent DFID's own policies or views. Any discussion of the content should be addressed to the author via the email address listed below.

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Abbreviations

BOI	*Board of Investment*
CIT	*Canberra Institute of Technology*
E - mail	*Electronic Mail*
GCE	*General Certificate of Education*
A Level	*Advanced Level*
O Level	*Ordinary Level*
IDM	*Institute of Data Management*
IT	*Information Technology*
IWE	*Institute of Workers' Education*
MIBT	*Melbourne Institute of Business Technology*
NA	*Not Applicable*
NAPITSE	*National Policy on Information Technology in School Education*
NM	*Not Mentioned*
NMIT	*Northern Melbourne Institute of Technology*
NYSC	*National Youth Services Council*
RMIT	*Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology*
TAFE	*Technical and Further Education*
TEC	*TEC Sri Lanka*
USEF	*United States Educational Foundation*

Executive Summary

The present report examines the shifts that have taken place in the country's educational structure following economic liberalization. The investigation was guided by a number of specific hypotheses relating to assumed shifts in the educational structure following economic liberalization. They were:

a. An increase in the number of students in private sector institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels,
b. An increase in the number of students enrolled in post-secondary private institutions specializing in IT and English,
c. An increase in the number of students enrolled in well-established post-secondary private institutions, with a proportionately greater increase among more affluent social groups,
d. A shift in curriculum policy at secondary level towards IT and English,
e. A re-evaluation of English as a potential medium of instruction at primary, secondary and tertiary levels,
f. An increase in the volume and types of franchise and access arrangements with foreign universities,
g. A marginal decrease in enrolment at primary and secondary levels,
h. A greater equalization of enrolment at primary and secondary levels,
i. A marginal decrease in enrolment of males at post-secondary level in rural areas,
j. A greater proportion of children from middle and upper classes enrolling in private and international schools, and
k. A rise in entry qualifications in the teaching profession.

a. Increasing enrolment of students in private institutions

Available data clearly shows that enrolments in private, fee levying schools have steadily increased after economic liberalization. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that enrolments in state schools have remained virtually static over the same period. In fact, there has been a marginal decrease in such enrolments over the last ten years. The number of pupils in the state schools increased by 68% between 1977 and 1998, while the corresponding increase in private schools is nearly 140%. It should be noted that the population in the country increased during this period by 34% only.

b. An increase in the number of students enrolled in post-secondary private institutions specializing in IT and English

Increasing enrolments in the Open University of Sri Lanka and external degree programmes of several local universities indicate a growing demand for tertiary education, which cannot be fully met by conventional state universities. The other major sources of post-secondary education available in the country are technical colleges, the Law College and private institutions and agencies preparing

students for Management, Accountancy and similar professional courses, which are mostly concentrated in and around Colombo.

The shift towards private sector dominance in the country's economy following economic liberalization is no doubt a major factor contributing to the rapid increase in the demand for English, Computing and IT skills. Mushrooming of institutions offering courses in these fields is very much a reflection of this increasing demand.

It is noteworthy that in spite of a widespread and growing desire to acquire a good knowledge of the English language, only a minority of children from Colombo and several urban centres appear to make significant progress in their endeavours. This is evident from GCE (Ordinary Level) results over the last ten years. The data on examination results during this period shows that most children in remote districts like Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya do not obtain even an ordinary pass mark, let alone a higher level of achievement. By contrast, children in Colombo have done very well, a large proportion of them even obtaining distinctions. While there is some improvement in performance during the period overall, it is clearly more marked in Colombo.

Therefore, the conclusion we can draw is that children all over the country today feel the need to acquire a good knowledge of English as the latter is a prerequisite for upward social mobility in the new liberal economic environment, dominated by big business firms and transnational corporations. However, the real gainers of English knowledge are still heavily concentrated in Colombo and a few urban centres.

IT and computer education are also areas that have shown a remarkable expansion after economic liberalization. This is also evident from student enrolment data available from selected training institutes covered by the present study.

c. Shift of curriculum policy in favour of English and Computer Technology at secondary level

Post-independence Sri Lanka has not witnessed a consistent state policy on English education that stood the test of time. State policy has undergone many shifts over time. The policy adopted in the early 1950's was to commence compulsory teaching of English from Grade 3 onwards; by 1960, the year of commencement was shifted to Grade 5. By the early 1970's, this was shifted further, to Grade 6. The next policy shift took place in 1981 when it was again decided to commence English teaching from Grade 3. In the mid 1990's, a decision was taken to use English in Grade 1 for communication purposes, though formal teaching of English was to commence in Grade 3.

The National Policy on Information Technology in School Education (NAPITSE) affirms the commitment of the government to providing state of the art knowledge in IT to Sri Lanka's younger generation, to prepare them to face the challenges in the 21st century. When one looks at the data on

the establishment of school computer centres throughout the country over the last several years, it is not difficult to imagine how daunting a task the implementation of the national policy can be. From 1994 onwards, nearly 70 school computer centres have been established in different parts of the country, providing access to computers for approximately 18,424 students. Given the fact that there are over 10,000 government schools in the country with a student population of over 400,000, it is not difficult to imagine the magnitude of the materials and human resources required to reach even the school population, let alone the entire nation, the population of which currently stands at over 19 million.

d. Franchise and access arrangements with foreign universities

Sri Lanka's university system which is almost entirely state-funded, has not expanded at a rate that is in line with the increasing demand for university places. The result has been that many who qualify at the GCE Advanced Level examination so as to enter the university are left out each year with no prospect of pursuing higher studies. Since the state policy has not been changed to allow degree awarding private universities in Sri Lanka, the demand for university places overseas has been increasing year by year. Many western universities have taken advantage of this situation by visiting Sri Lanka to hold orientation seminars and enrolment drives in Colombo. Several agencies established for the purpose of sending students to foreign universities have reported increasing applications over the years.

e. Marginal decrease in primary and secondary enrolments

Sri Lanka's birth rate has shown a significant decline over the last several decades. This should naturally reflect in school enrolment rates as the country had already achieved a very high level of enrolment at primary level. On the other hand, since school enrolment has not reached 100%, there is room for some improvement there as well. In fact the 'no schooling' category of the population above school going age remained around 15% even in the 1980's. By 1977, the rate had declined to about 8%, still short of universal school enrolment.

It seems that Sri Lanka reached the peak of school enrolment by the mid 1990's when it reached 4,172,897 in 1993. Since then it has shown a decline. It has decreased to 4,134,026 by 1999 and is unlikely to increase again even if those children who would not have otherwise enrolled are somehow admitted to schools. This is due to the fact that the declining trend in the birth rate is unlikely to be reversed given the prevailing socio-economic circumstances in the country.

f. Enrolment of students in private and international schools

It is noteworthy that the concept of an 'international school' is a very recent addition to the vocabulary of the ordinary members of the public in Sri Lanka. The Board of Investment Act enacted in 1978 provided for the establishment of firms engaged in the provision of services such as health and education. Educational institutions established under the Act are not regulated by legislation in the educational field in such areas as curricula testing, medium of instruction etc. In other words,

international schools established under the BOI Act could have their own curricula, medium of instruction and prepare children for examinations conducted by testing authorities in other countries.

Since the establishment of international schools, their enrolments have been rising steadily. A survey of the international schools in and around Colombo conducted as part of the present study revealed that the number of students enrolled in these schools increased rapidly, from a few hundred in the late 1980's to nearly ten thousand by 2001. If we take all international schools in Colombo and other regional towns in the country at present, the number must certainly be much higher.

g. Entry qualifications in the teaching profession

The last hypothesis advanced with respect to the changing educational structure in Sri Lanka was that there has been a rise in the entry qualifications to the teaching profession. Data available on the professional background of teachers in the state sector indicates that the proportion of qualified teachers has increased from about 58% in 1970 to about 80% by 1997. The proportion of teachers with University degrees has risen from about 8% to 27% over the same period. The practice of recruiting persons without any specialized training either from a teacher training college or from a university has disappeared, except under exceptional circumstances where voluntary teachers are recruited until they obtain necessary qualifications.

In view of the increasing enrolments in science streams at secondary level, the proportion of science teachers appears to be too low; they constituted only 2.2% in the mid 1990's. The same holds true for teachers with qualifications in English. They also constituted only 23% in 1997.

h. Public investments in education

Available information shows that investments in the educational sector have lagged far behind in comparison to other areas. For instance, between 1973 and 1999, government recurrent expenditure has increased over sixty fold, while the recurrent expenditure in the educational sector has increased only nineteen fold during the same period. The situation with respect to capital expenditure in the educational sector has been worse. This has been partly due to the fact that a major part of government capital expenditure has been diverted into Defence since the early 1980's owing to the escalating political violence and the ethnic conflict in the country.

Shifts in the Educational Structure of Sri Lanka Following Economic Liberalization

1.0 Introduction

Education became a major source of social mobility in Sri Lanka even before the country gained political independence in 1948. Following the granting of limited self rule in 1931 that accompanied the introduction of universal adult franchise in that year, the demand for greater equalization of educational opportunities grew in strength. Introduction of free education for children irrespective of their class, creed or ethnic background in response to the above demand was a landmark in the recent history of education in the island. Post-independence education policies were also decisively influenced by the emerging economic and political trends, in particular the shift towards state domination over the economy and the social sectors. In fact, private sector involvement in the provision of education at any level was discouraged and the entire education system soon became a virtual state monopoly by the mid 1960's. While many schools were established by religious missions in different parts of the country during the colonial period, most of these were also integrated into the state education system in the early 1960's. The two universities that existed in the country prior to independence were financed by the state and the same applied to the universities that were established later.

Greater state control over the education system led to increasing equalization of educational opportunities in the country. Adoption of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in schools, and later in the universities no doubt contributed to the above process of equalization. This does not mean that the existing inequalities between different types of schools, in particular those between privileged urban schools on one hand and underprivileged rural schools, on the other, became less significant. In fact, some of the measures taken to ensure equality of opportunity such as the Grade 5 Scholarship Scheme reinforced the importance of privileged urban schools. Moreover, the adoption of Swabhasha[1] as the medium of instruction did not devalue the importance of English which continued to be the almost exclusive preserve of a small, anglicized minority living in cities. On the other hand, the adoption of Swabhasha reinforced the trend towards monolingualism with serious social and political implications as it led to greater ethnic cleavages in the country in subsequent decades.

State domination over the country's education system remained unchallenged until the introduction of liberal economic policies in 1977. Economic liberalization since then has freed the economy from state domination and control. Many former state monopolies have given way to market competition. This is true not only for areas of commodity production but also for many areas of service provision such as health and education.

[1] Indigenous Language

While there has been considerable political resistance to privatization in general, such resistance has been strongest in the area of education. The establishment of a private medical school in the mid 1980's led to violent protests, eventually forcing the government to integrate it into one of the state universities. In spite of such opposition to greater private sector participation in education, private sector participation in providing education at all levels, and in diverse forms, has already become a reality. In fact, today the entire education sector has become highly diversified. While the state-education system continues to be the dominant provider of primary, secondary and tertiary education in the country, persisting inequalities within the system and the rapid mushrooming of private institutions and agencies have led to an intensification of competition for educational opportunities on the basis of social class.

The present paper examines the shifts that have taken place in the country's educational structure on the basis of available secondary data and some primary data collected from the relevant sources. The investigation was guided by a number of specific hypotheses relating to assumed shifts in the educational structure following economic liberalization. They were:

- An increase in the number of students in private sector institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels,
- An increase in the number of students enrolled in post-secondary private institutions specializing in IT and English,
- An increase in the number of students enrolled in well-established post-secondary private institutions, with a proportionately greater increase among more affluent social groups,
- A shift in curriculum policy at secondary level towards IT and English,
- A re-evaluation of English as a potential medium of instruction at primary, secondary and tertiary levels,
- An increase in the volume and types of franchise and access arrangements with foreign universities,
- A marginal decrease in enrolment at primary and secondary levels,
- A greater equalization of enrolment at primary and secondary levels,
- A marginal decrease in enrolment of males at post-secondary level in rural areas,
- A greater proportion of children from middle and upper classes enrolling in private and international schools, and
- A rise in entry qualifications in the teaching profession.

If we look at each of the above hypotheses separately, how they become relevant in the context of economic liberalization may not be obvious. It may therefore be necessary to indicate what kind of logic lies behind each one of them.

The increasing wealth gap between the rich and the poor due to economic liberalization, and the desire for an English education due to the growing demand for such an education in the expanding private sector, persuade affluent parents to send their children to private schools. This leads to an increase in enrolments in such schools at all levels.

Sri Lanka's integration into a rapidly globalizing world economy increases the demand for IT and English education, as private firms and other institutions tend to use IT and English in their daily operations. Youth looking for employment in the modern economic sectors are eager to enrol in private educational institutions offering instructions in IT and English.

The emergence of a sizeable upper middle class linked to the expanding corporate and non-government sectors has increased the demand for well-equipped post-secondary private schools. While there has been a major expansion of such schools, particularly in Colombo, student enrolments in such schools have by and large been confined to affluent families.

Increasing demand for IT and English in the country could not be ignored by policy-makers and educational authorities, hence the public pressure to change the education policy in the public sector in favour of IT and English. Policy-makers have been persuaded by the changing circumstances to reconsider the medium of instruction in schools at all levels in order to fall in line with the changing public attitudes in the country.

Globalization has been accompanied by a process of internationalization of education. Education providers have become more transnational in their operations. Institutions in the developed, English speaking countries have extended their programmes overseas, both directly and via franchise agents in peripheral countries like Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's demographic transition took place several decades back, and today the rate of population growth in the country is at a very low level. This has reflected in school enrolments. This is evident at both primary and secondary levels.

Economic liberalization and the consequent expansion of the economy led to more employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. These trends appeared to have encouraged some youth to drop out from schools earlier and take up new work and income opportunities. This is expected to reflect in school enrolments at the post-primary level.

The proliferation of international schools and the expansion of existing private schools reflect an increasing demand for such education in the country. Given the substantial costs involved in sending children to these schools, it is reasonable to assume that these children come disproportionately from middle and upper class families.

Finally a word about the last hypothesis regarding the entry qualifications for the teaching profession. With the increasing competition for teaching positions due to the expansion of the age cohort with secondary and tertiary qualifications, it is reasonable to assume that there has been an upward revision in the entry qualifications to the teaching profession.

2.0 Increasing Enrolment of Students in Private Institutions

As mentioned before, the state-run education system did not represent a monolithic structure before economic liberalization. Many urban schools established by Catholic and Christian missions, and Buddhist and Hindu schools established after independence continued to be well-equipped and more privileged than most rural schools and underprivileged urban schools. Affluent and more influential parents could find places for their children in these schools far more easily than their poorer, rural counterparts with no influence. Well organized old boys/girls' associations and influential parent-teacher associations could divert more and more public and private resources into these schools, making them the most attractive educational institutions in the public eye. They naturally attracted some of the best teachers in the country. The concentration of many middle and upper class children in these schools enabled them to acquire a good knowledge of English in spite of the fact that the medium of instruction in the schools remained the mother tongue. Therefore, unlike their underprivileged rural counterparts attending ill-equipped schools, they could more easily find their way into better streams of higher education such as Medicine and Engineering. Those who did not want to attend or failed to find places in the institutions of higher learning could secure employment not only in the public sector but also in the private corporate sector which favoured English speaking applicants from privileged, urban schools. Thus, the demand for places in the privileged public sector schools far outstripped the number of places available leading to severe competition. Even though clear rules, guidelines and objective criteria have been developed over the years to ensure a fair distribution of places, manipulation of the admission process by politicians, influential parents and officials has been the order of the day.

As we have discussed elsewhere (Hettige 1996, 2002), liberalization of the economy after 1977 led to a rapid expansion of the private sector. The expanding private sector created a number of new income opportunities for a range of social groups. Many people with entrepreneurial skills embarked upon new business ventures. Large business firms could offer very high salaries to their managerial and professional staff leading to the creation of a new upper middle class. The liberal economic environment allowed those who possess professional skills to sell their services and accumulate considerable wealth. In short, the expansion of the market economy after 1977 not only led to the emergence of a large stratum of affluent people but also resulted in the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of the 'new rich'. It is from the parents who belong to these affluent social strata that the demand for expensive private education has arisen. The establishment and rapid expansion of private and international educational institutions in the country over the last two decades is indicative of the magnitude of the demand for expensive private education. This demand would have

been even greater among relatively well-to-do parents as well, if not for the widespread popularity of privileged state schools.

Available data clearly shows that enrolments in private, fee levying schools have steadily increased after economic liberalization. This is particularly significant in view of the fact that enrolments in state schools have remained virtually stable over the same period. In fact, there has been a marginal decrease in such enrolments over the last ten years.

Table 1

Number of Students by Type of School 1966 - 1998

Item / Year	1966	1967	1971	1975	1976	1977	1978	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998
Government schools	2398968 (20.971)	2415346 (20.638)	2654503 (20.918)	2431626 (18.017)	2461503 (17.944)	2462147 (17659)	2990106 (21.071)	3398056 (22.361)	3539096 (22.682)	3751708 (23.263)	3962992 (24.573)	4111272 (24.162)	4159313 (23.868)	4194448 (23.444)	4119627 (22.467)	4134838 (22.024)
Private fee-levying schools*	24862 (0.217)	27315 (0.233)	28122 (0.221)	11324 (0.083)	11072 (0.080)	10161 (0.072)	15072 (0.106)									
Private non fee-levying schools*	32525 (0.284)	37650 (0.321)	33237 (0.261)	33412 (0.247)	28924 (0.210)	27946 (0.200)	33436 (0.235)	59383 (0.390)	58658 (0.375)	79717 (0.494)	82971 (0.499)	82953 (0.487)	86782 (0.498	87759 (0.490)	86205 (0.470)	91370 (0.486)
Pirivenas[2]	33088 (0.289)	29069 (0.248)	26734 (0.210)	25503 (0.188)	21330 (0.155)	19406 (0.139)	19882 (0.140)	24712 (0.162)	26925 (0.172)	32562 (0.201)	37810 (0.227)	38491 (0226)	43239 (0.248)	46314 (0.258)	4 8561 (0.264)	51916 (0.276)
Estate schools	74330 (0.649)	76325 (0.652)	84617 (0.666)	58614 (0.434)	50816 (0.370)	46721 (0.335))	26230 (0184)	2510 (0.016)	1218 (0.007)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other schools (Special and night schools)	2118 (0.018)	2797 (0.023)	857 (0.006)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total no. of pupils	2588502 (22.628)	2565891 (21.925)	2828070 (22.285)	2560479 (18.972)	2573645 (18.762)	2566381 (18.407)	3084726 (21.738)	3484661 (22.931)	3625897 (23.238)	3864187 (23.960)	4083773 (24.602)	4232356 (24.874)	4289334 (24.614)	4328521 (24.193)	4254393 (23.202)	4278124 (22.787)
Mid-year population ('000)	11439	11703	12690	13496	13717	13942	14190	15196	15603	16127	16599	17015	17426	17891	18336	18774

Sources: *Statistical Abstract of Ceylon 1967-68, 1973, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo*

Statistical Abstract of Sri Lanka 1979, 1985, 1992 and 1999, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

** Note: These are officially registered private schools. They do not include numerous international schools that are not registered with the Ministry of Education*

[2] These are traditional Buddhist temple schools open to both clergy and lay students. They continue to operate in most parts of the country and receive state assistance.

As is evident from the data in *Table 1*, the total number of students in private schools record a decline in the 1960's and 1970's, till 1977. This is particularly true for private fee levying schools. On the other hand, enrolments in state schools show an increase over the same period, and this trend continues beyond 1977 as well. This can be at least partly attributed to the population increase from about 14 million in 1978 to 18.7 million in 1998. While the number of pupils in state schools increased by 68% between 1977 and 1998, the corresponding increase in private schools is nearly 140%. It should be noted that the population in the country increased during this period by 34% only.

The above trends in school enrolments closely correspond to the changing public-private mix of schools in the country during pre and post-liberalization periods. In the 1960's and the early 1990's the number of private schools in the country declined from a high of 98 in 1966 to 38 by 1977. There is a slight decrease in the early 1980's, no doubt due in part to the outbreak of ethnic violence in the country leading to a major dislocation of civilian life. From the late 1980's onwards, once again, the number of schools have continued to increase (See *Table 2*). Even though the number of private schools in the country have not exceeded even 1% of the total number of schools, the point to be noted is that they by and large cater to a small minority of affluent people in the country, particularly in Colombo and a few other major cities. In 1977 students in private schools represented just about 1% of the total student population. In 1983, the corresponding figure was above 2%. It is interesting to note that, in the mid 1960's, the proportion was just over 2%.

Increasing student enrolments in private schools after economic liberalization only partly reflect the strong tendency towards greater reliance on private institutions for educational advancement. While the affluent parents tend to rely more and more on private schools, even not so well-to-do parents continue spending on their children's education by way of private tuition. Pupils preparing for national examinations, particularly in urban areas, often stay away from schools to attend private tuition classes. Even children from not so affluent homes could benefit from mass tuition classes conducted by some popular teachers. These classes usually accommodate several hundred or even several thousand pupils.

3.0 Increasing Enrolments in Private Institutions at Post-Secondary Level

Expansion of university education in Sri Lanka over the last several decades has not been commensurate with the rapid expansion of school education over the same period. As a result, only a small proportion of students qualifying for university admission in fact find places in the local universities (See *Table 3*). A government policy shift to allow private universities has not been possible due to strong student protests against what the protesters call " moves to privatize university education". As mentioned earlier, the single private medical college that was established in the mid 1980's had to be nationalized due to such protests.

Table 2

Private Schools : Student Enrolment 1966 – 1998

Item / Year	1966	1967	1971	1975	1976	1977	1978	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998
Private fee-levying schools	24862 (0.96%)	27315 (1.06%)	28122 (0.99%)	11324 (1.44%)	11072 (0.43%)	10161 (0.39%)	15072 (0.48%)									
Private non fee-levying schools	32525 (1.25%)	37650 (1.46%)	33237 (1.17%)	33412 (1.30%)	28924 (1.12%)	27946 (1.08%)	33436 (1.08%)	59383 (1.7%)	58658 (1.61%)	79717 (2.06%)	82971 (2.03%)	82953 (1.95%)	86782 (2.02%)	87759 (2.02%)	86205 (2.02%)	91370 (2.13%)
Total no. of Pupils	2588502	2565891	2828070	2560479	2573645	2566381	3084726	3484661	3625897	3864187	4083773	4232356	4289334	4328521	4254393	4278124

Sources: Statistical Abstract of Ceylon 1967-68 and 1973, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

Statistical Abstract of Sri Lanka 1979,1985,1992 and 1999, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

Table 3

University Education: Enrolments and Graduations 1950 – 2000

Year	No. of New Enrolments
1950	-
1955	658
1960	890
1965	1885
1970	-
1975	3482
1980	4688
1985	5707
1990	6143
1995	8015
2000	11805

Source: Annual Report 2000, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

There have been several public and private responses to the above situation. The decision by the government in the 1980's to establish colleges of education to train teachers in several streams was instrumental in diverting a significant number of GCE Advanced Level qualified students away from the universities, thereby relieving some pressure on the latter. Many well to do parents started sending their children overseas for university education. Apart from western universities which are certainly beyond the reach of most prospective students, countries like India and Russia also became popular destinations for university education. Educational and living costs in these countries are much lower in comparison to western countries.

Increasing enrolments in the Open University of Sri Lanka and external degree programmes of several local universities indicate the growing demand for tertiary education, which cannot be fully met by conventional state universities. Both these are the least expensive options available to non-affluent parents. The other major sources of post-secondary education available in the country are technical colleges, the Law College and private institutions and agencies preparing students for Management, Accountancy and similar professional courses. These are mostly concentrated in and around Colombo.

The growing demand for post-secondary education has to be examined in the context of changing livelihood opportunities in a liberal economic environment. Production and service-oriented private firms are looking for youth with specialized skills at different levels. It is in this context that the demand for vocational and technical training courses has been growing. In the universities, the demand for Management, Accountancy and Commerce courses has recorded a significant upward trend (See *Table 4 & 5*). In fact, these subjects have also become very popular at the Advanced Level in secondary schools.

Table 4

Number of Graduates by Streams 1959 – 1999

Stream	Year													
	1959	**1963**	**1965**	**1970**	**1972**	**1975**	**1985**	**1987**	**1989**	**1991**	**1993**	**1995**	**1997**	**1999**
Arts and Oriental Studies	268	988	1377	2730	2753	1764	1987	238	658	1983	1661	1999	2513	3613
Commerce and Management Studies	-	-	-	74	160	200	741	139	251	1096	1169	982	1219	1271
Law	10	8	15	58	110	82	64	-	-	98	112	140	182	325
Science	109	163	211	323	347	434	831	255	293	1169	913	958	882	1418
Engineering	31	53	88	206	223	246	247	-	-	355	382	458	496	631
Medicine	100	129	199	282	249	251	385	199	66	339	444	442	1022	1049
Dental Surgery	-	-	3	25	23	50	45	-	-	42	69	66	56	70
Agriculture	4	7	29	25	48	90	162	14	-	217	191	210	201	298
Veterinary Science	6	6	8	13	25	20	24	-	-	31	29	31	36	35
Architecture	-	-	-	-	3	9	42	-	-	76	86	23	58	46
Quantity Surveying	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	72	31
Total	528	1354	1930	3736	3941	3146	4528	845	1268	5406	5056	5309	6737	8787

Sources: Statistical Abstract of Ceylon 1964, 1967-68 and 1973, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

Annual Reports 1978, 1995 and 2000, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Colombo

Table 5

Number of Graduates by Streams 1959 - 1999 (%)

Stream	Year													
	1959	**1963**	**1965**	**1970**	**1972**	**1975**	**1985**	**1987**	**1989**	**1991**	**1993**	**1995**	**1997**	**1999**
Arts and Oriental Studies	50.76	72.97	71.35	73.07	69.86	56.07	43.88	28.17	51.89	36.68	32.85	37.65	37.65	41.12
Commerce and Management Studies	-	-	-	1.98	4.06	6.36	16.36	16.45	19.79	20.27	23.12	18.50	18.50	14.46
Law	1.89	0.59	0.78	1.55	2.79	2.61	1.41	-	-	1.81	2.22	2.64	2.64	3.70
Science	20.64	12.04	10.93	8.65	8.80	13.80	18.35	30.18	23.11	21.62	18.06	18.04	18.04	16.14
Engineering	5.87	3.91	4.56	5.51	5.66	7.82	5.45	-	-	6.57	7.56	8.63	8.63	7.18
Medicine	18.94	9.53	10.31	7.55	6.32	7.98	8.50	23.55	5.21	6.27	8.78	8.33	8.33	11.94
Dental Surgery	-	-	0.16	0.67	0.58	1.59	0.99	-	-	0.78	1.36	1.24	1.24	0.80
Agriculture	0.76	0.52	1.50	0.67	1.22	2.86	3.58	1.66	-	4.01	3.78	3.96	3.96	3.39
Veterinary Science	1.14	0.44	0.41	0.35	0.63	0.64	0.53	-	-	0.57	0.57	0.58	0.58	0.40
Architecture	-	-	-	-	0.08	0.29	0.93	-	-	1.41	1.70	0.43	0.43	0.52
Quantity Surveying	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.35
Total (%)	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Sources: Statistical Abstract of Ceylon 1964, 1967-68 and 1973, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

Annual Reports 1978, 1995 and 2000, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Colombo

The shift towards private sector dominance in the country following economic liberalization is no doubt a major factor contributing to the rapid increase in the demand for English, Computing and IT skills. Mushrooming of institutions offering courses in these fields is very much a reflection of this increasing demand. Suppliers of such skills range from poor quality private classes in rural towns to well-endowed**,** internationally connected institutions in Colombo. It is youth from affluent families who usually have access to the latter.

It is widely known that a good working knowledge of English is a prerequisite for white collar employment in the private sector. Yet, most children attend state schools which rarely provide students with English language skills. As mentioned before, only a small number of urban state schools have the facilities to impart English language skills to their students. It is this situation that has led to the mushrooming of private classes and institutions offering English language training.

Surveying the suppliers of English language skills in the country can be a major research effort in itself. What is attempted in the present study is to look at increasing enrolments at several popular and well-established institutions. It is remarkable that the enrolments at all these institutions have risen rapidly over the last two decades. This is true of fully equipped language training institutions like the British Council and the University of Colombo Language Teaching Unit as well as centres seemingly offering poor quality instruction (See *Tables 6,7,8, and 9*).

Table 6

Student Enrolment for the Diploma Course in English at the Sri Jinarathana Technical College 1981 – 2000

Year	Enrolment	Sat for the exam*	Passed out
1981	345	-	-
1985	4339	909	549
1990	2969	1079	655
1995	873	411	265
2000	159	286	189

Source: Sri Jinarathana Technical College Registers 1981-2000

*Repeaters are also included

Table 7

Student Enrolment for the Spoken English Course at the Sri Jinarathana Technical College 1991 – 2000

Year	Enrolment	Sat for the exam	Passed out
1991	779	-	-
1993	1382	182	125
1995	1056	333	332
1997	858	317	312
1999	758	263	260
2000	460	69	68

Source: Sri Jinarathana Technical College Registers 1991-2000

Table 8

Student Enrolment at Some Selected English Language Training Institutes

Institution	Year	No. of Students	Social Background
The British Council	2001	Young Learners = 1650 Adults = 1540	Mainly from middle class and above
Institute of Workers' Education (I.W.E.)	1994	Placement test = 2000 Final test = 1100	No specific social class
	1995	P.T = 1200 F.T = 900	
	1996	P.T = 1500 F.T =900	
	1997	P.T =1200 F.T = 800	
	1998	P.T = 1500 F.T = 850	
	1999	P.T = 4000 F.T = 1500	
	2000	P.T = 3500 F.T = 1600	
	2001	P.T = 2100 F.T =1500	
English Department, University of Colombo	1984	Students = 250 Teachers = 10	No specific social class
	2001	Students = 3799 Teachers = 82 Part - I = 863 Part - II = 1433 DAE/P = 884 DAE/P = 547 Law - I = 29 Law - II = 58	

Sources: The British Council, Colombo

The Institute of Workers' Education, Colombo

English Department, University of Colombo

Notes: P.T : Part Time

F.T : Full Time

Table 9

Student Enrolment for English Courses, Aquinas College 1984 – 2000

Year	Diploma in English	Graduate English Course	Religious English Course	A/L English	Aquinas Business English Courses	Professional English Courses
1984-85	2160	180	26	-	-	-
1985-86	2468	-	-	87	-	-
1986-87	1961	-	-	63	-	-
1987-88	2076	-	-	46	-	-
1988	2508	69	-	49	-	-
1989	2779	73	-	-	-	-
1990	3045	-	-	-	-	-
1991	3047	-	-	-	-	-
1992	4953	170	-	69	-	-
1993	5736	149	-	13	-	-
1994	4426	147	-	115	-	-
1995	5620	138	-	95	-	-
1996	5628	87	-	138	-	-
1997	6028	48	-	133	54	365
1998	5891	119	-	104	59	-
1999	5370	-	-	92	32	-
2000	4802	-	-	59	39	-

Source: Data files 1984-2000, Aquinas College, Colombo

It is noteworthy that inspite of a widespread and growing desire to acquire a good knowledge of the English language, only a minority of children from Colombo and several urban centres appear to make significant progress in their endeavours. This is evident from the GCE (Ordinary Level) results over the last ten years. English language papers are not set to test competency at a high level and even a distinction pass is not necessarily indicative of a very high level of achievement. Nevertheless, performance at this examination is indicative of the kind of opportunities that children have to learn the language either in schools or in the area of their residence. The data on examination results over the last ten years shows that most children in remote districts like Monaragala and Nuwara Eliya do not obtain even an ordinary pass mark, let alone a higher level of achievement (See *Table 10*).

By contrast, children in Colombo have done very well, a large proportion of them even obtaining distinctions. While there is some improvement in performance during the period overall, it is clearly more marked in Colombo (See *Figures 1, 2, and 3*).

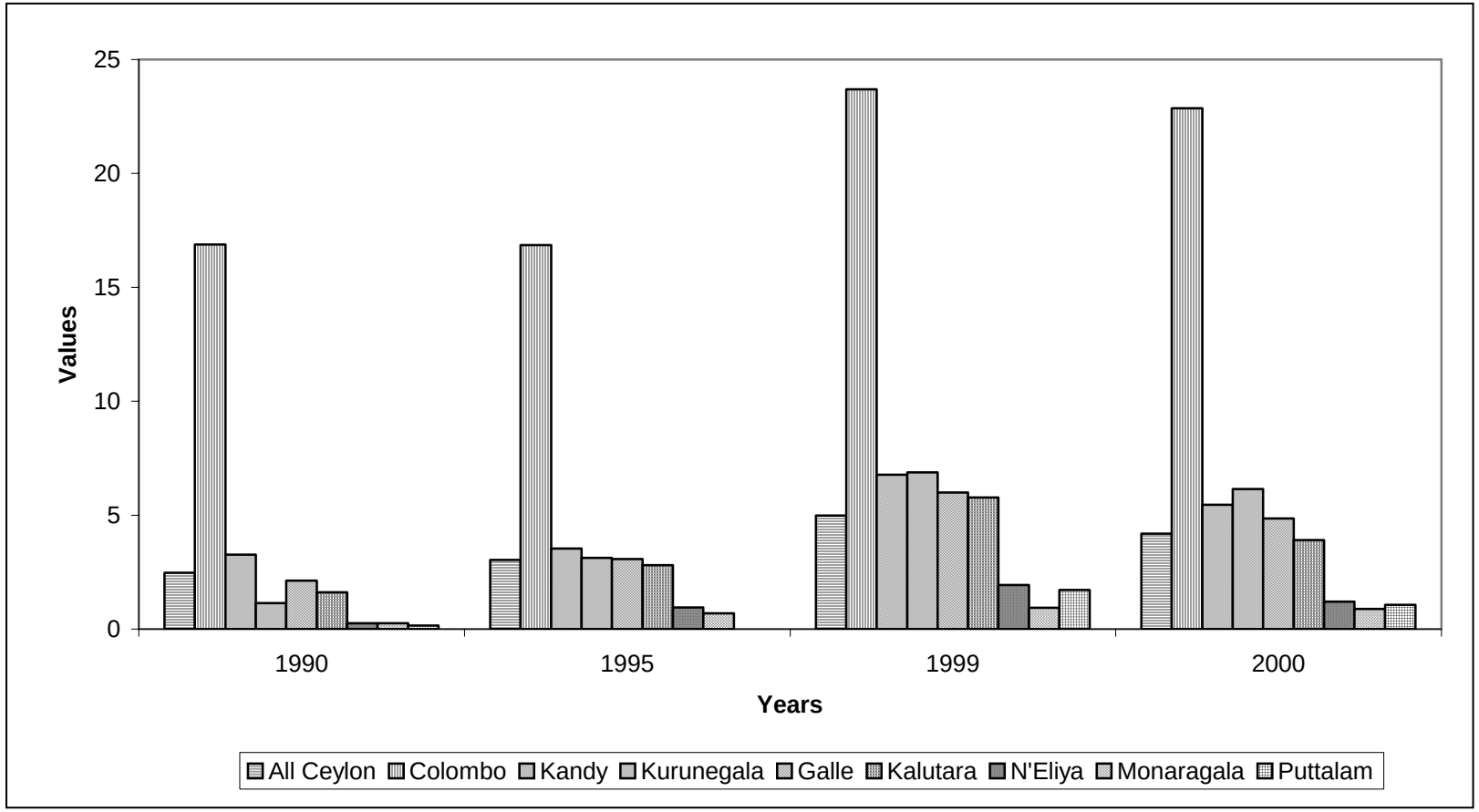
Table 10

GCE O/L English Results by Some Selected Districts (%)

Education Regions	1990			1995			1999			2000		
	Distinction	Ordinary pass	Failure	Distinction	Ordinary pass	Failure	Distinction	Ordinary pass	Failure	Distinction	Ordinary pass	Failure
All Sri Lanka	2.47	22.35	68.65	3.04	21.86	63.55	4.98	20.08	63.19	4.19	15.59	70.16
Colombo	16.88	30.88	30.88	16.85	26.72	28.84	23.69	23.07	29.57	22.86	20.23	34.35
Kandy	3.26	23.00	23	3.54	21.61	63.03	6.78	22.12	56.93	5.46	17.09	65.49
Kurunegala	1.14	20.06	20.06	3.12	22.51	62.71	6.88	21.89	55.56	6.15	17.90	62.84
Galle	2.13	24.18	24.18	3.07	21.46	62.19	5.99	20.70	60.05	4.85	16.63	67.15
Kalutara	1.62	24.82	24.82	2.81	23.97	59.74	5.78	21.83	58.2	3.90	17.65	66.42
N'Eliya	0.25	16.92	16.92	0.95	22.94	67.66	1.93	19.08	71.11	1.20	12.42	80.45
Monaragala	0.25	14.17	14.17	0.69	15.34	79.5	0.94	13.30	80.41	0.88	10.51	83.61
Puttalam	0.79	17.30	17.3	0	0	0	1.72	19.81	70.71	1.06	12.01	81.49

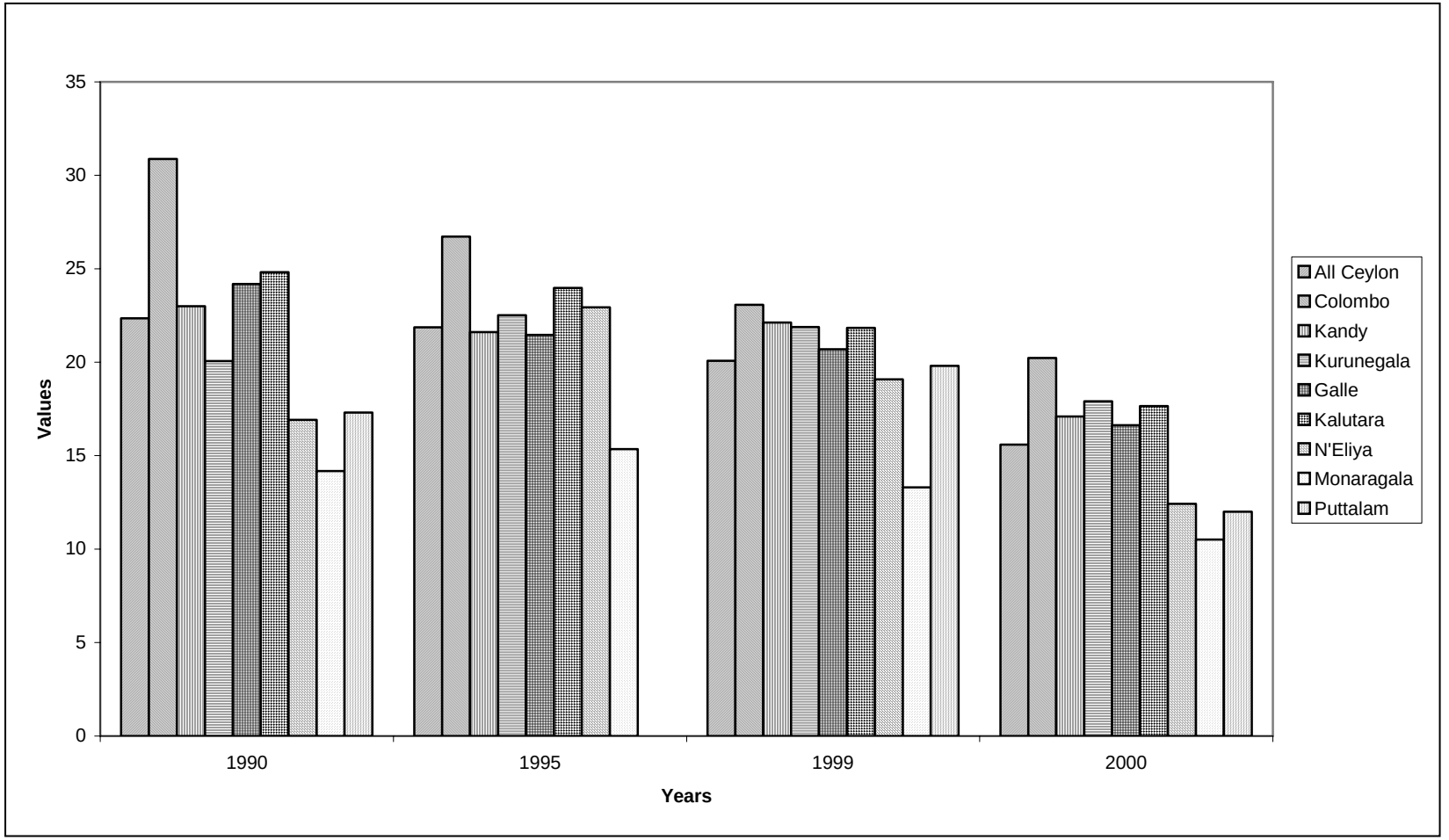
Source: Data Files 1990, 1995, 1999 and 2000, Department of Examinations, Colombo

Figure 1
GCE O/L English Results - Distinction



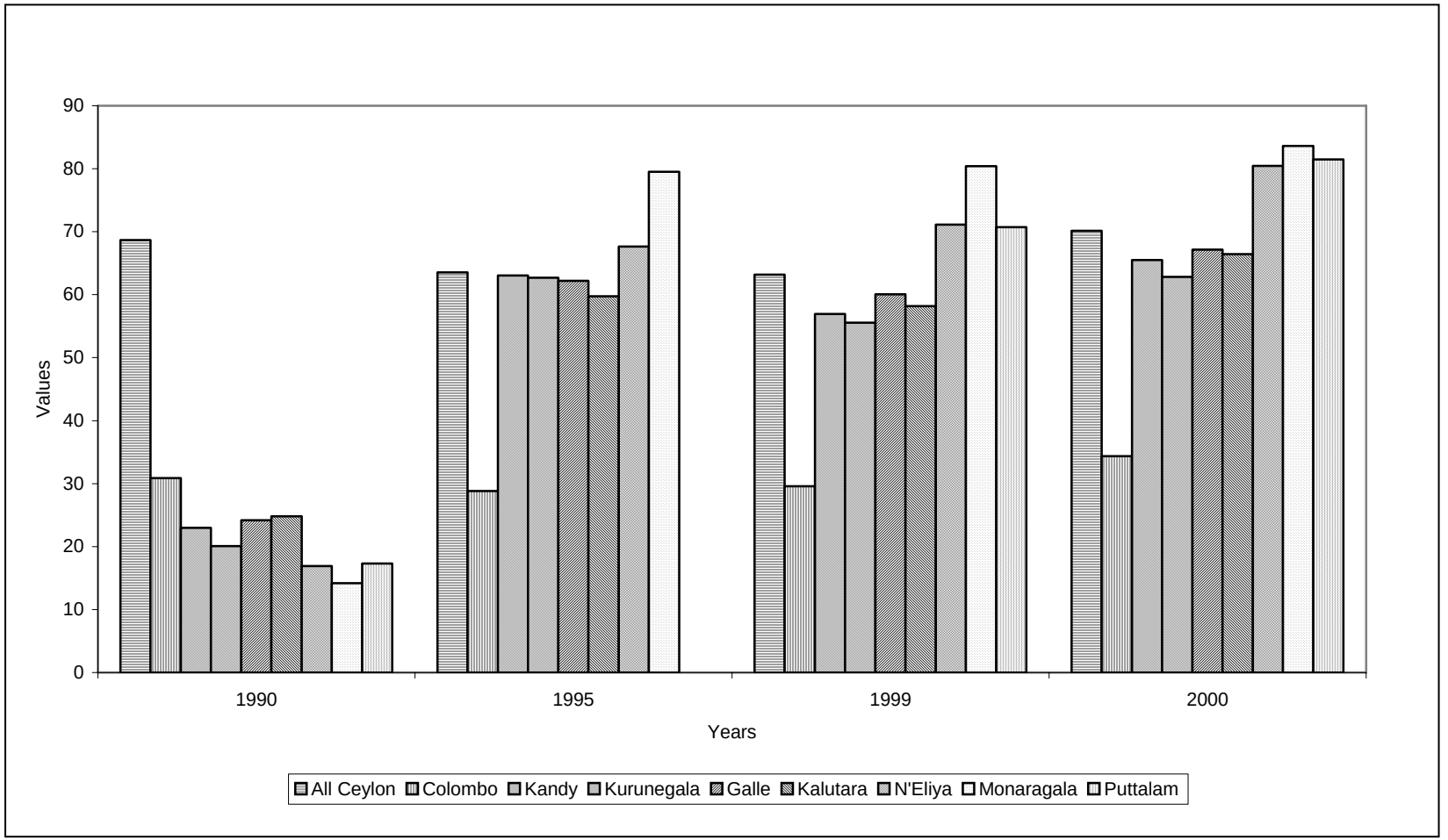
Source: Department of Examinations, Colombo

Figure 2
GCE O/L English Results – Ordinary Pass



Source: Department of Examinations, Colombo

Figure 3
GCE O/L English Results - Failure



Source: Department of Examinations, Colombo

These results indicate that the opportunities for learning continue to be distributed very unequally with a much greater concentration of resources in Colombo and a few other urban centres and also that the facilities in remote rural areas are either very poor or non-existent.

It is the above situation that encourages parents to send their children to Colombo for education. Interviews with personnel at English language institutes revealed that pupils attending their classes come from a distance and they are most probably children from not so poor families as travelling, accommodation and fees amount to considerable expense. Of course, some courses such as those offered by the British Council and private colleges like the Royal Institute in Colombo are far more expensive than those offered by state funded universities or some private tutories which usually accommodate not so affluent children.

The conclusion we can draw is that children all over the country today feel the need to acquire a good knowledge of English as the latter is a prerequisite for upward social mobility in the new liberal economic environment, dominated by big business firms and transnational corporations. This has contributed to the rapidly rising demand for language learning opportunities leading to a proliferation of English language classes. Yet, the real gainers of English knowledge are still heavily concentrated in Colombo and a few regional urban centres. These are by and large children from more privileged social backgrounds, as it is children who attend privileged schools who usually reach a higher level of language competency. It should also be noted that the tendency on the part of affluent parents to send their children to private schools, colleges and international schools is reinforced by their desire to give their children an English education. Instruction in these institutions are offered in the English medium. As will be discussed later, enrolments in these institutions have risen rapidly over the last decade or two.

IT and computer education is another area that has shown a remarkable expansion after economic liberalization. This is understandable in view of the fact that many institutions have begun to use computers and IT for various purposes. The use of computers is common even in state institutions today. E-mail too is becoming quite common and many E-mail and internet service providers are functioning in the country. The banking sector is perhaps the most highly computerized area of business activity. All these and related developments have impressed upon the country's youth that familiarity with computers coupled with a good working knowledge of English is a sure way to find lucrative employment in a changing economy which is increasingly integrated into the global system. The increasing use of computers even in state institutions for such simple functions as word processing sends out a clear signal to the younger generation that computer literacy is as important as educational qualifications when competing for employment, even in the state sector.

Unlike English language competency which can be objectively assessed by student performance at island-wide examinations, there are no similar objective measures to assess the availability and access to opportunities for acquiring computing and IT skills in the country. Nor have there been any

national surveys on the subject. Therefore our understanding of the subject has to be based on data collected from several institutions offering instruction in IT and computing. *Table 11* provides data on enrolment in several selected institutions.

Table 11

Student Enrolment at Selected Computer Training Institutes 1981 - 2000

Year	Number of Students							
	DP Aides	**Tec Sri Lanka**	**IDM**	**Singapore Informatics**	**ICT**	**NYSC**	**Aquinas**	**Total**
1981	28	-	-	-	80	-	-	108
1982	-	280	-	-	-	-	-	280
1984	-	-	110	-	-	-	-	110
1985	480	-	-	-	860	-	33	1373
1987	-	-	-	-	-	-	39	39
1990	2100	3800	-	-	-	-	83	5983
1991	-	-	-	400	-	-	-	40
1992	-	-	-	-	-	-	69	69
1994	-	-	-	-	-	-	197	197
1995	5033	9200	4200	-	-	124	-	18557
1996	-	-	-	4800	420	108	154	5482
1997	-	-	-	-	-	119	-	119
1998	-	15300	-	-	-	118	193	15611
1999	-	-	-	-	-	125	-	125
2000	11500	27000	13500	-	1800	132	200	54132

Source: Data based on information collected from the relevant institutions

Notes: * IDM - Institute of Data Management (Pvt) Ltd.

* NYSC - National Youth Services Council, Maharagama.

* ICT - Institute of Computer Technology, University of Colombo.

Given the fact that there are very wide gaps between rural and urban areas in the country in terms of income distribution, educational facilities and social infrastructure, it is reasonable to assume that the opportunities for acquiring IT and computer skills are also very unequally distributed. Most schools in the country do not have computer laboratories, and in rural areas there are no institutions providing computer learning opportunities. Particularly in urban centres, even though many upper middle and upper class homes have personal computers often with e-mail and internet facilities, many rural homes do not even have electricity, let alone telephone connections both of which are prerequisites for e-mail and internet facilities. Thus, non-affluent children even in urban areas may attend not so expensive computing classes providing a basic knowledge about common computer application programmes, but would have little opportunity for hands on learning at home or in schools. This, coupled with their poor English knowledge places them in a distinctly disadvantaged position in the emerging private sector-dominated employment market.

As mentioned earlier, the demand for IT and computer training has increased rapidly over the last two decades. This is also evident from student enrolment data available from selected training institutes

covered by the present study. These are all based in Colombo and usually cater to higher income groups as the course fees are considerable. As is evident from *Table 11*, student enrolment at some well established institutions like the TEC, IDM and Singapore Informatics have increased rapidly over the last two years. For instance, in 2000, total enrolments in the seven institutions from where the information was collected have exceeded 50,000. This is undoubtedly a very large number for a single year.

4.0 Shift of Curriculum Policy in Favour of English and Computer Technology at Secondary Level

The developments outlined in the previous section of the paper have provoked a national debate about the importance of English and computing in the process of human resource development in the country. Since employers are already favouring youth with computing skills and English language ability, the position that many have almost fatalistically taken is that more and more opportunities should be created within the school system to provide such training. It did not take long before the government adopted it as state policy.

Post-independence Sri Lanka did not witness a consistent state policy on English education that stood the test of time. State policy has undergone many shifts over time. The policy adopted in the early 1950's was to commence compulsory teaching of English from Grade 3 onwards; by 1960, the year of commencement was shifted to Grade 5. By the early 1970's, this was shifted further to Grade 6. This policy did not change till the late 1970's when Regional Boards of Education were empowered to commence English teaching in earlier grades depending on the availability of resources. The next policy shift took place in 1981 when it was again decided to commence English teaching from Grade 3. This policy did not undergo any significant change till the mid 1990's when as part of general education reforms, a decision was taken to use English in Grade 1 for communication purposes though formal teaching was to commence in Grade 3. It was also decided to introduce English as a core subject at the GCE Ordinary Level while a general English paper was introduced for GCE Advanced Level.

The most recent policy changes introduced by the government are based on the assumption that there is an urgent need to raise the level of English language competency of the younger generation, in particular those who sit for national examinations. The greater emphasis placed on the need for training English language teachers points to the official recognition of the fact that there is a dearth of competent teachers in the country. On the other hand, the most recent decision by the government to allow English instruction in some subjects at the GCE Advanced Level is likely to expose the wide resource gap that exists between the privileged public schools and the overwhelming majority of public schools in the country. Government policy on IT and computer education adopted as late as 2001 does not appear to be an unambiguous statement on the issue. A policy document published by the Ministry of Education in 2001 affirms the government's commitment to promoting IT education in schools:

> "The national policy on information technology in school education (NAPITSE) affirms the commitment of the government to providing the state of the art knowledge in IT to Sri Lanka's younger generation to prepare them to face the challenges in the 21st century. As a whole, the nation will achieve computer literacy thus equalling the achievements in general literacy and numeracy. As the world develops further, the most lucrative employment opportunities will be in the IT sector. The government in implementing education reforms is committed to preparing the younger generation for the eventual leap into IT revolution, which is daily unravelling itself " (Ministry of Education, National Policy on IT in school education, 2001 September, page 3).

Given the resources and other constraints already mentioned, the implementation of such a national policy is going to be much harder than its official adoption. In fact, when one looks at the data on the establishment of school computer centres throughout the country over the last several years, it is not difficult to imagine how daunting a task the implementation of the national policy could be (See *Table 12*).

Table 12

School Computer Centres by Province

Province	No. of Computer Centres	No. of Students 1994 - 1997			
		1994	1995	1996	1997
North-Central Province	6	1681	1275	1261	1891
Central Province	8	1018	1095	1571	1919
Southern Province	9	950	875	2098	3896
Sabaragamuwa Province	8	323	720	277	314
Western Province	23	675	887	2720	6926
Uva Province	7	0	667	1369	1128
North-Western Province	6	0	0	515	1781
North-Eastern Province	5	0	0	0	569
Sri Lanka	64	4647	5519	9811	18424

Source: Data files on Computer Centres 2001, Ministry of Education, Colombo

From 1994 onwards, nearly 70 school computer centres have been established in different parts of the country providing access to computers for approximately 18,424 students. Given the fact that there are over 10,000 government schools in the country with a student population of over 400,000, it is not difficult to imagine the magnitude of the materials and human resources required to reach even the school population, let alone the entire nation, the population of which currently stands at over 19 million. On the other hand, even market driven, profit oriented institutions surveyed as part of the present study have already recorded a student population of over 50,000. The fact of the matter however is that the latter naturally caters to only those who can pay for their services.

As mentioned before, the most recent shifts in government policy with respect to English and IT reflect a widely held belief among policy-makers that school leavers in the country in general will find it easier to fit into the changing economy if they are computer literate and have a good knowledge of English. In other words, the high rate of unemployment among educated youth is at least partly attributed to deficiencies in these fields. It is true that today, people with such competencies find employment in the expanding private sector. In fact, the demand for such people has been more than fulfilled by privileged state schools, private schools and international schools. It is, however difficult to comprehend how several hundred thousand school leavers could find such employment even if they possess IT and English language skills, unless the economy expands rapidly within a short period of time.

Almost after fifty years since the adoption of Swabhasha as the medium of instruction in schools, there has been a serious re-evaluation in recent years of English as a potential medium of instruction at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Many people argue that the knowledge of the English language among students, teachers and administrators is poor because school and university education has been in Swabhasha. It is strongly felt by many that the only way to raise English knowledge is to re-introduce English as the medium of instruction in schools and universities. This, however remains a highly controversial issue. Those who are against the introduction of English as a medium of instruction would argue that this is not necessary and children will learn English if their schools are provided with the necessary facilities to teach English from the primary school onwards. In fact, the main obstacle today is the lack of resources such as effective teachers, good text books, language laboratories and opportunities for practical use. Moreover, most of the school teachers who number about 200,000 today can hardly speak even a few words of English let alone being able to teach in the English medium. The time, effort and resources required to re-train or replace them would be so great that it is hard to imagine how this could be done in a socially just manner. The government's decision in 2001 to allow schools with the resources to conduct Advanced Level classes in English is likely to reinforce the existing inequalities by adding a few more to the small number of English medium students studying at private and international schools.

The issue of the medium of instruction at tertiary level has been more complex. Even though the Swabhasha policy was adopted in respect of the universities as well, certain faculties continued to teach in both Swabhasha and English. This has been true of the Medical, Engineering, Law and Science faculties. Since most of the teachers in these faculties are bilingual, they could teach in both languages depending on the situation. For instance, in the first year, students are taught largely in their own language, gradually shifting to English in later years. On the other hand, in faculties such as Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, teaching has been mostly in Swabhasha, particularly at undergraduate level.

Even those faculties providing instruction in both English and Swabhasha have not been able to raise the standard of English of their graduates due to the poor knowledge of English their students have

when they come to the university. Though some of the students fully overcome this barrier while studying in the university, the knowledge of English of many others remain much to be desired. This no doubt is a product of a range of complex circumstances such as their social background, inadequate facilities to teach English in the university etc.

5.0 Franchise and Access Arrangements with Foreign Universities

As mentioned earlier, Sri Lanka's university system which is almost entirely state-funded has not expanded at a rate that is in line with the increasing demand for university places. The result has been that many who qualify at the GCE Advanced Level examination so as to enter the university are left out each year with no prospect of pursuing higher studies. It is against this background that some commentators have argued that the private sector should be encouraged to establish universities to accommodate those who cannot find places in state universities. Their opponents however advance the argument that private universities will charge high fees and therefore cater to the rich, leading to a polarization of poorly endowed state universities and well equipped private universities. In response to this equity argument, proponents of private universities express the view that the rich will send their children abroad if such facilities are not available locally. In fact, after economic liberalization, those who derive large incomes from businesses, professional practice etc. have been looking for opportunities to send their children abroad. Many agencies have come up in and around Colombo to cater to this growing demand. It is reported that many western embassies have been issuing hundreds of student visas to Sri Lankans going abroad to pursue higher studies.

Since the state policy has not yet changed to allow degree awarding private universities in Sri Lanka, the demand for university places overseas has been increasing each year. Many western universities have taken advantage of this situation by visiting Sri Lanka to hold orientation seminars and enrolment drives in Colombo. The media often carries advertisements notifying such seminars which are often held in Five-Star hotels in the city. Several agencies established for the purpose of sending students to foreign universities have reported increasing applications over the years. A number of private tertiary colleges established in Sri Lanka after economic liberalization have entered into franchise arrangements with overseas universities, with the twin objectives of providing a half-way house to students going abroad on the one hand and circumventing the government rule prohibiting the award of local degrees by private colleges on the other. These institutions allow students to complete part of their degree programme in Sri Lanka and spend a year or so in a foreign university to complete the balance and obtain the degree. This has become a popular option for many students who either do not want to spend the entire period abroad or cannot afford to live in a foreign country for an extended period of time. There are also other advantages of such franchise arrangements.

Table 13

Background Information on some Selected "Access Arrangement" Consultants for Australian Universities

Name of Institution	Year of establishment	Universities & Institutions with Collaboration	Courses	No. of students
01. International Education Consultants (Wellawatte)	1990	1. Queensland University of Technology *Universities* 2. University of Western Australia 3. Murdoch University & Edward College *TAFE**	Arts, Commerce, Economics, Education, Law, Medicine *Degree* Art Design, IT, Nursing *Diploma*	100 students up to now
02. Australian Education Consultants (Panadura)	1992	1. Monash University 2. R.M.I.T. University *Universities* 3. Deakin University 4. Western Sydney College 5. Tegolors College 6. Monash College *TAFE* 7. TAFE New South Wales, Australia *TAFE*	Law, Medicine, Arts, Education, Commerce *Degree* Electronic Commerce, IT, Accounting, Finance & Banking *Diploma*	50-60 students per semester
03. C&N Education Consultants (Nugegoda)	1994	1. University of Melbourne 2. University of Monash *Universities* 3. Latrobe University 4. Victoria University 5. Box Hill, Melbourne 6. Chishom, Melbourne *TAFE*	Medicine, Law, Commerce, Accountancy, Marine Science *Degree* NMIT, MIBT, CIT *Diploma*	162 students

Source: Records provided by the relevant institutions

Note: * TAFE – Pre-University Technical College

Even though these courses are conducted in English, it is easy even for non-English speaking students to cope with the teaching programmes which are conducted by local lecturers. Thus, by the time they reach their third or fourth year which they normally spend abroad, even students who begin with a very limited knowledge of English usually reach a level of competence which enable them to function in a foreign university.

The fact that the students are eventually gaining a foreign qualification with even a brief exposure to a foreign university environment is no doubt highly valued by students and their parents alike. It is widely believed that foreign qualifications at least in certain fields such as IT are more valued than local qualifications, particularly in the private sector. It may also be true that some of the local colleges may not have the facilities and expertise to conduct advanced courses locally and sending students to a link university for later years may perhaps be a desirable thing to do.

It is noteworthy that local private colleges that have established franchise arrangements with foreign universities have done so in several selected areas such as IT, Management, Economics and Finance. It is also significant that many of the franchise arrangements are with British universities. A few have established franchise arrangements with American and Australian universities.

As mentioned earlier, a number of agencies sending students to overseas universities play an important part in the local higher education scene today. Many prospective students and their parents frequent these agencies, which are mostly located in and around Colombo. These agencies usually act as local representatives for overseas universities. Since the British Council and the United States Educational Foundation function as providers of information about university programmes in the United Kingdom and the United States respectively, private educational agencies function as the agents of Australian Universities that do not have a corresponding 'official' body to represent them in Sri Lanka. It is also a fact that undergraduate education in Australia is cheaper than in the USA and the UK.

The British Council and the USEF have been functioning in Sri Lanka for several decades. After economic liberalization their role in Sri Lanka has undergone some significant change. In the past they were usually handling various scholarship and training programmes for exchange scholars, whereas today, when many western universities have begun to actively look for fee-paying overseas students, their role has become one of facilitation by providing various services such as language testing, dissemination of information to prospective students, and organizing orientation seminars. However, unlike the private agents, they are not functioning as agents for a fee or commission.

Almost all the private educational agencies have been established in Sri Lanka in the early 1990's. This is understandable in view of the fact that western universities began to promote their educational programmes overseas in the late 1980's. It is during the 1980's that the governments of the United Kingdom and Australia encouraged their universities to become market friendly by encouraging more fee-paying overseas students. This coincided with the liberalization of many hitherto state-dominated economies like Sri Lanka allowing affluent parents in these countries to spend money freely on overseas education.

Private educational agents have been sending students not only for university courses but also for non-university Diploma courses at college level. It is also noteworthy that their students have selected a wide range of fields such as Law, Medicine, Arts and Commerce. Data collected from three large educational agencies shows an increasing trend in student enrolment through such agencies over the last decade.

In the absence of detailed data about the students who make use of the franchise and access arrangements discussed above, it is not possible to give a breakdown of this category by their socio-economic background. To compensate for this obvious gap in the data, detailed interviews were conducted with key personnel associated with many agencies. These interviews confirmed that the students who make use of their facilities are from the middle, upper middle and upper class backgrounds. Many non-affluent middle class parents expect their children to be self-reliant when they are abroad by engaging in part time work, thereby reducing the financial burden on their families.

6.0 Marginal Decrease in Primary and Secondary Enrolments

Sri Lanka's birth rate has shown a significant decline over the last several decades. This should naturally reflect in school enrolment rates as the country had already achieved a very high level of enrolment at primary level. On the other hand, since school enrolment had not reached 100%, there was room for some improvement there as well. In fact, the 'no schooling' category of the population above school going age remained around 15% even in the early 1980's. By 1997, the rate had declined to about 8%, still short of universal school enrolment (See *Table 15*). Given the fact that non-school going children come from extremely marginalized backgrounds, the rate of enrolment is unlikely to reach 100% until such social and economic marginalization is eliminated. Nevertheless, falling birth rates should reflect in school enrolments.

Table 14

Student Enrolment by Gender 1963-1999

Pupils by Gender	1963	1965	1967	1969	1971	1982	1987	1993	1999
Male	1349867	1361440	1372396	1412429	1413629	1766713	1924965	2095615	2067287
Female	1132737	1194751	1216106	1260670	1304090	1717948	1908194	2077282	2066739
Total	2482613	2556191	2588502	2673099	2717719	3484661	3833159	4172897	4134026

Sources: School Census of Ceylon 1973, Ministry of Education, Colombo
School Census of Sri Lanka 1987,1993 and 1999, Ministry of Education, Colombo
Statistical Abstract of Ceylon 1967-68 and 1973, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo
Statistical Abstract of Sri Lanka 1985, Department of Census and Statistics, Colombo

It seems that Sri Lanka reached the peak of school enrolment by the mid 1990's when it reached 4,172,897 in 1993. Since then it has shown a decline. It decreased to 4,134,026 by 1999 and is unlikely to increase again even if those children who would not have otherwise enrolled are somehow admitted to schools. This is due to the fact that the declining trend in the birth rate is unlikely to be reversed given the prevailing socio-economic circumstances in the country.

Increasing school enrolments over the last several decades despite widespread poverty in rural areas indicate a greater equalization of enrolment at primary level. Increasing enrolment of children from poor and marginalized communities no doubt contributed a great deal to the rapidly falling rate of non-enrolment over the last several decades. This may be as much due to improving levels of living as to state assistance of various sorts extended to school children such as free text books, school uniforms and a mid-day meal. Increasing recognition of the value of education as an avenue of socio-economic advancement in the wider society has no doubt played an important role as well.

Available data also shows that children have continued to stay longer in school over the last several decades. For instance, only 9.6% of the population reached secondary level in 1953, whereas by 1997, those who reached secondary level constituted 35.5%. Correspondingly, those who reached only primary level have declined from nearly 47% in 1953 to about 35.5% in 1997. Moreover, the

proportion of those who went beyond secondary level has also shown a steady increase over the years. Economic liberalization has not affected school enrolment, to any significant degree (See *Table 15*).

Table 15

The Rate of First, Second and Third Level Education Enrolment

Educational Attainment %	Survey Period						
	1953	**1963**	**1973**	**1978-79**	**1981-82**	**1986-87**	**1996-97**
No Schooling	41.8	26.8	22.9	14.9	15.1	11.8	8.6
Primary	46.8	45.5	43.2	43.8	42.9	41.1	35.2
Secondary	9.6	22.7	27.3	29.8	29.2	32.1	35.5
Tertiary	1.8	5.0	6.6	11.5	12.8	15.0	20.7

Source: Report on Consumer Finance and Socio Economic Survey 1996-97, Central Bank of Sri Lanka

7.0 Enrolment of Students in Private and International Schools

Earlier the trends in enrolment in the state sector as well as in the officially registered private schools before and after economic liberalization were discussed at some length. In the present section, attention is focused on enrolment in international schools which were established after economic liberalization.

The words 'international school' is a very recent addition to the vocabulary of the ordinary members of the public in Sri Lanka. The Board of Investment Act enacted in 1978 provided for the establishment of firms engaged in the provision of services such as health and education. Educational institutions established under the Act are not regulated by legislation governing the educational field in such areas as curricula, testing, medium of instruction etc. In other words, international schools established under the BOI Act could have their own curricula, medium of instruction and prepare children for examinations conducted by testing authorities in other countries. For instance, students in international schools in general sit for GCE (O/L) and (A/L) examinations conducted by British authorities. Some of their students may sit local examinations as private candidates, if they so wish.

Since the establishment of international schools, their enrolments have been rising steadily. A survey of the international schools in and around Colombo conducted as part of the present study revealed that the number of students enrolled in these schools increased rapidly, from a few hundred in the late 1980's to nearly ten thousand by 2001. If we take all international schools in Colombo and other regional towns in the country at present, the number must certainly be much higher.

Table 16

Student Population in Sri Lanka 1969-1997

Grade/Year	Years													
	1969		1972		1983		1986		1988		1991		1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lower Kindergarten/Year 1	NA		NA		193040	181834	217206	203880	216880	20288	212594	200051	186702	177604
Grade 1/Year 2	782961		120454		196448	181532	210567	196842	227017	210017	218180	201260	181424	169926
Grade 2/Year 3			403415		190817	176189	207564	191921	219408	204764	219010	202004	191646	179311
Grade 3/Year 4	888893		347913		189716	174950	194586	180122	203408	189842	218130	202061	186576	173275
Grade 4/Year 5			317181		171430	158405	179887	166845	191706	179743	209309	195553	186275	175012
Grade 5/Year 6			282468		157059	149737	162501	154662	170509	162795	192853	184385	183507	173273
Grade 6/Year 7	398802		241368		147000	144924	146803	144335	152001	147724	170126	167182	179088	175417
Grade7/Year 8			203459		124265	123718	127866	128644	136870	137366	152190	154559	169802	169498
Grade 8/Year 9	146166		194050		104948	109259	115423	120647	120851	126585	133904	138177	154425	160268
Grade 9/Year 10	NA	NA	NA	NA	88425	96019	105351	114369	104867	111585	115167	122848	124241	151835
Grade 9 Science	297750		46152		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 9 Arts			95243		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 9 Commerce			28087		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Science			61187		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Arts			122444		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Commerce			36609		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10/Year 11	NA	NA	NA	NA	73369	83660	151207	173740	98774	109539	102411	112197	129565	146667
Grade 10 /year 11 Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	51011	61891	NM	NM	67259	79302	52528	63725	74201	80857
Grade 11/Year 12 Science	44740		7541		4514	3071	10894	9369	11780	9367	11167	9045	11004	9220
Grade 11/Year 12 Arts			12564		4046	9593	8428	18929	10175	21337	11981	26616	18452	36169
Grade 11/Year 12 Commerce			1566		5257	5812	8391	9718	8045	8687	11651	12110	12108	11309
Grade 12/Year 13 Science			10864		16529	15450	18540	17549	10877	9357	9695	7847	8949	6668
Grade 12/Year 13 Arts			15582		12166	31373	8591	22718	7247	17281	8012	18526	12793	28367
Grade 12/Year 13 Commerce			1660		9563	12647	9153	12069	7632	8578	10116	10364	11720	10839
Grade 12/Year 13 Science Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NM	NM	6021	6306	6668	6279	6895	5483
Grade 12/Year 13 Arts Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NM	NM	4009	10133	4929	12159	8267	15760
Grade 12/Year 13 Commerce Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NM	NM	4195	5343	4920	5724	7437	6427
Special Education	NM		NM		NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	NM	1670	1176
Total	2559310		2549807		1740311	1720064	1882958	1866359	1979531	1958531	2075539	2052672	2064747	2059361

Sources: School Census of Ceylon 1973, Ministry of Education, Colombo

School Census of Sri Lanka 1983,1986,1988,1991 and 1997, Ministry of Education, Colombo

Table 17

Advanced Level Student Population in Sri Lanka 1969-1997

Grade/year	Years													
	1969		1972		1983		1986		1988		1991		1997	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Grade 9 Science	297750		46152		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 9 Arts			95243		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 9 Commerce			28087		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Science			61187		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Arts			122444		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 10 Commerce			36609		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Grade 11/Year 12 Science	44740		7541		4514	3071	10894	9369	11780	9367	11167	9045	11004	9220
Grade 11/Year 12 Arts			12564		4046	9593	8428	18929	10175	21337	11981	26616	18452	36169
Grade 11/Year 12 Commerce			1566		5257	5812	8391	9718	8045	8687	11651	12110	12108	11309
Grade 12/Year 13 Science			10864		16529	15450	18540	17549	10877	9357	9695	7847	8949	6668
Grade 12/Year 13 Arts			15582		12166	31373	8591	22718	7247	17281	8012	18526	12793	28367
Grade 12/Year 13 Commerce			1660		9563	12647	9153	12069	7632	8578	10116	10364	11720	10839
Grade 12/Year 13 Science Repeaters	* NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	* NM	NM	6021	6306	6668	6279	6895	5483
Grade 12/Year 13 Arts Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NM	NM	4009	10133	4929	12159	8267	15760
Grade 12/Year 13 Commerce Repeaters	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NM	NM	4195	5343	4920	5724	7437	6427
Total of all Grades/Years	2559310		2549807		1740311	1720064	1882958	1866359	1979531	1958531	2075539	2052672	2064747	2059361

Sources: School Census of Ceylon 1973, Ministry of Education, Colombo

School Census of Sri Lanka 1983,1986,1988,1991 and 1997, Ministry of Education, Colombo

Notes: * NA Not applicable

* NM Not mentioned

Many of the international schools in the country have been newly established under the BOI Act. It is also noteworthy that some older private schools that pre-date economic liberalization have also been converted into international schools in recent years. The motivation for such conversion might have been two-fold. Firstly, the conversion would have been made use of to avoid being regulated by legislation that covers national schools. Secondly, the owners of these schools would have noted the demand for international schools which provide instruction in the English medium, have their own curricula and prepare students for international examinations.

Of the large number of international schools that have been established after economic liberalization, only a few in fact cater to the expatriate community. Even they are not exclusive to foreign students. Most of the schools in fact do not have foreign children. As part of the present study, we collected data from ten schools and found that they differ considerably from each other in terms of student numbers, the number of years of schooling they offer and the fees charged from students. *Table 18* gives data on Admission Fees and Average Term Fees charged by the selected international schools.

Table 18

Admission and Average Term Fees of Some Selected Colombo Based International Schools

School No.	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
Admission Fee	Rs. 35,000	Rs. 50,000	Rs. _	Rs. 60,000	Rs. 50,000	Rs. 20,000	Rs. 55,000	Rs. 35,000	Rs. 35,000	Rs. 15,000
* Average Term Fees	11,600	9150	21,000	40,000	14,700	8,500	8,100	8,000	8000	8300

*Average from Primary Grades onwards

As is evident from the above data, there is a wide variation in the fee structure; the highest term fee is as much as five times the lowest fee of Rs.8,000. Therefore, it is obvious that these schools do not cater to a single social stratum. While the school charging fees in U.S. dollars from students clearly caters mostly to the expatriate community, other schools attract pupils from a range of social strata. It is however difficult to figure out *who* could afford to send their children to *which* international school, simply by looking at the term fees charged. There are other important factors that play a part. For instance, even when the term fee is as low as 8,000.00 rupees, other expenses involved such as transport, uniforms, food, facilities fees, admission fees etc. together may amount to a considerable sum, making it difficult for parents who could otherwise have afforded to pay the term fee, to send their children to that school. It is also noteworthy that many parents have more than one child of school-going age, making their actual family expenditure on education much more than the term fee for a single child.

In view of what is outlined above, it is reasonable to conclude that it is only parents belonging to the middle class and above who can afford to send their children to international schools. If one leaves out the extremely expensive school charging fees in US dollars, there is only one school, which can

be classified as 'upper class'. It is located in one of the most residential areas in the city of Colombo indicating that it attracts children from the vicinity, though it is true that some students come from far in chauffeur-driven cars. While there are two schools which appear to cater to children from the upper middle class, the rest no doubt cater to mostly middle class families. These include the children of small businessmen in and around Colombo though it is likely that some children from the provinces also attend these schools. It is difficult to imagine how a lower middle class family deriving a fixed monthly salary from such activities as teaching, clerical work or nursing could afford to send their children to any of the international schools covered by the present survey. It would not be easy for them to raise the funds needed to pay even the admission fee, which is a non-recurring payment.

8.0 Entry Qualifications in the Teaching Profession

Table 19

Teacher Qualifications 1970-1997

Qualifications	Year /No. Of Teachers							
	1970	**1974**	**1976**	**1980**	**1984**	**1988**	**1994**	**1997**
Graduate Science	0.47	0.58	0.62	0.80	1.01	1.30	1.10	13.1
All other Graduates	3.49	4.66	4.88	6.63	8.34	10.79	11.37	
Specialized Trained Teachers	2.17	5.23	6.56	-	-	-	-	-
Trained Teachers	22	21.24	22.7	26.51	29.40	28.51	22.58	24.62
Diploma Teachers (Science & Mathematics)	-	0.07	0.07	0.06	0.09	0.08	0.03	-
Certificate/Diploma English or Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.15	1.15
Other	20.24	18.1	15.14	15.17	10.29	8.20	13.31	9.88
Total Government Teachers	48.46	50	50	49.49	49.15	48.90	48.42	48.85
Other School (eg. Private Teachers	3.17	-	-	-	-	2.19	2.0	2.28
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Annual Reports 1981, 1985, 1996 and 1999, Central Bank of Sri Lanka, Colombo

The last hypothesis advanced with respect to the changing educational structure in Sri Lanka was that there has been a rise in the entry qualifications to the teaching profession. Data available on the professional background of teachers in the state sector indicates that the proportion of qualified teachers has increased from about 58% in 1970 to about 80% by 1997 (See *Table 19*). The proportion of teachers with university degrees has risen from about 8% to 27% over the same period. The practice of recruiting persons without any specialized training either from a teacher training college or from a university has disappeared, except under exceptional circumstances where voluntary teachers are recruited until they obtain the necessary qualifications. A decision by President Premadasa's government in the early 1990's to recruit 25,000 trainee teachers increased the proportion of untrained teachers from a mere 16% in 1988 to about 27% by 1994. The size of this category has come down since then.

In view of the increasing enrolments in the science streams at secondary level, the proportion of science teachers appears to be too low; they constituted only 2.2% in the mid 1990's. The same holds true for teachers with qualifications in English. They constituted 2.3% in 1997. In view of the increasing desire among pupils to learn English, this is no doubt a major gap. Though there might be a few graduate teachers who might have done English as a subject for their degree programme, they are more likely to be in urban, privileged schools as they usually come from more affluent urban backgrounds.

9.0 Public Investments in Education

Table 19 gives data on educational expenditure in the country from 1973 onwards. Given the fact that public sector educational institutions have dominated the educational scene in the country in the decades following political independence, the level of public expenditure on education is an indication of the extent to which the public education sector provides opportunities for children and youth. As the data in the Table indicates, investment in the educational sector has lagged far behind the other areas. For instance, between 1973 and 1999, government recurrent expenditure has increased over sixty-fold while the recurrent expenditure in the educational sector has increased only nineteen-fold during the same period. The situation with respect to capital expenditure in the education sector has been worse. When the total government capital expenditure increased over hundred-fold between 1973 and 1999, in the education sector, the increase has been just nineteen-fold. It should however be noted that an increasing share of public expenditure has been diverted into Defence since the early 1980's owing to the escalating political violence and the ethnic conflict in the country.

While it is important to note that the private education sector has expanded substantially after economic liberalization, the setback in the public education sector in terms of capital and recurrent expenditure cannot be explained solely in terms of the growth of private educational institutions. While the latter emerged in the urban centres, the above setback would have adversely affected educational opportunities in rural areas.

Table 20

Public Investments in Education

Education Expenditure	**Nature of Expenditure**	**1973**	**1974**	**1979**	**1980**	**1986**	**1987**	**1992**	**1999**
	Recurrent	570.4	602.2	1144.4	1390.5	3998.4	4314	5070.0	10933
	Capital	40.6	33.5	137.4	259.4	1139.9	1259	2501.7	7402
Total Expenditure	Recurrent	3840.0	3918.6	10953.0	11346.2	37000.4	39000	86268.4	230504
	Capital	1284.7	1438.1	7333.5	10772.0	22989.4	27606.7	71306.7	135881
Education Expenditure as a % of Total Expenditure	Recurrent	14.85%	15.36%	10.44%	12.25%	10.8%	11.65%	5.8%	4.74%
	Capital	3.16%	2.32%	1.87%	2.4%	4.95%	4.56%	3.5%	5.44%

Source: Annual Reports 1973,1979,1986,1992,1999, Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

10.0 Conclusion

This report has examined the shifts in the educational structure of Sri Lanka following economic liberalization. Different dimensions of the shifts were examined in a number of sections.

The analysis of available data leads to the conclusion that increasing student enrolments in private schools after economic liberalization only partly reflect the strong tendency towards greater reliance on private institutions for educational advancement. While the affluent parents tend to rely more and more on private and international schools, even not so affluent parents continue spending on their children's education by way of private tuition. Pupils preparing for national examinations, particularly in urban areas, often keep away from schools to attend private tuition classes. Even children from not so affluent homes could benefit from mass tuition classes conducted by some popular teachers.

Available secondary data points to the fact that demand for IT and computer training has increased rapidly over the last two decades. Institutes are mostly offering instructions in these fields based in Colombo and usually cater to higher income groups, as the course fees are considerable. It is evident from data that student enrolments at some well established institutions have increased rapidly over the last two years. For instance, in 2000, total enrolments in the seven institutions from where the information was collected, have exceeded 50,000. This is undoubtedly a very large number for a single year.

Even those faculties providing instruction in both English and Swabhasha have not been able to raise the standard of English of their graduates due to the poor knowledge of English their students have when they come to the university. Though some of the students fully overcome this barrier while studying in the university, the knowledge of English of many others remain much to be desired. This no doubt is a product of a range of complex circumstances such as their social background, inadequate facilities to teach English in schools and the university etc.

In the absence of detailed data about the students who make use of franchise and access arrangements discussed above, it is not possible to give a breakdown of this category by their socio-economic background. To compensate for this obvious gap in the data, detailed interviews were conducted with key personnel associated with many agencies. These interviews confirmed that the students who make use of their facilities are from the middle, upper middle and upper class backgrounds. Many non-affluent middle class parents expect their children to be self-reliant when they are abroad by engaging in part time work, thereby reducing the financial burden on their families.

Available data also shows that children have continued to stay longer in school over the last several decades. For instance, only 9.6% of the population reached secondary level in 1953, whereas by 1997, those who reached secondary level constituted 35.5%. Correspondingly, those who reached primary level have declined from nearly 47% in 1953 to about 35.5% in 1997. Moreover, the

proportion of those who went beyond secondary level has also shown a steadily increasing trend over the years. Economic liberalization has not affected school enrolment to any significant degree.

In view of what is outlined above, it is reasonable to conclude that it is only parents belonging to the middle class and above who can afford to send their children to international schools. If one leaves out the extremely expensive school charging fees in US dollars, there is only one school, which can be classified as 'upper class'. It is also located in one of the most residential areas in the city of Colombo indicating that it attracts children from the vicinity, though it is true that some students come from far in chauffeur driven cars. While there are two schools which appear to cater to children from the upper middle class, the rest no doubt cater to mostly middle class families. These include the children of small businessmen in and around Colombo, though it is likely that some children from the provinces also attend these schools. It is difficult to imagine how a lower middle class family deriving a fixed monthly salary from such activities as teaching, clerical work or nursing could afford to send their children to any of the international schools covered by the present study. It would not be easy for them to raise the funds needed to pay even the admission fee, which is a non recurring payment.

In view of the increasing enrolments in science streams at secondary level, the proportion of science teachers appears to be too low; they constituted only 2.2% in the mid 1990's. The same holds true for teachers with qualifications in English. They constituted 2.3% in 1997. In view of the increasing desire among pupils to learn English, this is no doubt a major gap. Though there might be a few graduate teachers who might have done English as a subject for their degree programme, they are more likely to be in urban, privileged schools.

While it is important to note that the private education sector has expanded substantially after economic liberalization, the setback in the public education sector in terms of capital and recurrent expenditure cannot be explained solely in terms of the growth of private educational institutions. While the latter emerged in the urban centres, the above setback would have adversely affected educational opportunities in rural areas, with serious equity implications.

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1. Special issue of the *Journal of Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice,* Carfax publishers, Volume **7**, No **3**, 2000 on the theme 'Globalisation, Qualifications and Livelihoods' Editor Angela W Little

Contents:

Globalisation, Qualifications and Livelihoods: towards a research agenda
Angela W. Little

Globalisation: an annotated bibliography for the readers of Assessment in Education
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Economic Liberalisation, Qualifications and Livelihoods in Sri Lanka
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