

Globalisation Qualifications and Livelihoods



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Shifts in the Qualifications 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 4, by Siri Hettige of the University of Colombo, examines shifts in the qualifications 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 qualifications structure in the period prior to liberalisation. This study is based mainly on analyses of secondary sources and interviews.

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

AAT	<i>Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka</i>
ACBT	<i>Australian College of Business and Technology</i>
B. Com	<i>Bachelor of Commerce</i>
B.Sc	<i>Bachelor of Science</i>
BA	<i>Bachelor of Arts</i>
BBA	<i>Bachelor of Business Administration</i>
BS	<i>Bachelor Science</i>
CIMA	<i>Chartered Institute of Management Accountants</i>
GAQ	<i>General Arts Qualifying</i>
GCE	<i>General Certificate of Education</i>
A Level	<i>Advanced Level</i>
O Level	<i>Ordinary Level</i>
GQLSRI	<i>Globalization, Qualifications and Livelihoods, Sri Lanka</i>
ICMA	<i>Institute of Cost and Management Accountants</i>
ICT	<i>Institute of Computer Technology</i>
IDM	<i>Institute of Data Management</i>
IESL	<i>Institute of Engineers of Sri Lanka</i>
IT	<i>Information Technology</i>
ITS	<i>Institute of Technological Studies</i>
LLB	<i>Bachelor of Laws</i>
M. Com	<i>Master of Commerce</i>
MBA/MPA	<i>Master of Business Administration/Public Administration</i>
NAITA	<i>National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Board</i>
NCC	<i>National Computer Centre</i>
NIBM	<i>National Institute of Business Management</i>
NYSC	<i>National Youth Services Council</i>
P.G.	<i>Post-Graduate</i>
Ph.D	<i>Doctor of Philosophy</i>
RQ2	<i>Research Question 2 Report</i>
SLIDA	<i>Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration</i>
SLIPM	<i>Sri Lanka Institute of Plantation Management</i>
SLR	<i>Sri Lanka Rupee</i>
UGC	<i>University Grants Commission</i>
UK	<i>United Kingdom</i>
USA	<i>United States of America</i>

Executive Summary

This report has examined the changes in the qualifications structure in Sri Lanka over the last two decades, following economic liberalization which commenced in the late 1970's. The main hypothesis guiding the present enquiry has been that the process of economic liberalization has been accompanied by an expansion and diversification of the qualifications structure leading to a greater choice for qualification seekers, particularly in the fields that are in greater demand in a liberal economic environment. The new economic environment dominated by an expanding private sector, has led to an increase in the demand for a variety of qualifications from both qualification seekers as well as employers. Both these groups have acquired greater independence after economic liberalization in terms of the choices they make. The former in terms of the *type* of qualifications they wish to secure and the latter in terms of *what* qualifications to recognise for recruitment purposes. Relaxation of trade and exchange regulations that came into effect as part of the liberalization process has facilitated the diversification and expansion of the qualifications structure beyond national boundaries. These had led to an intensification of connections between domestic and international qualification bodies. However, the choice with regard to what qualifications one pursues in the new economic environment does not come one's way cheaply. Private qualification bodies, both domestic and foreign, are guided by market forces and offer their qualifications in the market for a price determined by many circumstances. It is against this background that the present study focuses attention on the changing qualifications structure in the country. The main findings of the research have been discussed under seventeen hypotheses. They are;

- a. Economic liberalization has led to a diversification of the qualifications structure in comparison to the pre-liberalization period,
- b. Middle and upper class youth have more opportunities than lower class youth to accumulate foreign qualifications in the liberal economic environment,
- c. Economic liberalization has led to an increase in the number and volume of vocational qualifications offered by vocational training institutions,
- d. An increase in the demand among middle and upper class youth for professional level qualifications from private sector institutions,
- e. An increase in the number of partnerships between foreign and domestic qualification bodies in IT and Management,
- f. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign professional qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy fields,
- g. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy,
- h. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign vocational qualification bodies in IT fields,
- i. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic vocational qualification bodies in IT fields,

- j. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign qualification assessment bodies in technology,
- k. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from national qualification assessment bodies in technology,
- l. An increase in the volume and type of academic qualifications offered by foreign based qualification bodies at secondary and tertiary education levels,
- m. An increase in the number of national institutions preparing students for foreign secondary and tertiary qualifications,
- n. An increase in overseas based academic qualification bodies offering services in Sri Lanka,
- o. An increase in employers' demand for qualifications in computing and communication skills in English,
- p. An increase in the number and type of English language qualification bodies,
- q. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from national English language institutions.

a. Economic liberalization has led to a diversification of the qualifications structure in comparison to the pre-liberalization period

The trend after economic liberalization has been towards a greater diversification of the qualifications structure in the country. This is evident to a certain extent from the data based on the newspaper survey that points to an increase and greater diversification of qualifications on offer in an increasingly commercialized qualifications market, particularly in the late 1990's.

b. Middle and upper class youth have more opportunities than lower class youth to accumulate foreign qualifications in the liberal economic environment

When we look at more professionally-oriented training and qualifications in such fields as Computing, Accountancy, Management, and Marketing, private and even foreign suppliers who charge significantly higher fees tend to dominate the market. This naturally favours youth from middle and upper class families. As some of the advertisements indicate, there is a rise in fees charged by qualification suppliers over the last two decades.

Fees charged by foreign and domestic suppliers for professional and higher qualifications are much more than for short-term training and lower level qualifications offered by numerous agencies and individuals at the lower end. For instance, qualifications in Computer Technology and English offered by well established institutions like the Informatics and the British Council are far more expensive than poor quality training and certificates offered by numerous training institutes in the same fields in and around Colombo. The former charge very high fees and, therefore, only affluent youth from middle and upper class families could secure such qualifications which carry more weight in the employment market. The same applies to numerous private colleges and up-market training centres that prepare students for foreign qualifications. This is evident from the data gathered from these institutions.

c. Economic liberalization has led to an increase in the number and volume of vocational qualifications offered by vocational training institutions

The data available from the four key national institutions responsible for vocational training in Sri Lanka shows a clear increase in enrolments in their various programmes after economic liberalization. As the same data shows, there is more than a four-fold increase in apprentices from 1977 to 1981, within a few years after the adoption of liberal economic policies. By 1995, the increase has been more than ten fold. Furthermore, when vocational apprenticeships are taken together with higher and lower level qualifications in crafts, technology and related fields, the trend towards growth and diversification is even stronger. When we compare the pre-liberalization data with post-liberalization figures, a sharp increase in certain areas is clearly evident i.e. building, electrical, fitting and fabricating, textiles, wood working and clerical. The areas in which post-liberalization growth is noteworthy are the textile and garments industries, catering and hotels, electronics and telecommunication and the electrical and automotive trade.

d. An increase in the demand among middle and upper class youth for professional level qualifications from private sector institutions

Since the Universities Act of 1978 does not permit private institutions to award university degrees, national qualifications offered by domestic institutions are at or below diploma level. However, some institutions have entered into franchise arrangements with overseas universities or qualification bodies to offer foreign qualifications to students enrolled in academic programmes at these institutions on the completion of their courses, either wholly or partly in Sri Lanka. Fees charged by these institutions are high and naturally only youth from affluent backgrounds can benefit from such arrangements. In many cases, students spend part of their study period in the country where the foreign partner institution is located and this adds to the cost of the programme. A case in point is the Institute of Technological Studies (ITS), which offers tertiary courses in several fields leading to the award of American university degrees to its students. Average annual course fees are substantial, amounting to around 50,000 rupees (approximately 500 US dollars), which is much less than what the students have to spend if they were to go to the United States to complete the same academic programmes there. By 1999, nearly 2500 students completed degree courses at the ITS.

e. An increase in the number of partnerships between foreign and domestic qualification bodies in IT and Management

The expansion of the private corporate sector after economic liberalization has led to an increase in the demand for personnel with management and IT skills. This in turn resulted in an increase in the demand for qualifications in these fields. On the other hand, the Universities Act of Sri Lanka 1978 does not permit the establishment of private universities awarding locally accredited university degrees. Thus, many private educational institutes entered into franchise arrangements with overseas universities so that they could provide the students the necessary training locally and award them the degrees of the universities with which they have established partnerships.

f. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign professional qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy fields

It is evident from the collected data that there is a rapid increase over the last ten years in undergraduate enrolments in Commerce and Management studies that also include Accountancy. It is in keeping with the above demand that the enrolments in foreign qualification bodies have also risen after economic liberalization. Some of the institutions listed for IT and Computer Studies also offer foreign qualifications in Management and Accountancy. The cases in point are American University of Asia, Australian College of Business and Technology, Singapore Informatics, Royal Institute, and Institute of Technological Studies (ITS). All these institutions admit and train students for foreign qualifications. Many Sri Lankan students enrol for Management and Accountancy courses in foreign universities in North America, UK, Singapore and Australia but there is no single credible source of information about these students and this makes it difficult to determine trends over time in quantitative terms.

g. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy

As mentioned before, domestic qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy existed prior to economic liberalization. These include national universities as well as several professional institutes. However, the demand for such qualifications has increased steadily after economic liberalization.

h. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign vocational bodies in IT

As mentioned before, many private domestic educational institutes offering training in IT have established partnerships with foreign qualification bodies. Some of the courses they offer are at a basic vocational level. They prepare students for vocational certificates offered by foreign vocational bodies such as British Computer Society, Australian Computer Society etc.

i. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic qualification bodies in IT

IT is perhaps the most popular field among post secondary students in Sri Lanka today. Hundreds of private institutions ranging from poorly equipped centres to well established, internationally connected educational institutions offer instruction and qualifications in IT. While it is difficult and costly to gather data from all these institutions scattered in different parts of the country, enrolments at some of the well established ones show a clearly upward trend over the last ten years.

j. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign qualification bodies in technology

Most of the Sri Lankan students enrolling for foreign qualifications are mainly in the fields of Management, English, IT, Computer Studies, Accountancy and Business Studies. However, in recent years, the demand for qualifications in technology fields such as Engineering, Natural Sciences etc.

has also risen. Local education agencies sending students to foreign universities report that the demand for qualifications in technology subjects has been increasing over the years. Unfortunately, no quantitative data is available for these agencies to support this assertion.

k. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from national qualification assessment bodies in technology

It should be noted that apart from the local universities, there are not many private domestic qualification bodies in technology. Part of the problem is that the Universities Act of 1978 does not permit private institutions to offer degree level qualifications in technology or any other fields. Therefore, the private institutions either have to prepare students for foreign qualifications or offer qualifications below the degree level. A case in point is the Institute of Engineers of Sri Lanka (IESL) that offers non-degree level qualifications in technology. Student enrolments in these courses have risen sharply from about 24 in 1975 to about 285 in 2000. This institution was established way back in 1956 but expanded only after economic liberalization.

l. An increase in the volume and type of academic qualifications offered by foreign based qualification bodies at secondary and tertiary levels

International schools and private full-fee charging colleges in Sri Lanka usually prepare students for foreign secondary qualifications, mostly from the U.K. These include London GCE (O/L) and GCE (A/L). Apart from the students studying at international and private schools, some students attending state schools in Sri Lanka, particularly those from privileged urban schools sit the above examinations through the British Council in Colombo. Information from the latter indicates a steady rise in the demand for such qualifications in recent years, though there is no data over time to look at the trends.

m. An increase in the number of national institutions preparing students for qualification at secondary and tertiary levels

As already discussed in the present report, there are dozens of private educational institutions in Sri Lanka that prepare students for foreign tertiary qualifications. Unfortunately, most of these institutions do not maintain enrolment records and as a result, we have no access to time series data to indicate the trends over time. However, interviews we conducted with personnel at these institutions showed that there has been a sharp rise in the number of students enrolled for courses at overseas universities and the number of graduates completing such courses. These graduates either complete the entire course in Sri Lanka or at least part of it at a foreign university.

n. An increase in Metropolitan-based academic qualification bodies

Opportunities for securing academic qualifications from overseas based qualification bodies were not widely available in Sri Lanka before economic liberalization. The only way to obtain such qualifications then was to go abroad either privately or on a scholarship. The situation changed rapidly after economic liberalization.

o. Employers' demand for qualifications in computing and communication skills in English

Use of computers for office management and business transactions is so widespread today that the ability to use a computer is considered a prerequisite for white-collar employment in public and private sector institutions. It is this realization that has persuaded youth aspiring for white-collar employment to acquire computer skills from whatever source available to them. The demand for computer skills in turn has led to the mushrooming of institutes offering such skills and qualifications. On the other hand, a certificate in computing is no guarantee of employment. As available data on unemployment shows, the highest rate of unemployment (about 46%) is reported for those with computing skills though we do not know the quality of this training.

p. An increase in the number and type of English language qualification bodies

As mentioned earlier, the UGC is the only national accreditation body in the country that regulates degree level courses and qualifications. In other words, private educational institutions are free to offer non-degree qualifications and certificates. On the other hand, qualifications offered by some institutions are recognized by employers and therefore, are in considerable demand. The cases in point are the qualifications offered by the British Council, the University of Colombo Language Centre and the Diploma in English offered by the Aquinas College, Colombo. Furthermore, enrolments in the Diploma in English Course at the Aquinas College in Colombo have more than doubled since the mid 1980's. The same pattern is reported from institutions like the British Council and other private colleges though we do not have time series data to support this claim.

q. An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from National English Language Institutions

As mentioned before, the demand for English language skills increased after economic liberalization as English became a prerequisite for white-collar employment in the expanding private sector. As a consequence, many private institutions were established offering English language courses at different levels. Some university centres began to offer language courses tailor-made to suit special professional requirements i.e. Business English, English for Law, Academic English etc. Enrolments in English language courses have shown a steady increase at almost all institutions offering such courses.

Shifts in the Qualifications Structure in Sri Lanka After Economic Liberalization¹

Introduction

This report examines the changes in the qualifications structure in Sri Lanka over the last two decades, based on the data drawn from a number of relevant sources. These include secondary data drawn from a range of institutions and agencies dealing with training and qualifications, an employer survey to determine the skills in demand and prevailing gaps in skills and a content analysis of a sample of newspapers published before and after economic liberalization in Sri Lanka. In a subsequent paper, we will analyse the data drawn from a household survey involving a sample of youth representing different segments of Sri Lankan society relating to the changes discussed in the present report. The main hypothesis guiding the present enquiry is that the process of economic liberalization has been accompanied by an expansion and diversification of the qualifications structure leading to a greater choice for qualification seekers, particularly in fields that are in greater demand in a liberal economic environment. The new economic environment dominated by the expanding private sector, has led to an increase in the demand for a variety of qualifications by both qualification seekers as well as employers. Both these groups have acquired greater independence after economic liberalization in terms of the choices they make. The former in terms of the *type* of qualifications they wish to secure and the latter in terms of *which* qualifications to recognise for recruitment purposes. Relaxation of trade and exchange regulations that came into effect as part of the liberalization programme has facilitated the diversification and expansion of the qualifications structure beyond national boundaries. This has led to an intensification of connections between domestic and international qualification bodies.

However, the choice with regard to what qualifications one pursues in the new liberal economic environment does not come one's way cheaply. Private qualification bodies, both domestic and foreign are guided by market forces and offer their qualifications in the market for a price determined by many circumstances. In a country where a sizeable segment of the people are living below a widely accepted poverty line, it is usually those with higher disposable incomes who find it convenient to pay for and secure such qualifications. In other words, it is children and youth from more affluent families who benefit most in such an environment.

The changes in the economy due to liberalization policies implemented after 1977 in Sri Lanka have led to an increase in the demand for certain types of skills and qualifications. As discussed in the paper on the shifts in the economic structure of the country, economic liberalization has facilitated the expansion of certain production and service activities. These include textiles and garments, construction, tourism, banking, finance, insurance, import and export trade, shipping and telecommunications. It is also noteworthy that most of these facilities are in the hands of domestic and foreign investors. Moreover, liberalization policies have also facilitated export of labour, particularly to

the Middle-East. Migrant workers belong to both skilled and unskilled categories and the latter comprise of mostly young rural women.

Another important aspect of the process of economic transformation following economic liberalization has been its increasing outward orientation. Sri Lanka's economy, largely inward oriented till mid 1970's, moved towards full integration with the global economy after liberalization. External linkages became critical for many areas of economic activity such as export-oriented production and services, imports, banking, insurance, export of labour, tourism and the management of development assistance. Institutions and firms with such critical external links required personnel with communication skills capable of handling such links effectively.

The rapid expansion of the construction industry after economic liberalization resulted in a substantial increase in the demand for skilled workers in a variety of fields ranging from civil engineers to bricklayers. It is also during this same period that a construction boom occurred in the Middle-East where Sri Lankan workers began to find work as skilled and unskilled workers. This led to an expansion and diversification of the institutions providing training and qualifications in the relevant fields. Increasing employment opportunities for youth with professional and vocational qualifications persuaded them to enrol students for such courses in large numbers. These trends are likely to have significant implications for the general education system in the country.

Another significant outcome of economic liberalization has been the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Colombo region has become the most significant economic region in the country in terms of concentration of wealth and export oriented economic activity. It also has the highest concentration of social infrastructure facilities both public and private, such as schools, hospitals, universities, markets, theatres etc. Moreover, Colombo region has the largest concentration of affluent households with the highest disposable incomes. An expanding market dealing with such goods and services has met the increasing demand for expensive consumer goods and services. In the field of education, existing and new suppliers of training and qualifications have responded enthusiastically meeting the growing demand. Qualification suppliers in such fields as English Language, Computing and IT, Management, Accountancy and Manufacturing and Construction Technology have gained enormous significance over the last two decades. In the area of general education, suppliers of overseas qualifications ranging from London GCE to foreign university degrees have also seen a steadily growing demand for their services.

It is against this background that the present study focuses attention on the changing qualifications structure in the country. Taking the general implications of globalization and the specific circumstances in the country into account, researchers formulated a series of hypotheses to guide the present investigation. These hypotheses are outlined below:

¹ Report on research question No. 3: Shifts in the qualifications structure in Sri Lanka following economic liberalization.

- a) Economic liberalization has led to a diversification of the qualifications structure in comparison to the pre-liberalization period,
- b) Middle and upper class youth have more opportunities than lower class youth to accumulate foreign qualifications in the liberal economic environment,
- c) Economic liberalization has led to an increase in the number and volume of vocational qualifications offered by vocational training institutions,
- d) Increase in the demand among middle and upper class youth for professional level qualifications from private sector institutions,
- e) Increase in the number of partnerships between foreign and domestic qualification bodies in IT and Management,
- f) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign professional qualification bodies in management and accountancy fields,
- g) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy,
- h) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign vocational qualification bodies in IT fields,
- i) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from domestic vocational qualification bodies in IT fields,
- j) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from foreign qualification assessment bodies in technology,
- k) Increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from national qualification assessment bodies in technology,
- l) Increase in the volume and type of academic qualifications offered by foreign-based qualification bodies at secondary and tertiary education levels,
- m) An increase in the number of national institutions preparing students for foreign secondary and tertiary qualifications,
- n) An increase in overseas based academic qualification bodies offering services in Sri Lanka,
- o) An increase in employers' demand for qualifications in computing and communication skills in English,
- p) An increase in the number and type of English language qualification bodies,
- q) An increase in the number of entrants to, and graduates from national English language institutions.

Before an attempt is made to discuss the above hypotheses in the light of empirical evidence, it is necessary to look at each of them in terms of their rationale in the context of the present study.

If we look at the first hypothesis that economic liberalization has led to a diversification of the qualifications structure, it is relevant to note that the liberal open economic policy environment enables a wider range of qualification suppliers to enter the market to meet the growing demand for diverse qualifications coming largely from more affluent sections of society. The liberal economic

environment also enables many people to accumulate wealth that could be invested in many areas including qualifications with a national and international currency.

In regard to the hypothesis that upper and middle class youth have more opportunities to accumulate foreign qualifications, it is relevant to note that the acquisition of foreign qualifications is largely possible only for those who can afford to pay the higher costs involved and this actually favours the more affluent.

The provision of vocational qualifications has traditionally been confined to public sector institutions. Private sector participation in the vocational area has been largely limited to the informal sector where vocational skills are imparted by master craftsmen/women to their young assistants who join the former as helpers at a very young age. The economic liberalization process led to an expansion of several sectors of the economy creating a shortage of skilled workers. Existing public sector vocational training institutions responded by expanding their programmes.

The demand for professional level qualifications also increased in the aftermath of economic liberalization. These qualifications are usually at a much higher level of educational attainment and act as prerequisites for highly lucrative higher level occupations. Suppliers of such qualifications can demand very high fees. Private sector institutions are keen to enter this more lucrative professional qualifications market that usually caters to more affluent middle and upper class youths.

The liberal economic environment facilitated the entry of foreign qualification bodies into Sri Lanka, either directly or via partnerships with local qualification bodies. This has been particularly the case in such fields as IT and Management, the demand for which has been increasing during the post-liberalization period.

Hypotheses (f) to (i) deal with domestic and international qualification bodies in IT, Management and Accountancy. They point to the increasing trends in enrolments and graduation from both domestic and foreign qualification bodies in this period. The demand for people with qualifications in these fields increased steadily after economic liberalization leading to a rapid expansion of the market for such qualifications, both domestically and internationally.

Hypotheses (j) and (k) relate to qualifications in technology. Industrialization and the construction boom that followed economic liberalization generated considerable demand for people with technology qualifications in areas such as textiles, construction etc. The trend has been a significant growth in enrolments in technology related courses, both domestic and foreign.

Hypotheses (l), (m) and (n) deal with secondary and tertiary academic qualifications, both domestic and foreign. Increasing demand for foreign secondary and tertiary qualifications among the members of the middle and upper classes has encouraged agencies of international qualification bodies acting

as intermediaries in Sri Lanka to expand their operations. The continuing dominance of indigenous languages as the media of instruction in schools and local universities has encouraged those who have resources to look for overseas qualifications.

This demand for skills in information technology and foreign languages like English has risen in a fast globalizing economy. In fact, employers demand such skills from potential new recruits. It is this tendency that has persuaded many youth to acquire such skills. This has led to a diversification of qualification suppliers. Enrolments in courses in these fields have also risen as a consequence.

The data necessary for an empirical examination of the hypotheses outlined above are drawn from a number of sources. Firstly, a range of agencies and institutions dealing with training and qualifications, both public and private, were contacted to collect relevant data. Secondly, an employer survey involving a sample of seventeen public and private sector institutions in and around Colombo was conducted to determine what kind of skills and qualifications were in demand and the sort of gaps in skills that they encounter when they look for new recruits. Finally, a sample of popular newspapers published in the country were screened to look at advertisements relating to training and qualifications on offer and to find out the nature of the emerging qualifications market after economic liberalization. The empirical examination of the hypotheses outlined above is based on a careful analysis of the data drawn from the above sources. In the discussion that follows, the hypotheses are examined in the same order as they appear in the paper.

a) Diversification of the Qualifications Structure After Economic Liberalization

A newspaper survey was carried out to find out the trends in the qualifications market in terms of the kind of qualifications/ training offered by various institutions and the fees charged from those who seek such qualifications and training. Methodology involved a content analysis of advertisements appearing in a sample of newspapers. The survey was done in two stages. In stage one, three weekly newspapers in Sinhala, Tamil and English were monitored from 1965 to 2000 by looking at the edition in the last weekend of June each year at an interval of five years. In the second stage, advertisements appearing in the six newspapers in all three languages (one weekly and one daily each) over a two week period between 1976 and 2001 were examined to elicit information regarding the type of qualifications/training advertised and the fees charged for same. The three Sunday papers surveyed were the Sunday Observer, Silumina and Weerakesari. The three daily newspapers were Daily News, Divaina and Tinakaran. All these are widely read national newspapers reaching all parts of the country.

As mentioned earlier in the report, the trend after economic liberalization has been towards a greater diversification of the qualifications structure in the country. This is evidenced to a certain extent from the data in *Table 1* based on the above which points to an increase and greater diversification of qualifications on offer in an increasingly commercialised qualifications market, particularly in the late 1990's.

Table 1

Number of Advertisements Placed by Institutions in Sri Lanka's Main Newspapers by Subject Area 1965 - 2000

Area	Year	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Business		1	-	2	2	-	4	2	15
Accountancy		1	2	-	-	2	3	2	5
Recruiting examination		1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-
Medical assistant		2	1	-	-	1	8	1	9
AL science		5	8	25	23	8	11	7	14
AL commerce		1	2	10	9	5	1	2	6
AL arts		4	4	8	7	5	6	3	3
English		3	19	23	23	16	13	13	20
Other languages		1	5	2	4	1	-	2	10
OL subjects		14	7	14	7	9	5	7	11
Law		1	1	11	8	4	1	1	4
Management		-	-	2	-	-	-	3	21
AL subjects		2	6	4	1	5	-	1	4
Engineering		1	2	5	-	2	7	2	18
Communication		1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Driving		-	-	1	1	-	2	-	1
Pre-school teaching		1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1
Clerical		-	7	9	6	2	4	1	1
Marketing		-	-	1	-	-	2	-	4
Machine, Motor and industrial		1	-	6	7	7	10	6	3
Higher education		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Sports, Self-development		-	5	1	2	4	9	5	13
Sales, Export		-	-	-	-	3	1	5	3
Computing (basic)		-	-	-	-	2	7	3	82
Computing (advanced)		-	-	-	-	-	8	1	19
GAQ		-	2	2	8	2	1	1	3
Tourism		-	-	-	-	-	7	5	3
Music/ entertainment		-	-	-	-	-	9	-	5
Medicine		-	-	-	-	-	4	-	5
Social sciences		-	-	-	-	-	1	49	5
Mathematics		1	7	1	1	-	1	1	1
OL subjects		1	-	4	-	1	3	2	4
Secretarial		-	-	-	-	-	2	1	4
Textile/clothing		-	-	-	5	-	2	2	91
Natural science		-	1	-	-	-	1	1	16
Nursing		-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total		42	80	133	114	80	135	132	408

Source: Newspaper Survey, 2002 (GQLSRI)

The data in the above Table indicates that before liberalization, qualifications and training for qualifications were offered not only by fewer institutions but also in a fewer areas. It seems that training offered by various suppliers was largely confined to conventional academic areas such as the GCE Advanced Level and traditional occupational categories such as clerical work. The pattern is

very different from the 1980's onwards. While some of the areas of training i.e. academically oriented ones have become less significant during this period, many new areas have been added to the list. These include management, communication, marketing, industrial production and technology, computing, tourism, engineering, secretarial work and sales and exports. On the other hand, English language qualifications remain significant throughout the period, pointing to a persisting demand for such qualifications, both before and after economic liberalization.

The above changes in the qualifications market indicate the increasing significance of skills and qualifications demanded by private sector employers. Conversely, many of these skills were not as significant in the public sector dominated economy before liberalization. The emphasis then has been largely on academic qualifications offered by public educational institutions i.e. GCE (OL), GCE (AL) and university degrees in traditional subject areas.

After liberalization, some advertisements refer to foreign qualification bodies. As regards domestic suppliers, both public and private suppliers continue to be equally significant. This is no doubt due to the continuing significance of public sector institutions engaged in providing vocational training and qualifications in a variety of fields. As will be discussed later, enrolments in vocational courses conducted by these institutions have increased steadily after economic liberalization.

b) Access to Foreign Qualification Bodies

When we look at more professionally-oriented training and qualifications in such fields as Computing, Accountancy, Management and Marketing, private and even foreign suppliers who charge significantly higher fees tend to dominate the market. This naturally favours youth from middle and upper class families. As some of the advertisements indicate, there is a rise in fees charged by qualification suppliers over the last two decades.

Table 2

Fees Charged by Training and Qualification Suppliers in Sri Lanka

Fees (SLR)	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Free	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	5
< 50	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	7
51-500	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	4
501-1000	-	-	1	-	2	1	1	3
1001-2000	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	12
2001-5000	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	59
5001-10000	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
10001-20000	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	42
20001-50000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	21
50001-100000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
>1 million	-	-	-	-	-	40	-	-
Not specified	41	77	134	118	76	85	115	254

Source: Newspaper Survey. GQLSRI, 2001.

The data given in the above Table is sketchy², partly because most advertisements do not provide adequate information needed for a detailed analysis. Fees mentioned in some of the advertisements are not directly comparable as the training and qualifications offered vary enormously depending on the type of training and qualifications as well as on their duration. Sometimes fees are given as a monthly charge whereas in others, they are aggregate amounts. Unless these complexities are sorted out, the data cannot be used for a detailed analysis. Nevertheless when we look at the trends over time, the pattern is significant. The rates have moved upwards from the 1980's. This in turn should have significant implications for accessibility. Naturally, it is youth from affluent families who have easier access to training and qualifications that costs larger amounts of money. This is particularly so for qualifications supplied by foreign qualification bodies and their representatives in Sri Lanka whose fees are usually beyond the means of non-affluent youth.

Fees charged by foreign and domestic suppliers for professional and higher qualifications are much more than for short-term training and lower level qualifications offered by numerous agencies and individuals at the lower end. For instance, qualifications in Computer Technology and English offered by well established institutions like the Informatics and the British Council are far more expensive than poor quality training and certificates offered by numerous training institutes in the same fields in and around Colombo. The former charge very high fees and, therefore only affluent youth from middle and upper class families could secure such qualifications which carry more weight in the employment market. The same applies to numerous private colleges and up-market training centres that prepare students for foreign qualifications. This is evident from the data gathered from these institutions.

It is not only higher fees that restrict foreign qualifications to affluent youth. Since a good working knowledge of English is a pre-condition for enrolling for foreign qualifications, access to English language is also a key factor. As we have discussed in the report on the educational structure, English language competency in Sri Lanka is very much confined to Colombo and a few other cities. It is children from English speaking families and privileged urban schools who usually acquire an adequate knowledge of the language. These children hail mostly from affluent urban backgrounds.

c) An Increase in the Demand for Vocational Qualifications

As mentioned earlier, the changing economic structure in the aftermath of economic liberalization resulted in a substantial increase in employment opportunities for youth with vocational skills at home or abroad, particularly in the Middle-East. This, in turn resulted in a significant increase in the demand for vocational training. Various state institutions already engaged in providing vocational training responded to this growing demand by increasing training programmes and courses leading to specialised qualifications in a variety of fields.

² Table 1 and 2 are based on a newspaper survey conducted as part of the present study. Selected Sinhala and English language newspapers published in Sri Lanka were screened for two weeks for advertisements relating to courses and qualifications in each of the years selected for the study. The period was determined to cover pre and post liberalization periods. The newspapers actually screened may not necessarily be representative and, therefore, perhaps only point to general trends during the period covered.

There is no single authority responsible for vocational education and certification in Sri Lanka. In fact, several national-level agencies coming under a number of Ministries conduct training courses in different parts of the country through a network of training centres. The agencies involved are: the Department of Technical Education and Training (Ministry of Education), National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (Ministry of Labour), National Youth Services Council (Ministry of Youth Affairs) and the Vocational Training Authority (Ministry of Rural Development). In addition to these formal sources, there are also informal sources of training in various vocational fields. Many under-aged children are known to work in informal sector work sites as helping hands and eventually become productively employed, skilled workers. There is no information on the trends in the informal sector. Some of the youth who join formal sector work sites as helpers are known to acquire some form of on-the-job training under master craftsmen and eventually end up as skilled workers, often as self-employed entrepreneurs having their own workshops. However, there are no private sector sponsored vocational training institutions in Sri Lanka. The only exceptions are a few vocational training centres run by small scale non-government organizations in a few urban centres like Colombo and Kandy.

The data available from the four key national institutions responsible for vocational training in Sri Lanka shows a clear increase in enrolments in their various programmes after economic liberalization. As *Table 4* shows, there is more than a four-fold increase in apprentices from 1977 to 1981, within a few years after the adoption of liberal economic policies. By 1995, the increase has been more than ten fold. As *Table 3* shows, when vocational apprenticeships are taken together with higher and lower level qualifications in crafts, technology and related fields, the trend towards growth and diversification is even stronger. When we compare the pre-liberalization data with post-liberalization figures, a sharp increase in certain areas is clear i.e. building, electrical, fitting and fabricating, textiles, wood working and clerical.

The areas in which post-liberalization growth is noteworthy are the textile and garments industries, catering and hotels, electronics and telecommunication and the electrical and automotive trade. As *Table 4* shows, enrolments in courses offered by the Technical Colleges have also increased steadily since the late 1970's. The vast majority of students in these colleges are male. Possession of vocational qualifications does not necessarily ensure employment. About 16% of the youth with vocational training appear to remain unemployed. This, of course is much lower than the rate of unemployment among those who possess only academic qualifications like GCE (OL) and GCE (AL). On the other hand, rates of unemployment among youth with vocational training in such areas as the hotel and restaurant trade, computing and data entry and clerical are much higher. As for computing and data entry, it is likely that these are youth who have received training at private training classes at the lower end of the spectrum.

As mentioned earlier, national level, vocational training institutions are almost entirely state-sponsored and provide training to youth free of charge. In fact, students who enrol in vocational courses offered

by the National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Board (NAITA) are paid a small monthly stipend to cover travel and other incidental expenses of trainees. This allowance is also paid during the period of practical training that follows the instruction phase of the course. These courses in turn attract rural male youth from lower class backgrounds in large numbers. As we have seen from school enrolment data in the report on the changes in the educational structure in the country, many male pupils leave school after their secondary education, and it is reasonable to assume that at least some of them opt for vocational qualifications offered by national vocational qualification authorities like NAITA.

Table 3

Craft Categorized Trade Apprentices Recruited in 1973-1997

Trade	1973	1975	1977	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997
1. Automotive Trade	265	354	311	416	576	555	507	691	665	464	449	1043
2. Building Trade	94	94	31	793	90	18	26	24	25	22	20	88
3. Electrical Trade	150	264	75	272	270	223	371	383	350	436	394	976
4. Electronic & Telecommunication Trade	-	24	1	107	85	60	114	18	94	22	40	265
5. Fishing and Marine Trade	-	-	-	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Fitting & Fabricating Trade	303	495	159	818	800	616	782	748	705	670	688	1204
7. Gem & Jewellery Industry Trade	-	-	35	206	24	34	18	18	58	33	29	54
8. Metal Forming & Machine Trade	151	218	101	319	320	319	328	225	212	240	122	402
9. Operative Trade	-	12	-	81	22	62	74	83	92	218	22	24
10. Office Machinery & Precision Equipment Trade	-	15	5	16	16	29	13	7	10	15	11	28
11. Printing Trade	-	189	40	262	232	133	390	198	255	269	160	321
12. Painting & Finishing Trade	-	56	8	59	77	84	102	87	96	114	78	191
13. Rubber & Plastic Product Trade	-	3	-	4	38	8	20	11	11	14	13	20
14. Shoe & Leather Goods Trade	-	1	-	4	29	138	152	50	54	51	25	75
15. Catering & Hotel Trade	-	5	-	72	501	646	640	318	633	603	584	786
16. Textile & Garment Industry Trade	42	118	189	258	440	362	413	272	1355	656	2592	2579
17. Wood Working Trade	-	138	24	134	215	178	213	113	202	152	147	330
18. Clerical Trade	-	4	19	210	301	385	356	757	598	615	1715	1960
19. Information Technology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	318	592
20. Services Trade	-	-	-	-	112	165	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1005	1954	998	4066	4148	4015	4519	4142	5591	4858	7855	11388

Source: National Apprenticeship and Industrious Training Authority, Colombo

As Table 3 shows, there has been more than a ten-fold increase in apprentices since 1977. The increase is more pronounced in certain categories than in others. i.e. textiles and garments industry and automotive and electrical trades. These areas are very much related to the new liberal economy.

Table 4

Number Recruited in Each Year According to Level of Apprenticeship 1973-1996

Apprenticeship/Year	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995
Engineering Undergraduate Apprentices - Moratuwa	-	-	135	117	267	543	364	425		706	535	794
Engineering Undergraduate Apprentices - Peradeniya	-	-	-	251	740	837	497	522		1206	538	621
National Diploma in Engineering Science	-	90	80	194	163	159	277	248	250	229	300	300
National Diploma in Technology	245	342	237	308	404	391	391	309	76	258	368	390
Craft (Categories Trade) Apprentices	1005	1954	998	4066	4148	4015	4519	4142	5591	4858	7855	11388
Craft (Situational Normal) Apprentices	-	-	--	398	4081	600	603	455	1790	2453	3133	3731
Village Level Apprentices	-	-	-	-	303	721	1067	1711	2168	881	4288	4314
Special Situational Apprentices	-	-	-	-	239	102	119	5	-	-	-	-
Construction Supervisors	-	-	-	-	153	269	143	179	194	104	-	-
Higher National Diploma in Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	196	153	45
School Leavers (Artisans Trades) Apprentices	-	-	-	-	140	22	-	-	-	-	-	-
Job Bank Apprentices	-	-	-	51	1033	4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Craft Accelerated Apprentices	-	-	-	4328	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arts Graduate Apprentices	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1250	2386	1450	9713	8671	7663	7980	7996	10069	10891	17170	21583

Source: National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority, Colombo

The data in *Table 4* indicates that the increase in apprentices is not confined to craft grades alone. Though not as pronounced as in the case of craft grades, the increase is also significant in higher technology and engineering studies. The number of engineering undergraduate apprentices and National Diploma in Technology apprentices has also increased significantly over the same period.

d) Increase in the Demand among Middle and Upper Class Youth for Professional Level Qualifications from Private Sector Institutions

Professional level courses conducted by private educational institutions are mostly concentrated in Colombo. This is true for areas like Management, Accountancy, Marketing, IT, Computer Programming, Business English etc. Many of the institutions involved are affiliated to foreign

qualification bodies or act as local agents for foreign qualification bodies. Since the Universities Act of 1978³ does not permit private institutions to award university degrees, national qualifications offered by domestic institutions are at or below diploma level. However, some institutions have entered into franchise arrangements with overseas universities or qualification bodies to offer foreign qualifications to students enrolled in academic programmes at these institutions on the completion of their courses, either wholly or partly in Sri Lanka. Fees charged by these institutions are high and naturally only youth from affluent backgrounds can benefit from such arrangements. In many cases, students spend part of their study period in the country where the foreign partner institution is located and this adds to the cost of the programme. A case in point is the Institute of Technological Studies (ITS), which offers tertiary courses in several fields leading to the award of American university degrees to its students. Average annual course fees are substantial, amounting to around 50,000 rupees (approximately 500 US dollars), which is much less than what the students would have to spend if they were to go the United States to complete the same academic programmes there. By 1999, nearly 2500 students completed degree courses at the ITS.

The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) established in Sri Lanka as far back as 1965 as a local branch of its parent body in the United Kingdom has been conducting courses leading to professional qualifications offered by the latter. Examinations are conducted in Sri Lanka by the National Institute and the students pay fees set by the parent body. Students have opportunities to participate in classes conducted not only at the Institute but also by numerous private individuals in several cities in the country.

Singapore Informatics, established after economic liberalization in 1983, is a branch of Informatics Holdings Ltd of Singapore, a public quoted company in Singapore. It is reportedly affiliated to over 40 universities in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It also gives the option to students to either complete the entire course in Sri Lanka or go to another country to complete the final year. Student numbers at this institute have risen sharply over the last ten years, from about 250 in 1991 to about 2800 in more recent years.

The Institute of Cost and Management Accountants (ICMA) is the national professional body in the field of Accountancy, established in 1959 under an Act of Parliament of Ceylon. It offers courses leading to several levels of competency i.e. foundation, intermediate, final II and I. The Institute offers instructions to registered students in-house as well as through correspondence. It has seen a rise in student registrations over the years. There are currently over 16,000 registered students.

Fees charged by the Institute for registration, tuition and examinations are much less than what other private institutions charge from their students. They range from about 3000 to about 6000 rupees,

³ Sri Lankan universities are managed under the provisions of this Act. It provides no room for the establishment of private universities or any other degree awarding institutions.

depending on the level of the course. This is no doubt the reason why youth from rural lower middle class backgrounds also register and follow these courses, often successfully completing them.

Tech Sri Lanka is another private institute, established in 1982, offering certificate and diploma level courses in computing and related studies. Their student numbers have risen rapidly over the last two decades, from about 280 in 1982 to about 27000 in 2000. They have established branches in different parts of the country, currently standing at 16. Tech Sri Lanka is not affiliated to any international qualification body and they award their own certificates and diplomas. There is no doubt that their aggressive advertising campaigns using the electronic media and efforts to reach out to different parts of the country through a network of branches have helped them boost enrolments. Several national universities offer degree and postgraduate level courses in Management and related fields, particularly through Postgraduate Institutes affiliated to these universities. The most successful of these institutions is the Postgraduate Institute of Management, affiliated to the University of Sri Jayawardenepura. Their courses are popular among both public and private sector employees. Course fees are quite high, perhaps to give them an added value in the public eye and attract the attention of the corporate sector. The university authorities in the country accredit the diplomas and degrees awarded. Some of the postgraduate courses conducted by these institutes admit students who do not possess university degrees but have professional experience and qualifications.

e) Increase in the Number of Partnerships between Foreign and Domestic Qualification Bodies in IT and Management

The expansion of the private corporate sector after economic liberalization has led to an increase in the demand for personnel with management and IT skills. This in turn resulted in an increase in the demand for qualifications in these fields. On the other hand, the Universities Act of Sri Lanka 1978 does not permit the establishment of private universities awarding locally accredited university degrees. Thus many private educational institutes entered into franchise arrangements with overseas universities so that they could provide the students the necessary training locally and award them the degrees of the universities with which they have established partnerships.

As mentioned earlier, the Universities Act does not prevent institutes from awarding diplomas and similar qualifications to their students. Therefore, most of the qualifications offered by these local institutes are either at the level of diploma or lower. Students who enrol for these courses are school leavers, often with no more than the GCE (Ordinary Level) certificate. On the other hand, the demand for university level qualifications has also been rising over the years due to increasing competition for limited places available in local universities. For instance, the Institute of Computer Technology of the University of Colombo admitted only fifty students per year for its degree course for many years since its establishment in the mid 1980's. Private educational institutes, established mostly after economic liberalization came forward to take advantage of this situation. They established partnerships with foreign universities so that their students, wholly or partly trained in Sri Lanka, could obtain qualifications awarded by the collaborating overseas universities.

Some of the private institutes that have established partnerships with overseas qualification bodies offer qualification in information technology, while others offer qualifications in several fields. *Table 5* gives data on a number of private educational institutes (locally-based) that offer local and foreign qualifications.

Table 5

Locally Based Institutions that Offer Foreign Qualifications

Institute	Year *	Field	Qualifications	Foreign Partners
Skills Lanka Ltd.	2000	Information Systems, Software Development Technology	Diploma B.Sc. B.Sc.	British Computer Society
American University of Asia	1984	Management Accountancy Marketing Computer Science System Engineering Others	BBA BS BBA B.Sc. B.Sc. BA	Parent University in USA
Australian College of Business and Technology	1998	Business IT Electronic Commerce Graphic Design	Diploma B.Sc. B.Sc.	Edith Cowan University, Western Australia, Perth Institute of Business and Technology, W. Australia, Curtin University of Technology, W. Australia.
Singapore Informatics	1995	Computing I.T. Electronic Commerce Marketing Business Administration Administrative Management	B.Sc. B.Sc. Diploma Advanced Diploma Higher Diploma Higher Diploma	University of Portsmouth U.K, University of Cambridge, (NCC) Manchester, UK, University of Southern Queensland, Australia.
Aquinas College	1985	Management, Marketing, Arts, Languages, Computing, IT	Certificates, Diploma, B.A. B.Sc.	
Royal Institute	1971	Computing and IT, Management, Accounting and Finance, Law, English, Others	Diploma B.Sc. LLB	University of London NCC, UK.
DP Aides	1981	Computer and Information Systems, Programming, Computer Engineering	B.Sc. Diploma	London Guildhall University NCC, U.K.
IDM	1984	Computer Studies, Data Management, System Analysis	Foundation Certificate International Diploma Professional Graduate Diploma	British Computer Society London Guildhall University London Metropolitan University Australian Computer Society

Source: Records provided by the relevant Institutions

* Year of establishment

What is given above is not an exhaustive list of educational institutes with foreign partnerships. Almost all of them have been established after economic liberalization. The only exception is the Royal Institute which dates back to 1971. Even in the case of the Royal Institute, foreign collaboration is a recent development. It appears that there is considerable competition among private educational institutes to offer foreign qualifications to their prospective students, indicating a growing demand among students for foreign academic qualifications. This may also be an indication of the increasing value of foreign qualifications in the employment market in Sri Lanka, particularly in the private sector.

f) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from Foreign Professional Qualification Bodies in Management and Accountancy

Management and Accountancy studies in Sri Lanka were well established in several local institutions prior to economic liberalization. Apart from a few university faculties and institutes, several private institutions involved in Management and Accountancy were already offering training and qualifications to students. These included the National Institute of Business Management (NIBM), Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA), Sri Lanka Institute of Plantation Management (SLIPM), Association of Accounting Technicians of Sri Lanka (AAT) and Institute of Cost and Management Accountancy (ICMA). These institutions have been functioning in Sri Lanka at least since the early 1970's. Economic liberalization in the late 1970's led to an increase in demand for training and qualifications in these fields and the relevant institutions have responded by expanding their programmes. The increasing demand for qualifications in Management and Accountancy is also reflected in the enrolments in the relevant courses at national universities in the country. As *Table 6* shows, there is a rapid increase over the last 10 years in undergraduate enrolments in Commerce and Management studies that also include Accountancy.

Table 6

Undergraduates Registered for External Degrees 1993-1997

University	Course of Study	Registered in the year									
		1993		1994		1995		1996		1997	
		Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total
Peradeniya	Arts Science	8254	12187	8338	11331	6772	10596	7072	10760	6223	10043
		358	683	492	928	585	859	279	485	362	565
Sri Jayawardenapura	Arts Commerce	337	599	1148	1623	1112	1587	526	912	1220	1785
		247	535	415	729	428	729	411	688	1597	4130
Kelaniya	Arts Commerce	438	975	1681	2793	4170	6731	2858	5839	2914	4236
		61	131	81	189	178	368	181	219	142	228
Eastern University of Sri Lanka	Commerce & Management	84	230	122	336	*	*	55	149	*	*
	Science	42	125	36	93	*	*	08	15	*	*
	Agriculture	22	125	20	59	*	*	01	09	*	*
	Arts & Culture							114	229	*	*
Total		9843	15590	12333	18081	13245	20870	11503	19305	12458	20987

Source: University Grants Commission, Colombo

Table 7

Commerce and Management Graduates of Sri Lanka 1970-1996

Type of the degree	Years											
	1970	1971	1972	1977	1978	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1989	1990	1993	1996
B.Com	32	42	28	112	68	643	498	473	505	479	626	515
B.Sc.(Public Finance and Taxation)	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
B.Sc.(Estate Management & Valuation)	-	-	-	-	-	18	19	26	315	-	-	-
B.Sc.(Estate Management)	-	-	-	31	36	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B.Sc.(Public/Business Administration)	-	-	-	115	123	177	132	202	-	293	553	663
P.G.Diploma in Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	-
P.G.Institute of Management-Diploma	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	36	54	1
P.G.Institute of Management-M.B.A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	92	48	14
P.G.Institute of Management-M.P.A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
P.G.Institute of Management-Ph.D.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
M.Com	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MBA/MPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	-	-	-	30

Sources: *Statistical Abstract 1973, 1979, 1985, Central Bank of Sri Lanka*

Statistical Handbook 1990, 1995 and 1997 Statistics on Higher education in Sri Lanka, University Grants Commission, Colombo

It is in keeping with the above demand that the enrolments in foreign qualification bodies have also risen after economic liberalization. Some of the institutions listed for IT and Computer Studies also offer foreign qualifications in Management and Accountancy. The cases in point are American University of Asia, Australian College of Business and Technology, Singapore Informatics, Royal Institute and the Institute of Technological Studies (ITS). All these institutions admit and train students for foreign qualifications. Many Sri Lankan students enrol for Management and Accountancy courses in foreign universities in North America, UK, Singapore and Australia, but there is no single credible source of information about these students and this makes it difficult to determine trends over time in quantitative terms. As discussed in an earlier report (RQ 2 Report), the data available with local agents of foreign education and qualification bodies shows an increasing trend in the demand for foreign qualifications in diverse fields including Management and Accountancy.

g) An Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from Domestic Qualification Bodies in Management and Accountancy

As mentioned before, domestic qualification bodies in Management and Accountancy existed prior to economic liberalization. These include national universities as well as several professional institutes. However, the demand for such qualifications has increased steadily after economic liberalization.

h) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from Foreign Vocational Bodies in IT

As mentioned before, many private domestic educational institutes offering training in IT have established partnerships with foreign qualification bodies. Some of the courses they offer are at a basic vocational level. They prepare students for vocational certificates offered by foreign vocational bodies such as the British Computer Society, Australian Computer Society etc. (See Table 5). Table 8 below gives data on one institution that offers training and qualifications in IT.

Table 8

Australian College of Business and Technology (ACBT)

Course	Awarding bodies			
<u>University Level</u> 1. Diploma in Business Studies 2. Degree in Business Studies 3. Bachelor of Business Management 4. Diploma in IT 5. Degree in IT 6. Bachelor of Science <u>Pre-University Foundation Course</u> 1. Foundation Programme in Business Studies 2. Foundation Programme in Information Technology 3. Diploma in Graphic Design 4. Diploma in Electronic Commerce	In association with Edith Cowan University - Western Australia In association with Perth Institute of Business and Technology In association with Curtin University of Technology In association with Edith Cowan University –Western Australia			
ACBT's Student Enrolments				
Name of the Course	Year			
	1998	1999	2000	2001
1. Certificate in IT	30	55	75	90
2. Diploma in Business Studies	40	50	85	110
3. Diploma in IT	25	40	75	100
4. Associate Degree in Business Studies	-	10	15	20
5. Associate Degree in IT	-	8	15	15
6. Bachelor of Business Studies	-	-	-	12
7. Bachelor of Science	-	-	-	6
8. Diploma in Design		15	12	12
Fee Schedule Per Month				
Level	1 Unit (Rs)	2 Unit (Rs)	3 Unit (Rs)	4 Unit (Rs)
1. Pre-University Level	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000
2. Diploma and Associate Degree Courses	6,750	13,500	20,250	27,000
3. Third Year University Courses	9,250	18,500	27,750	37,000

Source: ACBT, Colombo

i) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from Domestic Qualification Bodies in IT

IT is perhaps the most popular field among post secondary students in Sri Lanka today. Hundreds of private institutions ranging from poorly equipped centres to well established internationally connected educational institutions offer instruction and qualifications in IT. While it is difficult and costly to gather data from all these institutions scattered in different parts of the country, enrolments at some of the well established ones show a clearly upward trend over the last ten years. The following Table gives some data to illustrate this point.

Table 9
Students of Computer Training Institutes in Sri Lanka

Year	Number of Students						
	DP Aides	Tec Sri Lanka	IDM	Singapore Informatics	ICT	NYSC	Aquinas
1981	-	-	-	-	80	-	-
1982	-	280	-	-	-	-	-
1984	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
1985	280	-	-	-	860	-	33
1987	-	-	-	-	83	-	39
1990	800	1500	-	-	-	-	83
1991	-	-	-	240	-	-	-
1992	-	-	-	-	-	-	69
1994	-	-	-	-	-	-	197
1995	1700	2500	800	-	-	124	-
1996	-	-	-	800	420	108	154
1997	-	-	-	-	-	119	-
1998	-	5000	-	-	-	118	193
1999	-	-	-	-	-	125	-
2000	4500	27 000	3800	-	1950	132	200

Source: Records provided by the relevant Institutes

- Notes - * IDM - Institute of Data Management (Pvt) Ltd.
 * ICT - Institute of Computer Technology, University of Colombo.
 * NYSC - National Youth Services Council, Maharagama.
 * Most of the Institutions listed above offer courses in IT
 Approximate enrolment figures from selected training institutes (Colombo based)

Table 10
Technical Colleges in Sri Lanka 1956 – 2000

Year	Mid Year Population	Pupils' Enrolment		
		Total	Male	Female
1956	8929000	1891	1829	62
1960	9896000	1824	1686	138
1966	11439000	1364	1311	53
1970	12514000	3485	3070	408
1974	13284000	4040	3472	568
1978	14190000	2585	2179	406
1986	16127000	20938	-	-
1989	16825000	19094	-	-
1992	17426000	18077	-	-
1995	18136000	20387	-	-
1998	18774000	15013	-	-
2000	19359000	17310	-	-

Source: Ministry of Tertiary Education

j) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from Foreign Qualification Bodies in Technology

Most of the Sri Lankan students enrolling for foreign qualifications are mainly in the fields of Management, English, IT, Computer Studies, Accountancy and Business Studies. The reason for this situation appears to be the fact that many lucrative employment opportunities available in Sri Lanka after economic liberalization are concentrated in these fields. However in recent years, the demand for qualifications in technology fields such as Engineering, Natural Sciences etc. has also risen. Local education agencies sending students to foreign universities report that the demand for qualifications in technology subjects has been increasing over the years. Unfortunately, no quantitative data is available for these agencies to support this assertion.

k) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from National Qualification Assessment Bodies in Technology

It should be noted that apart from the local universities, there are not many private domestic qualification bodies in technology. Part of the problem is that the Universities Act of 1978 does not permit private institutions to offer degree level qualifications in technology or any other field. Therefore, the private institutions either have to prepare students for foreign qualifications or offer qualifications below the degree level. A case in point is the Institute of Engineers of Sri Lanka (IESL) that offers non-degree level qualifications in technology. Student enrolments in these courses have risen sharply from about 24 in 1975 to about 285 in 2000. This institution was established way back in 1956 but expanded only after economic liberalization.

It is also significant that student enrolments have also increased in Technical Colleges funded by the state and managed by the Department of Tertiary Education. These colleges offer local qualifications in a range of technical subjects. There is a sharp rise in student enrolments in the Technical Colleges after economic liberalization though a decline is recorded since the late 1990's (see *Table 10*).

l) Increase in the Volume and Type of Academic Qualifications Offered by Foreign-Based Qualification Bodies at Secondary and Tertiary Levels

International schools and private full-fee charging colleges in Sri Lanka usually prepare students for foreign secondary qualifications, mostly from the U.K. These include London GCE(O/L) and GCE(A/L). Apart from the students studying at international and private schools, some students attending state schools in Sri Lanka, particularly those from privileged urban schools sit the above examinations through the British Council in Colombo. Information from the latter indicates a steady rise in the demand for such qualifications in recent years, though there is no data over time to look at the trends. In recent years, over two thousand students have sat the London GCE (A/L) examination through the British Council.

On the other hand, the demand for foreign tertiary qualifications has risen sharply during the post liberalization period. While this is partly a reflection of the persisting high competition for places in

local universities, it is also an indication of the high value of foreign tertiary qualifications in the local employment market, in particular in the expanding private sector. A good foreign university degree is a sure way to find lucrative white-collar employment in the corporate sector in Sri Lanka. While there are over 30,000 graduates from local universities currently without work, some of whom have qualifications in Commerce and Management, a youth returning to Sri Lanka with a foreign university degree usually finds it very easy to join large private firms in Colombo at a managerial level with a very high salary and other privileges.

m) Increase in the Number of National Institutions Preparing Students for Qualification at Secondary and Tertiary Levels

As already discussed in this present report, there are dozens of private educational institutions in Sri Lanka that prepare students for foreign tertiary qualifications. Unfortunately, most of these institutions do not maintain enrolment records and as a result, we have no access to time series data to indicate the trends over time. However, interviews we conducted with personnel at these institutions showed that there has been a sharp rise in the number of students enrolled for courses at overseas universities and the number of graduates completing such courses. These graduates either complete the entire course in Sri Lanka or partly or wholly at a foreign university.

n) An Increase in Metropolitan-Based Academic Qualification Bodies

Opportunities for securing academic qualifications from overseas based qualification bodies were not widely available in Sri Lanka before economic liberalization. The only way to obtain such qualifications then was to go abroad either privately or on a scholarship. The situation changed rapidly after economic liberalization. Not only could affluent parents now send their children abroad with ease for academic courses, they could also prepare them for such qualifications at well established private colleges in Sri Lanka. (See *Table 10*).

o) Employers' Demand for Qualifications in Computing and Communication Skills in English

Use of computers for office management and business transactions is so widespread today that the ability to use a computer is considered a prerequisite for white-collar employment in public and private sector institutions. It is this realization that has persuaded youth aspiring for white-collar employment to acquire computer skills from whatever source available to them. The demand for computer skills in turn has led to the mushrooming of institutes offering such skills and qualifications. On the other hand, a certificate in computing is no guarantee of employment. As available data on unemployment shows, the highest rate of unemployment (about 46%) is reported for those with computing skills.

The Colombo-based, private corporate sector in Sri Lanka has always been dominated by the English educated members of the urban middle and upper classes. This situation has persisted to this day and has become more pronounced after economic liberalization due to greater external links that private business firms have established in recent years. In fact, post-liberalization economic growth

has been aided by growing external links. It is partly these links that have facilitated the rise of English as the dominant business language in the country. The result is that the corporate employers expect their office staff to be competent in English in terms of writing and communication skills.

In order to investigate the above and other related issues, we conducted an employer survey involving a number of public and private sector institutions. Personnel responsible for human resource development in these institutions were interviewed in order to find out what gaps in skills they encounter in recruiting new personnel. Almost all of the persons we interviewed emphasized the importance of computer skills and communication skills in English.

p) Increase in the Number and Type of English Language Qualification Bodies

As mentioned earlier, the UGC is the only national accreditation body in the country that regulates degree level courses and qualifications. In other words, private educational institutions are free to offer non-degree qualifications and certificates. On the other hand, qualifications offered by some institutions are recognized by employers and therefore, are in considerable demand. The cases in point are the qualifications offered by the British Council, the University of Colombo Language Centre and the Diploma in English offered by the Aquinas College, Colombo. Most of the private colleges established after economic liberalization do not offer courses in English. The Test of English as a Foreign Language is also a prerequisite for entry into university and other courses in many western universities and therefore, is sought after by many post-secondary students. This test is conducted in Sri Lanka by the US Educational Foundation.

Table 11

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: Aquinas College, Colombo

q) Increase in the Number of Entrants to, and Graduates from National English Language Institutions

As mentioned before, the demand for English language skills increased after economic liberalization as English became a prerequisite for white-collar employment in the expanding private sector. The result is that many private institutions were established offering English language courses at different levels. The qualifications these institutions offer are at certificate and diploma levels. Some university centres began to offer language courses tailor-made to suit special professional requirements, i.e. Business English, English for Law, Academic English etc.

Enrolments in English language courses have shown a steady increase at almost all institutions offering such courses. Unfortunately, not many institutions maintain their enrolment records or do not wish to divulge such information due to various reasons. As *Table 11* shows, enrolments in the Diploma in English Course at the Aquinas College in Colombo have more than doubled since the mid 1980's. The same pattern is reported from institutions like the British Council and other private colleges though we do not have time series data to support this claim

2.0 Conclusion

Acquisition of educational qualifications has long been a major preoccupation of upwardly mobile youth in Sri Lanka. This pattern was reinforced after political independence where the state became the dominant player in the economy, controlling both the opportunity structures as well as the allocation of opportunities to citizens. As regards the recruitment of personnel to various institutions, the tendency was to institutionalize objective procedures such as competitive examinations, interviews conducted by panels of higher officials and determination of minimum academic qualifications etc. These procedures in turn tended to privilege academic qualifications much more than other criteria. For instance, a university degree almost guaranteed white-collar employment in the state sector irrespective of the socio-economic background of the graduates. The down side of these developments was the overwhelming bias of the education system towards examinations and paper qualifications, often at the expense of skills development. While more and more youth tended to collect paper qualifications, it did not take long before many youth with such qualifications found it difficult to secure productive livelihoods. By the early 1970's, unemployment among educated youth became a major socio-political issue.

Economic liberalization in the late 1970's led to a shift of focus from the state to the private sector. Unlike the Sri Lankan state operating in a popular democratic framework, the private corporate sector is not guided by equity and social justice considerations in their recruitment practices. Private sector employers continued to favour urban English speaking youth in filling relatively more lucrative white-collar positions in their establishments. On the other hand, educated but non-English speaking youth comprising the overwhelming majority of the country's youth could move into managerial and other white collar positions in the state sector at least in situations where political considerations did not interfere with the recruitment process. However, such positions became scarce after economic

liberalization even though the number of educated youth looking for such employment continued to increase over the last several decades due to the expansion of university education. Unable to find state sector employment, youth graduating from state sector educational institutions have also been compelled to look for private sector employment. Yet, they could hardly compete for such opportunities with privileged urban youth who graduate from international schools, private colleges and overseas universities. These privileged urban youth, with qualifications in IT, Computing, Management, Accountancy, Business Studies and English secured from domestic and overseas qualification bodies have placed them in a distinctly advantaged position vis-à-vis their less privileged, lower class rural counterparts.

Economic liberalization has led to a diversification of the qualifications market. Today, there are many qualification bodies both local and foreign, offering a wide range of qualifications in a variety of fields. It is also noteworthy that the qualifications market represents a continuum ranging from low value certificates issued by small informal training centres to internationally recognised university qualifications offered by reputed institutions of higher learning in the developed countries like the USA, UK, Australia and Canada. There are many institutions in between offering qualifications of varying value. Access to these qualifications depends on a range of factors. In the case of higher value qualifications with wider national and international currency, ability to pay is the key factor. For instance, a degree from a reputed overseas university can cost several million rupees. In other words, it is youth from affluent social backgrounds who have access to such qualification bodies. Those who obtain these qualifications often have access to lucrative livelihood opportunities in any part of the world including Sri Lanka. Thus, an increasingly commercialized and largely polarized qualifications market tends to mediate between youth who seek livelihood opportunities on the one hand and increasingly privatized opportunity structures on the other. However, in the case of Sri Lanka, the vast majority of youth continue to depend on state funded qualification bodies for academic, vocational and professional qualifications, while a minority of affluent youth rely exclusively on private qualification bodies, both domestic and foreign. This has created an anomalous situation where the vast majority of the country's youth continue to secure qualifications which are of diminishing value in an employment market increasingly dominated by the private corporate sector. These developments have significant social and political implications that deserve the attention of policy-makers.

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- Institute of Engineers of Sri Lanka (IESL)
- Institute of Technological Studies (ITS)
- National Institute of Business Management (NIBM)
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- Royal Institute
- Singapore Informatics
- Skills Lanka Ltd
- Sri Lanka Institute of Plantation Management (SLIPM)
- Tech Sri Lanka
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