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A survey of employment trends of recent graduates could be used as a tool to examine the current level of Science & Technology

Local Trends

(S&T) manpower requirements in the labour market. It could also be used to forecast demand for the coming years, which in turn would facilitate policy changes with regard to the effective utilization of S&T manpower and science education. The Science and Technology Policy Research Division of the NSF conducted a study, supported by an ADB project of the Ministry of Science and Technology, to analyze career information of the 1998/1999 S&T graduates from the universities of Colombo, Kelaniya, Moratuwa, Peradeniya, Ruhuna, Sri Jayawardenepura, Sabaragamuwa, Rajarata, the Eastern University and the Open University (present studies include the other universities as well). The data collected through a questionnaire survey and analyzed statistically are given in Figures 1-4 and Tables 1-3. However, only 36% of the graduates responded to this survey and the observations given below represent the information provided by this sample.

Significant findings of this study:

* Of the sample, 78% was employed and 14.6% unemployed. (The term 'unemployed graduates' refers to graduates without work but seeking employment).

* Of the graduates pursuing higher studies on a full-time basis, not seeking jobs and unemployed, more than 2/3rds were female.

* The highest percentage (more than 95%) of employed graduates was engineering graduates.

* Absorption to the private sector

Science graduates and the labour market

Table 1: Sector of employment by degree

Degree Course	Sector of Employment (%)			
	Govt.	Semi-Govt.	Private	Other
B.Sc. General (Phy)	39.2	14.4	39.2	.5
B.Sc. General (Bio)	44.9	24.7	23.0	1.2
B. Sc. Special	24.2	24.2	43.5	4.8
B. Sc. Agriculture	33.1	27.5	23.8	8.8
B. Sc. Engineering	12.3	27.6	56.7	1.0
Not specified	56.3	18.8	18.8	6.3
Total	30.9	23.7	37.8	2.5

* 5% of the sample had not specified sector of employment

Table 2: Sector of employment by income

Income Group	Sector of Employment (%)			
	Govt.	Semi-Govt.	Private	Other
Rs. 3,000 or less	9.5	.4	1.1	
Rs. 3,001-5000	27.3	5.6	9.4	16.0
Rs. 5,001-10,000	53.9	56.7	21.8	52.0
Rs. 10,001-15,000		1.7	13.2	8.0
Rs. 15,001-20,000	7.9	24.9	25.3	12.0
Rs. 20,001-30,000	.7	4.7	18.0	12.0
Rs. 30,001 & over	.3	5.2	10.5	
Not specified	.3	.9	.8	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* 5% of the sample had not specified sector of employment

Table 3: Obstacles to employment cited by graduates

Obstacle	Responded Percentage
(a) Lack of required work experience	34
(b) Lack of opportunities in the specialized field	25
(c) Lack of opportunities in the area of interest	15
(d) Poor knowledge of English	13
(e) Lack of knowledge in Information Technology	10
(f) Lack of knowledge in Management	5
(g) Other	8

* 30% of the sample had not specified the obstacles

* Percentages do not add upto 100 due to multiple responses

was highest among engineering graduates (more than 55%), while absorption to the public sector was highest among B.Sc. (Bio Science) graduates.

* The average monthly income of employed graduates was between Rs. 5000/= to Rs. 10,000/=.

* More than half the graduates employed in the private sector

received a monthly income of Rs. 15,000/=.

* 60% of the engineering graduates earned a monthly income of more than Rs.15,000/-

* 80% of the B.Sc. (Special) and 75% of the engineering graduates secured employment within 6 months of graduation, while less than 50% of the other graduates

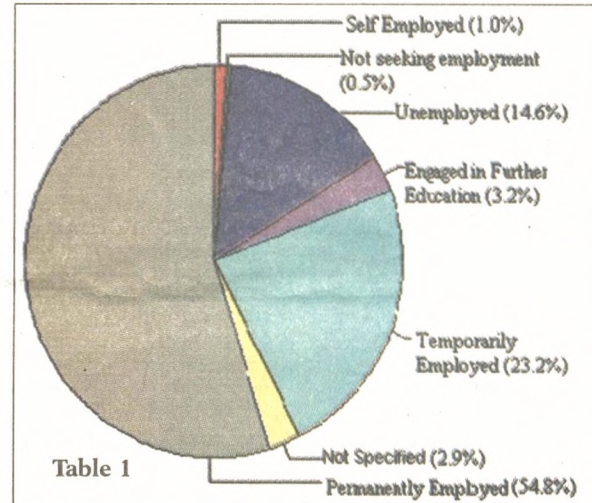


Table 1

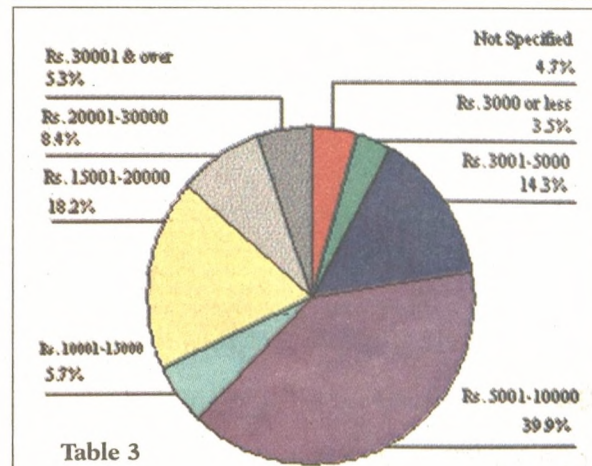


Table 3

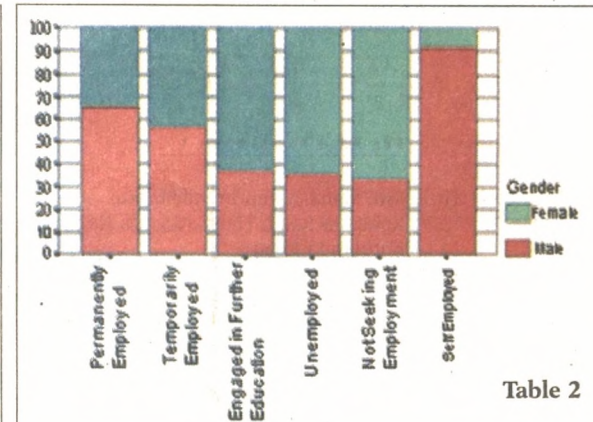


Table 2

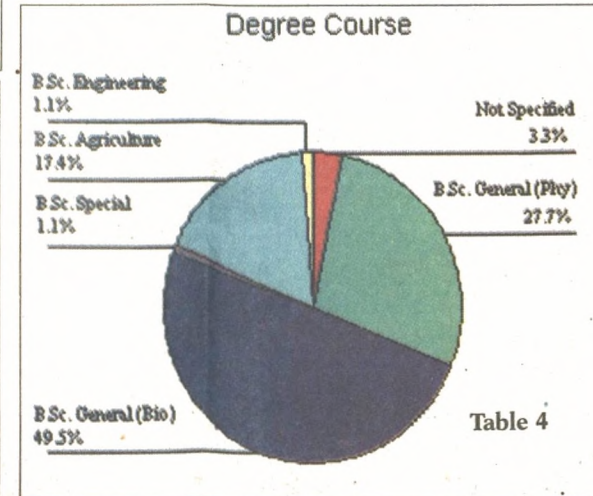


Table 4

religion, caste and political bias as the major factor for not receiving permanent employment.

secured employment within that period.

* A higher proportion of B.Sc. (Special) graduates were engaged in Research and Development activities (around 35%). Teaching was the commonest profession among B.Sc. (General) graduates.

* Temporarily employed and unemployed graduates cited discrimination on the basis of race,

* Graduates cited newspaper advertisements as the commonest means of learning about job vacancies.

* Many of the obstacles faced by graduates in finding suitable employment could be removed by making appropriate changes to the curriculum.

Obstacles indicated under (a), (d), (e) and (f) [Table 3] could be easily eliminated by making the necessary changes to the curriculum, for instance by adding project work in collaboration with research institutes, private sector industries etc. With the necessary policy changes being made to tertiary education, the obstacles indicated in (b) and (c) too could easily be overcome. Studies such as the one reported here are a step in this direction.