History of University Education in Sri Lanka

A Literature Review

Tushani P. Kalugalagedera

Thilani Kaushalya

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Foreword

Since the 1970s, Sri Lanka's higher education institutions have been facing a barrage of criticism. While access has been an underlying issue through the decades, in the more recent past the quality of university education provided and the quality of graduates produced have also come into question. Often the lack of resources in terms of funds and manpower, as well as the mis-match between the graduates produced and the skills required by the labour market are cited as key issues within the education sector. On the basis that this narrowed debate is due to a lack of historical perspectives, a micro study was commissioned to locate the current crisis in the context of the history of free tertiary education and educational policy, specifically focusing on the role of free university education as a means of social mobility over time. This literature review report provides an overview of the history of university education in Sri Lanka and trends in graduates' social mobility and other socio-economic indicators from the 1940s to 2014. It was produced as part of the preliminary stage of a micro research conducted by the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) on university education and social mobility.

Information referenced is from literature providing insights into the rationale and objectives of university education policy and the implications of university education on equity, human and national development and particularly social mobility. Special focus was placed on finding material pertaining to the unique free education system in Sri Lanka.

While this review report provides a brief background on pre-independence education in Sri Lanka, the crux of the report reviews literature covering the period from the start of the free education scheme and university education in the 1940s up to 2014. In addition, the review focuses on material pertaining to universities falling under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC), which as at 2014 constituted 15 out of the 20 government universities in Sri Lanka.

Over 85 full text publications were reviewed in the preparation of this report. Literature reviewed includes legislature, parliamentary proceedings, research reports, historical publications, national survey reports and newspaper articles.

Acronyms

AUC	-	Affiliated University Colleges
CTC	-	Ceylon Technical College
EAB	-	Education Advisory Board
FUTA	-	Federation of University Teacher's Association
HNCE	-	Higher National Certificate of Education
JVP	-	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna
KEI	-	Knowledge Economy Index
NCHE	-	National Council of Higher Education
NEC	-	National Education Commission
OUSL	-	Open University of Sri Lanka
UGC	-	University Grants Commission

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CHAPTER I

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Since the 1970s, Sri Lanka's higher education institutions have been facing a barrage of criticism. Some critics argue that severe shortfalls in resources spanning several decades, both in terms of funds and manpower, have curtailed the quality of education that is being offered (Warnapala, 2011: xii-xiii, Chandrasiri, 2003). Others argue that the universities are failing to produce graduates whose skills are demanded by the labour market and who can contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation (ILO, 1971; Youth Commission Report, 1990; Salih 2002; Herath and Ranasinghe 2011). On the basis that this narrowed debate is due to a lack of historical perspectives, a micro study was commissioned to locate the current crisis in the context of the history of free tertiary education and educational policy, specifically focusing on the role of free university education as a means of social mobility over time. This literature review was produced as part of the preliminary stage of this micro research conducted by the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) on university education and social mobility.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this literature review is to provide a background, and a review of research and literature, pertaining to the history of university education in Sri Lanka. Literature covering policy rationale and objectives, the impact of university education on equity, human and national development and, in particular, graduates' social mobility are referenced. Special focus has been placed on the unique free education system in Sri Lanka and the historical trends and reasoning behind education policy. The review focuses on material pertaining to universities falling under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC) which, as at the year 2014, constituted 15 out of the 20 government universities in Sri Lanka.[1]

1.3 Structure of the report

This report has been divided into two main chapters representing the two main concerns of the CEPA micro study; 1) mapping out the historical development of university education and 2) the socio-economic impacts of university education, from the 1940s to 2014.

Chapter One outlines the history and the main policies dealing with university education up to 2014, while highlighting the main catalysts for change within the education system. This chapter is divided into two sections; Section One provides an introduction to the literature review report, SectionTwo outlines the history and evolution of university education and higher education policies in Sri Lanka. Section Two is divided into six time periods based on changing trends in admission figures (Figure 2.1), with a timeline at the beginning of each sub-section summarising notable events in the university education sector during each time period.

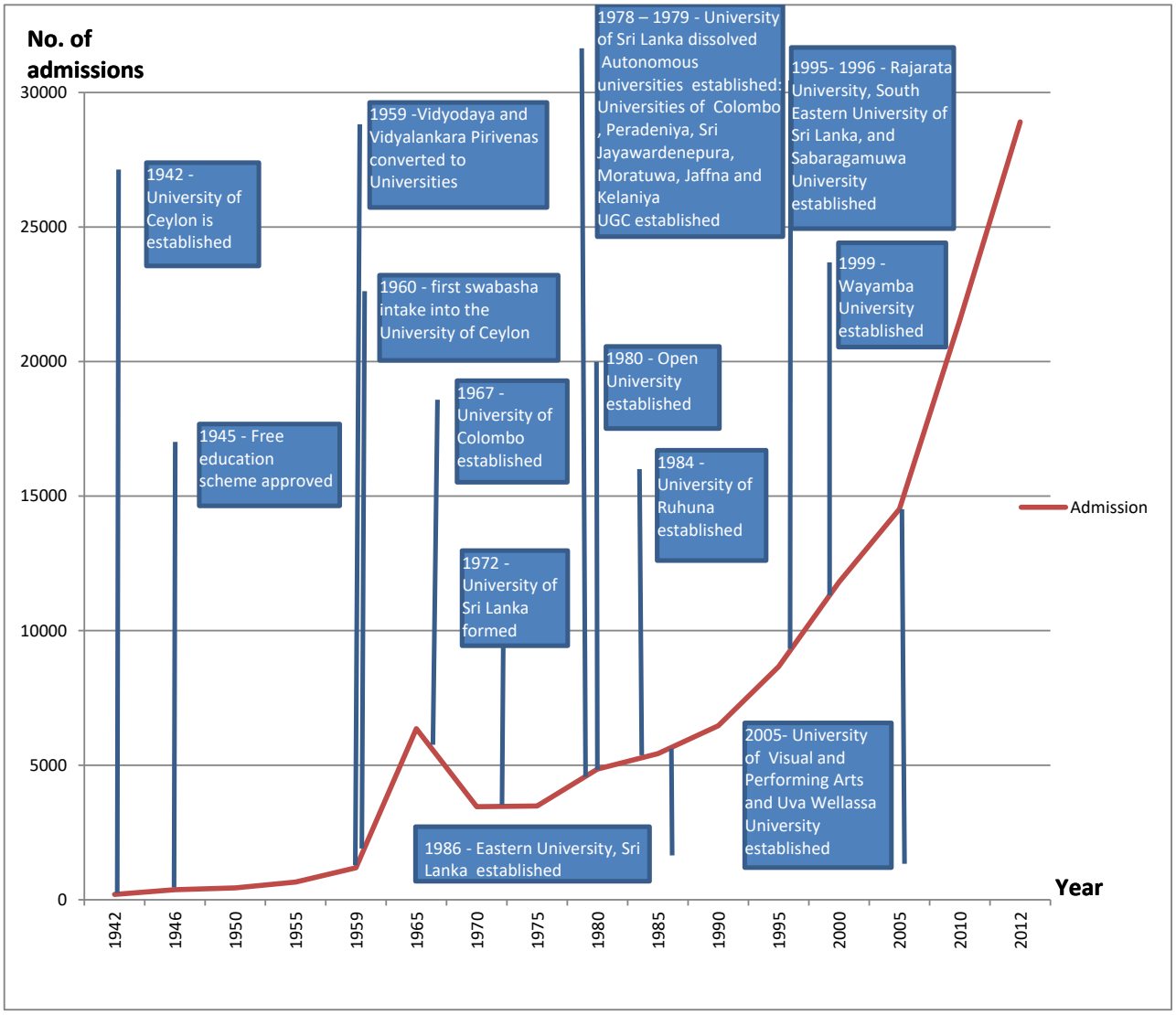
Chapter Two provides a synopsis of the main socio-economic impacts of university education (particularly social mobility) referring to findings of previous studies researching this link. Chapter Two is divided into two sections; Section Three and Section Four of the review. Section Three provides historical information on university admission policy, student numbers, social composition, gender composition, university courses and university funding for undergraduate programmes. The final section of this report, Section Four, reviews literature covering the impacts of university education, specifically in terms of social mobility, while also covering its impacts on Sri Lanka's national development and global competiveness, employment, equity and socio-economic development.

[1] Government universities which are not under the UGC are the Buddhist and Pali University and the Bhuddhasravaka Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka which come under the Ministry of Higher Education, The General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University which is under the Ministry of Defense, The University of Vocational Technology which is under the Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training and The Ocean University of Sri Lanka which comes under the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training.

2. History of University Education

This chapter maps out the history of higher education in Sri Lanka from pre-independence to 2014. While this chapter provides a brief background on pre-independence education in Sri Lanka, the chapter is mainly dedicated to providing an overview of the flow of events covering the period from the start of the free education scheme and the evolution of university education in the 1940s up to 2014. The chapter has been divided into six time periods: pre-independence, independence and early post-colonial, 1960s, 1970 – 1984, 1985 – 1999, and 2000 – 2014. These time periods were chosen mainly for being periods of significant change in university admission numbers (please refer Figure 2.1). Each time period starts with a text box summarising the significant economic policies and socio-economic events during the period, in order to provide the reader with an idea of the macro environment in which changes in the university education sector were taking place. A timeline is then provided highlighting key events in the university education sector during the specific period. This is then followed by a description of the changes which took place during the period, linked to policies, socio-economic trends and development demands at the time.

Figure 2.1: Establishment of Universities and Admission of University Students from 1942 - 2012



* 'The X-axis five year time interval and admission is based on availability of data.'

2.1: Pre-independence

Pre-independence - Key socio-economic trends/events

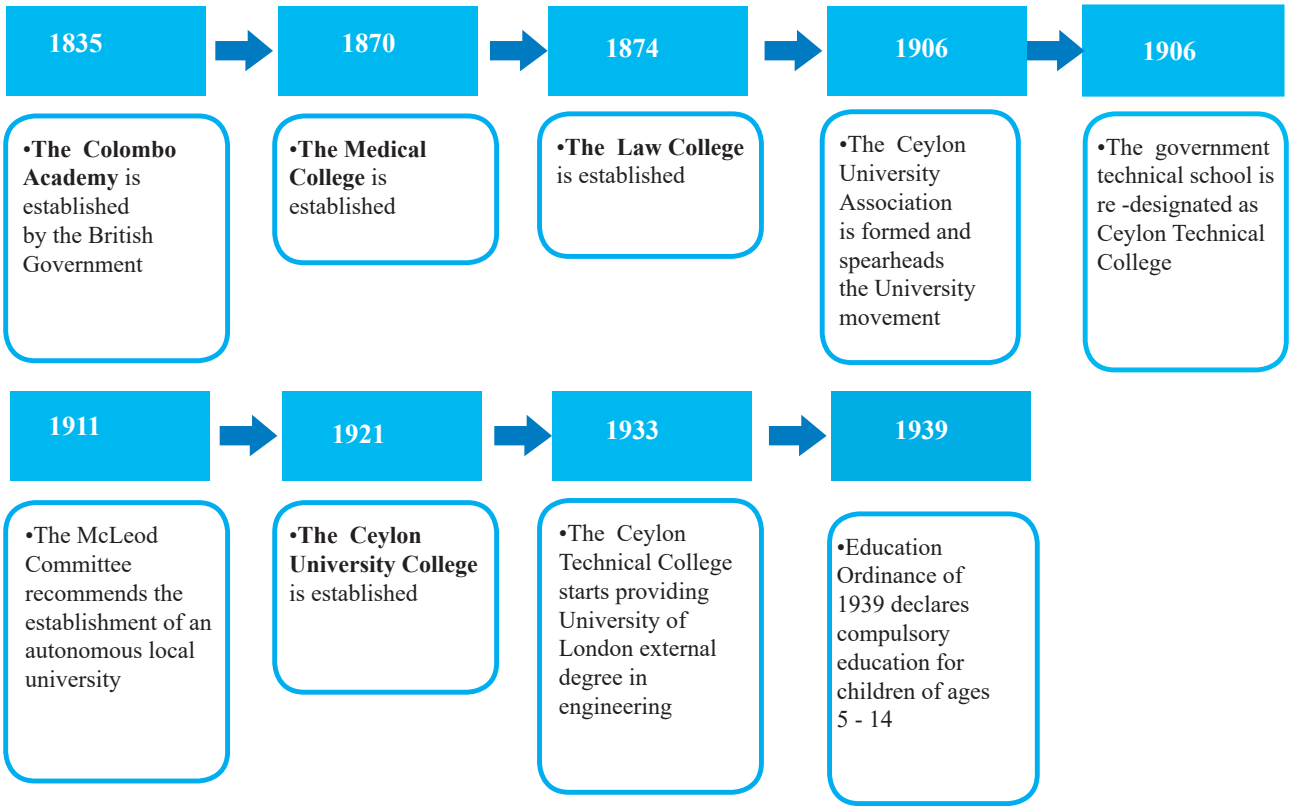
Colonial integration into global markets.

Emergence of Estate agriculture - agriculture (plantation crops and their processing) constitutes the main economic activity.

First World War (1914-1918) and post-war depression delay the establishment of the Ceylon University College.

Source: Little & Hettige, 2016: 45

Figure 2.2: Timeline from 1835 to 1939



While under colonial rule the content and pattern of education in Sri Lanka were based on the needs and objectives of the colonial administration (Warnapala 2011: ii). Within 3 years of occupation, specific training and education systems were established for the sons of Mudaliyars and other chiefs to supply English speaking officers to various Government Departments and from 1811 onwards, the sons of Chiefs were also sent to British Universities to create an elite corps. As stated by T. L. Green 'whether or not Western education aimed first at religious conversion is unclear, that it had vocational purpose in producing clerks and other such servants of State is certain, as it is that it sought to re-align the loyalties of some in terms of ruler identification.' (Green T. L. 1956[2], cited by Warnapala 2011: ii). However, the appearance of this education system did not destroy the remnants of the indigenous education systems as these too existed in a rudimentary form associated with the Buddhist foundations of learning (Warnapala 2011:ii). The primary and secondary education systems that existed under British colonial administration consisted of education being provided in the vernacular languages for the masses and an elitist education in English for a select few (de Silva 2013: 185). Missionary-sponsored schools provided an English education for a fee and their students had better access to higher education and professional appointments (Seram D. D. 1973:

[2] Green T. L., 1956. Education and Society in Ceylon, in *Educand*. Vol II. No.3 of 1956

1169[3], cited by Samaranayake 1991: 95). Schools which functioned in the backward rural areas were exclusively vernacular and provided elementary forms of education. The number of English educated students in the 19th century was very small, only 2% of the population was English literate in 1901 (Peiris R. 1964: 437, cited by Warnapala 2011: vi). Thus, educational policy in the then 'Ceylon' aimed at the creation of an elite body of educated native middle class (as stated by Lord Macaulay in his 'Minute on Education'). In 1833 the Colebrooke Commission introduced a set of utilitarian-oriented reforms with the aim of 'preparing candidates for public employment and as an aid to natives to cultivate European attainments' (De Silva K. M. 1965: 143, cited by Warnapala 2011: iv). The Commission recommended the establishment of a College in Colombo and discussion on the need for the establishment of a higher institute of learning ensued.

In 1835, the ***Colombo Academy*** was established by the British Government, and '…it was the first institution – nucleus of higher learning – established for the purpose of imparting some kind of higher education' (Peiris R. 1964: 436, cited by Warnapala 2011: iv). The Colombo Academy (renamed **Royal College** in 1881) prepared students for external examinations conducted by the University of London and it was the island's premier government school for higher education courses (Malalasekara 1969a: 867). Higher education was also provided through secondary schools (Colleges) established through the activities of the Missionary schools. These Colleges provided courses which led to University degrees and qualifications required for white collar employment. The Colleges were supported by the Government because they provided personnel for Government service (Warnapala 2011: 7). It was through these Colleges, that links with foreign universities were established – for instance the affiliation of Colombo Academy to the University of Calcutta in 1859. This 'affiliated system' was a restrictive form of higher education with the (foreign) University which awarded the degree preparing the curriculum of teaching and evaluating learner-achievements, leaving little room for innovation by local institutions (Warnapala 2011: v). Christian students also found it easier to gain admissions into these affiliated Colleges and as pointed out by Ralph Pieris (1964, cited by Warnapala 2011: v), it was a policy to confine the educated elite to the Christian elements of the Ceylonese society.

During the first half of the 19th century the British Government only spent a minor amount on education which limited the expansion of educational opportunities. Rapidly increasing revenues reaped from the expansion of plantation industries stimulated a steady growth of expenditure on education. However, English remained reserved for the rich and privileged.

The higher education institutions in both the areas of Medicine[4] and Law, the ***Ceylon Medical College*** (which was funded by the state) and the ***Law College*** (a self-financed institution which did not receive a grant from the government and was managed by the Council of Legal Education[5]), came into existence in the 1870s (Ratnapala 1991: 88, de Silva and Peiris 1995: 4-5, Warnapala 2009: 2). These were the earliest institutions of professional education.

The Government Technical School (founded in 1893) was re-designated the ***Ceylon Technical College*** (CTC) in 1906 under the Department of Education (de Silva & Peiris 1995: 4, Warnapala 2009: 2) and formed the nucleus for engineering studies. The original function of the institute was training skilled personnel for various technical departments of the government. This later expanded to teaching higher-level engineering, telegraphy, surveying, chemistry and physics (de Silva & Peiris 1995: 5).[6]

The western educated elite that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century began an

[3] Saram, D. D., 1973. Education: An Era of Reform, *Asian Survey*, 13

[4] The Medical College was established due to the need and demand for properly-qualified medical staff. (Ratnapala 1991:2)

[5] The Council of Legal Education is made up of the Hon. Chief Justice (Chairman), Hon. Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Secretary to the Ministry of Justice, two judges of the Supreme Court nominated by the Chief Justice, six members appointed by the Minister of Justice and two members nominated by the Bar Association of Sri Lanka (Anon. 2000: 1).

[6] By 1931 there were 128 Trade and Industrial Schools in the country providing vocational education (Sumathipala 1968: 340). In 1933, the CTC started preparing students for University of London external degrees in engineering (and was later linked to the University of Ceylon's Faculty of Engineering in 1952) (de Silva & Peiris 1995: 4). When the Engineering Faculty was moved to Peradeniya the CTC reverted back to its original role of training technicians and as a centre of management and business education.

agitation for the expansion of higher education in the island and formed the **Ceylon University Association** in 1906, led by Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam (Malalasekara 1969a: 869). There were two compelling thoughts behind the agitation for a national university; first was the educational need to expand the limited avenues available for post-secondary education, second was a cultural dimension which placed the university as an integral part of the cultural renaissance that the country felt entitled to experience after centuries of colonial rule (de Silva 2013: 87). The Ceylon University Association was often supported by individual Christian missionaries (op.cit.: 868). As part of the developing nationalist movement, the English educated elite demanded the establishment of 'a University adapted to local needs' as well as an extension of secondary education. Arunachalam stressed that the chief aim of the Ceylon University would be to see that 'Our youth do not grow up strangers to their mother-tongue and to their past history and traditions' (The Journal of the Ceylon Association 1 1906, cited by Ratnapala 1991:88).

In 1912, Governor Sir Henry McCallum appointed a committee (the **McLeod committee**) to examine whether it was desirable to continue the existing arrangements regarding Royal College and the more prominent 'colleges' in preparing students for the London University examination or whether it should be replaced by a single institution which could provide higher education either as a University or University college. The McLeod Committee recommended the establishment of a university in the new building of Royal College in Colombo, stressing the need for a local alternative for families who could not afford to send their sons to England for education, particularly in view of the development of a fairly large wealthy class. In 1913 the Executive Council resolved that a Ceylon University College should be established (Malalasekara 1969a: 870-871).

Governor Chalmers who arrived in the island in 1914 restated the views of the McLeod Committee and urged the establishment of a university. However, the outbreak of the First World War and post-war depression hindered progress and The ***Ceylon University College*** was only established in Colombo in 1921 (Malalasekara 1969a: 871). It was not an autonomous university and this was largely due the fact it was administered in the form of a Government Department (Warnapala 2013:ix). According to K. M. de Silva and Peiris (1995: 6) the University College was always regarded as a half-way house to a national university and it took 21 years for it to become part of the country's first national university[7].

Governor Chalmers (the Governor of British Ceylon from 1913 to 1915) expressed the view that the University College should ultimately be converted into a university granting degrees, and be affiliated to an English university (preferably Oxford). 'He wanted it to be residential in character, the students residing in hostels leased by the government to educational organisations' (de Silva 2013: 187). This is a view that was echoed by the then Director of Education, Edward Denham, who pointed out that 'it was hoped and believed that the University College would develop into a University awarding Degrees of permanent value, and of value outside Ceylon' (Jennings 1951 1920[8], cited by Ratnapala 1991: 88). As the Ceylon University College was not a fully-fledged autonomous national university, pressure kept being applied by those who began the university movement.

[7] It only broke its affiliation to the University of London in 1942 when it became part of the University of Ceylon (1995: 9).

[8] Jennings,W. I., 1920. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon. Sessional Paper IX.
Jennings, W. I., 1951. The Foundation of the University of Ceylon. University of Ceylon Review IX.

2.2: From 1940 – 1959: Free education and early post-colonial university education Oxbridge model

Post-independence: Key socio-economic trends/events

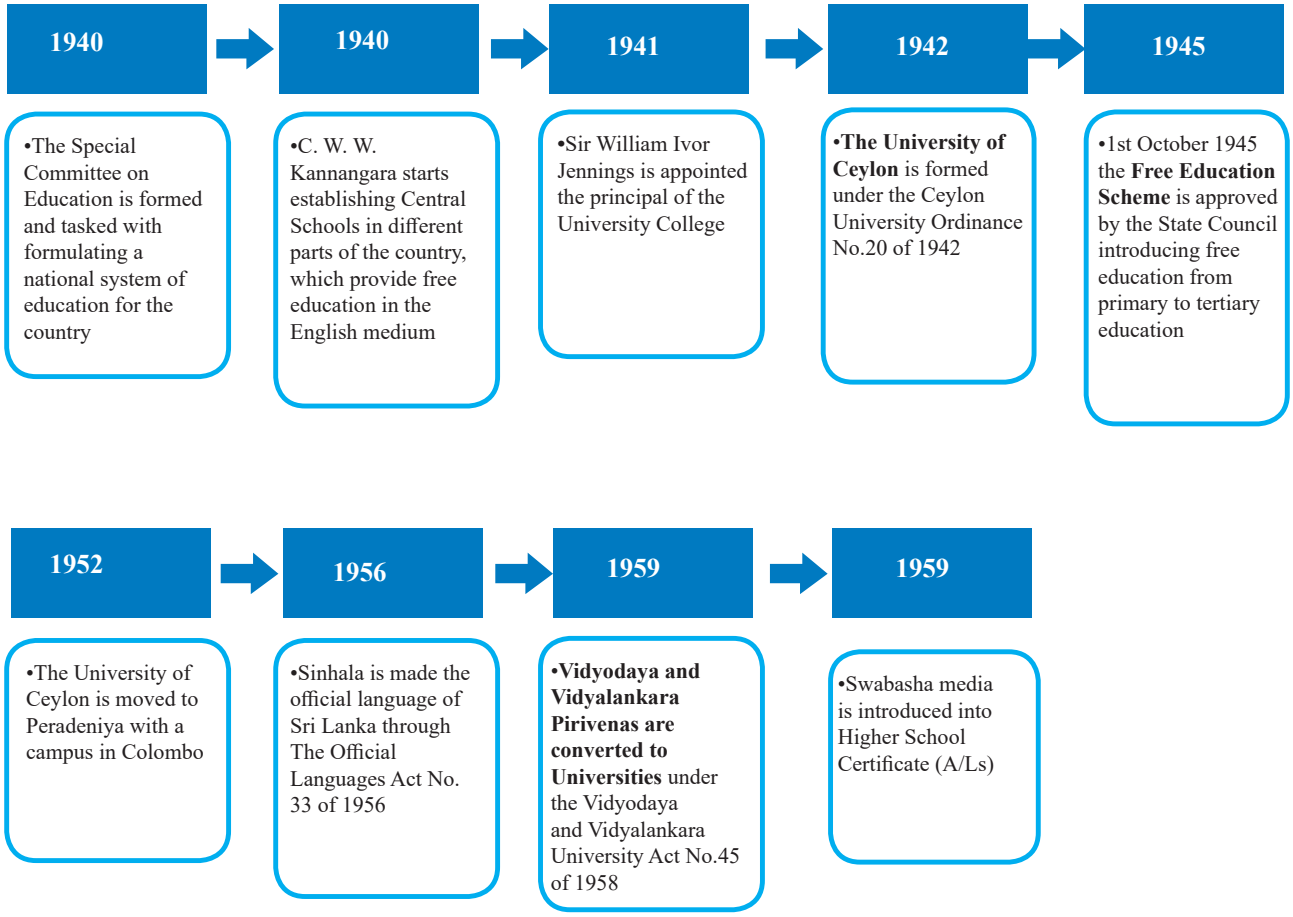
World War II (1939 – 1945) and the Great Depression delay the establishment of the University of Ceylon

1948 to 1956 – government pursues policies of minimum state intervention, economic populism and an open economy: welfare benefits are introduced such as free education, free healthcare, subsidised foodstuffs, public transportation

1956 – state-led protectionist development strategy (closed economy): high tariff levels, import and exchange controls, increased presence of state enterprises, import substitution industrialisation, central planning

Source: Sandaratne. 2014 Sunday Times; Little & Hettige, 2016: 45

Figure 2.3: Timeline from 1940 to 1959



As the country approached independence, educational reforms across the entire education system were required and were being formulated during the early 20th century. In 1931 the Donoughmore Constitution was inaugurated, giving the country a large measure of internal self-government and universal suffrage (de Silva 2013: 144). Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara became the Minister of Education and was a member of the State Council and he led the Executive Committee. The education law that prevailed at the time was the Education Ordinance of 1920 under which the Board of Education was the all-powerful body on policy making. The Board consisted of officials and others nominated by the governor. 'They represented the vested interests at the time and were determined to maintain the privileges of the denominational bodies that were in control of a large number of assisted schools' (Medegama 2014: 3). De Silva (2013: 146) states that the passing of the **Education Ordinance No. 17 of 1939**, which amended the Education Ordinance No.1 of 1920, paved the way for the major reforms in education that were to follow. It empowered the State Council and the Executive Committee to make the changes required without having to obtain approval from the Director and Board of Education which was dominated by those who wanted no change in the status quo.

At this time, quality education was available only in the English medium urban schools and had become the preserve of relatively well-to-do-families. In 1931, prior to the introduction of Central Schools, 88% of the school going children were enrolled in the Swabasha and Bilingual schools and the remaining 12% attended fee-levying English schools (Sumathipala 1968: 209). Kannangara played a pivotal role in the establishment of **Central Schools** (Madya Maha Vidyalayas) with the aim of taking quality education to the less advantaged rural population. The first Central School was established in Matugama in 1940 and there were 22 Central Schools by 1944 (de Silva 2010, 2013: 150) and 54 by 1946 (Gunawardena 1980: 12). They were the first schools to provide free education in the English medium. The schools also provided free board and lodging, free clothing, as well as books and stationery for scholarship holders (ibid)[9].

The Central Schools added a third category of schools to the existing system which consisted of i) vernacular schools providing free education in Sinhala and Tamil and ii) fee-levying schools providing education in the English medium. Central Schools began to produce students who were able to compete for university admissions with their counterparts from schools which had English as the medium of instruction from kindergarten upwards (de Silva 2013: 151, 152).

In terms of higher education, in 1929 the **Buchanan-Riddell Commission** (Riddell Commission) which had been entrusted with the task of examining the question of establishing a University in Ceylon, released their report. It outlined the steps necessary to establish a new unitary and residential university and also prepared a draft constitution for such a university, which greatly influenced the 1942 constitution of the University of Ceylon (Warnapala 2011:108). The Riddell Commission drew from the experiences of certain Universities in India such as Lucknow, Allhabad, and Dacca (*op.cit.*: 102). The need to establish a university with a unitary, independent and autonomous status was one of the recommendations of the report. Regarding the relationship between the Government and the proposed university, the Riddell Commission made a strong case for academic freedom, stating that 'no University, deserves the title of University which is denied freedom to determine the branches of learning in which it will provide instruction and promote research and the conditions of governing the appointment of its staff and the control of its regulation and of intervention by the legislature.' (Riddell Report: 44, cited by Warnapala 2011: 104). The Commission also recommended that the university be funded by the Government via a block grant which the university would be free to use at its discretion, and a statutory grant for five years (Warnapala 2011: 105). Warnapala (2011: 106-107) states that the dependence on government grants was one based on accepted university traditions at the time and this demanded that universities maintain good relations with governments.

In 1930 the draft University Bill, which was based on the Buchanan-Riddell Commission report (with some modifications) passed its second reading in the Legislative Council. However, the outbreak of World War II, the onset of the Great Depression and the debate over where to site the university (The Battle of the Sites[10]) resulted in a stalemate for the next 9 years (Jayasuriya 1969: 159 – 160, De Silva and Peiris 1995:.6-7). However, in 1942 delays in receiving question papers and dispatching answer scripts to the Examination of the London University due to the war were creating difficulties for the Ceylon University College and holding up studies. This emergency situation prompted the government to finally establish the first autonomous university in Sri Lanka in 1942, the ***University of Ceylon,*** by amalgamating the Ceylon Medical College and the Ceylon University College under the **Ceylon University Ordinance No.20 of 1942** (Jayasuriya 1969: 160, De Silva & Peiris 1995: 7).

When steering the University Ordinance through the State Council, Kannangara in his first reading of the Bill stated that 'The Bill itself is drafted on the popular model.... That is, the model that is to be found in the case of most of the other Universities. The University will be an autonomous body and will not form a department under the Government...' (Hansard 1942: 452-4). The residential nature of the university was also debated. Sir Ivor Jennings (the then principle of the Ceylon University

[9] Chapter II of this document elaborates further on the findings of Gunawardena's study (1980), Socio-economic effectiveness of higher education in Sri Lanka: A Study of a Cohort of Arts Graduates.

[10] The 'battle of the site' was over the proposed university's location. The site was ultimately to be Peradeniya and until buildings were ready in Peradeniya it was decided to establish the university in Colombo.

College) was convinced that the needs of Ceylon could not be met by a partially residential university as only students from affluent homes and convenient distances could benefit from such a University. Poor students of a high academic quality may not have an adequate foundation (physique, home education and schooling background) to succeed as an undergraduate. Jennings stated that such a student was '...excellent raw material and a university can do much for him if it takes him out of his environment and puts him in a Hall of Residence' (Jennings cited by de Silva 2013:193). The Ceylon University Ordinance No.20 of 1942 was passed on 1st July 1942 and was the foundation for the University of Ceylon which was initially located in Colombo (until the infrastructure in Peradeniya, Kandy had been built). In the ordinance, the university had the power to demand and receive fees as determined by the Act. There was also a clause which dealt with the secular nature of the university which ensured that the university was open to all persons of either sex and whatever race, creed or class, and it was not lawful for the University to impose conditions in relation to the religious beliefs of a person (Section 7 of Ceylon University Ordinance No.20 of 1942, cited by Jennings 1944: 2).

However, Warnapala (2011: x) states that both the University College and subsequently the University of Ceylon functioned as elite institutions. W. A. Jayawardena (the former Registrar of the University of Ceylon) stated that the University of Ceylon'… was intended to be an isolated teaching institution preparing a chosen few for traditional degree courses in selected disciplines and cut away from the people at large' (Jayawardena 2008[11]: 32, cited by Warnapala 2011:136). Thus, the University of Ceylon was initially not envisioned for a large number of students. In 1938, the number envisaged was the same given in the Riddell Commission report, over 550. When the University of Ceylon opened in 1942 it was recorded as admitting 942 students (Sanyal *et al*. : 114). It had four faculties: Arts, Oriental Studies, Science and Medicine (Sanyal *et al*. : 114). The Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science was added in 1947 and Engineering in 1949 (*op. cit.*: 114). By the late 1940s Jennings stated that as part of the Peradeniya Scheme the immediate objective was to provide residential university for 1,600 students (De Silva & Peiris 1995: 17). The University was initially based in Colombo and then in 1952 the University of Ceylon was shifted to Peradeniya with a campus in Colombo (Warnapala 2011: x). Thus, the University of Ceylon functioned with two campuses, Peradeniya and Colombo and the student intake increased, reaching 10,723 by 1965 (Warnapala, 2011: 140, 213).

The University of Ceylon was modelled on the Oxbridge formula and it was elitist and exclusively residential in character (Warnapala 2009: 8). Warnapala states that it was based on the ideas and ideals of the late Sir Ivor Jennings (Warnapala 2009: 8). However, as early as 1914 Governor Chalmer stated that ultimately the local university should be residential, as did the Riddell Commission report in 1929 (de Silva 2013: 188). The Riddell Commission report also recommended the university be unitary and autonomous and that it should incorporate the main features of the Oxbridge model. Thus, according to de Silva the profile of the university was agreed upon well before Jennings' appointment at the Ceylon University College. De Silva (2013: 137) was of the view that Jennings brought into Peradeniya a hybrid between the Oxbridge London model and the Redbrick model (defined in section 2.5 of this report), creating a unitary residential and autonomous university[12]. The autonomy of the university was secured through the formation of the Court, Council and Senate which had clear responsibilities prescribed by law, preventing government or ministerial control or interference (de Silva 2011).

Oxbridge model

The term Oxbridge is a portmanteau of the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge and is often used to refer to the similar characteristics of these two universities. Oxford and Cambridge were made up of self-governing residential colleges. Referring to Oxford and Cambridge, Jennings stated, 'In the colleges these scholars did far more than attend lectures and laboratories. … They lived a common life in which they learned to adapt themselves to each other's ways, discussed each other's personal problems, argued about everything from religion to racing, read books that were not prescribed, played games together, and developed a high sense of communal loyalty' (Jennings

[11] Jayawardena W. A., 2008. *March Towards an Open University*. Colombo

[12] G Uswatte-aratchi (*The Island*, 12th December 2010 cited by E. J. de Silva 2013) and E. J. de Silva point out that Peradeniya differed from the Oxbridge model – the tutorial classes and the structure and content of academic programmes did not attempt to follow the Oxbridge model.

2005,197). The Riddell Commission referring to a residential university said very categorically that 'the collegiate life associated for centuries with Oxford and Cambridge would give the maximum opportunities of corporate life and of daily association between students of all sorts and condition for living in close contact with each other and with senior members of the University …' (cited by de Silva 2013:188). This connection with the corporate life meant that the universities were intimately connected with the theological traditions which dominated life and learning during that period.

It is also interesting to note that the Oxbridge model to this day denotes a sense of elitism. For instance, in her 2008 article 'Oxbridge Blues' Cadwalladar states that 50% of admissions into Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the United Kingdom were from private schools, despite making up only 7% of the total school population (Cadwalladar 2008). The Sutton Trust's research into the university background of UK's professional elite states that an independent school student is 55 times more likely to win an Oxbridge place and 22 times more likely to go to a top-ranked university than a state school student from a poor household (The Sutton Trust 2010: 2). The Sutton Trust also researched the background of 2,533 of the leading figures in the UK and found that 45% of them had obtained their first degree at either Oxford or Cambridge (The Sutton Trust 2007: 8).

The **Free Education Scheme in 1945** (which came to be known as the social demand model of education) was one of the main catalysts for change. The socio-economic context in which these reforms for the secondary and tertiary education system took place should be recognised to facilitate understanding of the thinking behind the reforms. C. W. W. Kannangara was one of the main leaders of these reforms. Sumathipala (1968: chapter 9) elaborates on how Kannangara had been an ardent supporter of a unified system of state schools, an opinion which seemed to have been influenced by William H. Kilpatrick, Professor of Education at the Teachers College, Columbia University. Kannangara refers to Kilpatrick and states that 'We discussed this matter with him and he is strongly of the opinion that the system prevailing now in this island of running these schools by various denominations is not calculated to do any good to the country, and he is strongly of the opinion that all these schools should be taken over by the government.' (Hansard 1927, cited by Sumathipala 1968: 161). The socio-economic context under which these reforms came about were as follows; poverty did not allow people to access fee levying education, only a small number were employed in wage earning jobs, the existing low literacy rate (only 39% literacy rate in 1937, female literacy was 12%), only 8% had some form of secondary education, high birth rates, and a 72% dependency rate in the population (Sedere 2005: 3). By this time the Missionary-oriented public schools and denominational schools[13] had grown to become a network of secondary schools. The colonial administration, after the hardships brought on by World War II, was not geared to have development plans for the colonies. A Charity Based Approach was adopted and things (rice, milk) were given on charity. Sedere (2005: 4) states that in this context, if education were to be given to all, free education was the only choice. The vernacular medium was also the only avenue for delivery because only 3% of the population was English literate (*ibid*.).

The medium of instruction at school was a point of great interest to the reforms that were to be proposed from the 1940s onwards in the education system. Jennings points out that English was looked upon as a badge of servitude with its link to colonialism and class-distinction. He argues that it perhaps may have been more that the class-distinction created the language distinction, with only parents with large enough incomes being able to provide their children with an English education (Jennings 2005: 153,154).

In 1940, Kannangara formed and chaired the Special Committee on Education which was tasked with formulating a national system of education for a country emerging out of centuries of colonial rule. The Special Committee consisted of 23 members, mainly from the State Council, Department of Education, University College, and schools or training colleges (Jennings 2005: 138). The connection between the educational needs of the country and the country's responsibility towards its citizens (and vice versa) were highlighted in the Report on the Special Committee on Education ('The Special Committee Report'). In their report, the committee stated that their task was to recommend an

[13] The Buddhist Theosophical Society (BTS) (founded in 1880 for the promotion of Buddhist education) had established a network of secondary schools while a similar network of schools was established with the initiative of the Christian denominations (Warnapala, 2009: 102). According to the Special Committee report there were 2,246 denominational schools in the country out of the total 3,641 schools in 1930 (de Silva 2013: 163).

educational system suitable for a democracy. A system which would

'... *enable every citizen to play his full part in the life of the nation. This means two things. Firstly, the individual must be helped to achieve the highest degree of physical, mental and moral development of which he is capable, irrespective of his wealth or social status. Secondly, the individual as a result of his education should be able to use his abilities for the good of the nation in the fullest possible measure and should be able to pass his judgement on affairs of state and exercise intelligently the franchise that the State has conferred upon him'* (Sessional Paper XXIV 1943, p 9)

This was a turning point in the country's education system, with education beginning to be looked upon as a basic right. In his address to the Executive Committee when passing the 'Free Education Bill' C. W. W. Kannangara stated '*"Sir, how much nobler – when we shall be able to say that we found education dear and left it cheap, that we found it a sealed book and left it an open letter, we found it the patrimony of the rich and left it the inheritance of the poor"* (Hansard 1944: 946). The main defects in the education system highlighted by the Committee were; 1) the existence of two types of education, English and Vernacular, with the former catering to a minority but having more resources, 2) excessive uniformity of the educational system which was academic in character and almost totally unrelated to the practical aspects of life, 3) absence of equality of opportunity within the system 4) compulsory education in substantial measure was not compulsory (*ibid*: 273 – 274).

The Report submitted by the Committee was signed by 17 members except Sir W. Ivor Jennnings who in his dissent stated that 'It was not until the 88th meeting when the report was ready for signature that it was recommended that education be free from Kindergarten to University. I agree with that decision... It seems to me, however, that the consequences of the decision need more consideration than the committee has given to them.' (cited by Sumathipala 1968: 272) Some of Jennings' concerns were that the education system was not prepared to accommodate (in terms of infrastructure, teachers, as well as finance) the large intake of students which would result from the proposed free education, making education compulsory, and other changes proposed in the Report (Jennings 2005: 149). These predicted issues would be faced by the country's free university education system many years into the future.

The recommendations of the Special Committee on Education were accepted by the Executive Committee with a few modifications. The regulations were approved by the State Council without a division on 28th August 1945, and the Free Education Scheme became a reality on 1st October 1945 (Sumathipala 1968: 301). Education was made free from kindergarten to University on the grounds of social justice and social efficiency (Sessional Paper XXIV 1943. Chapter XI: 64-66). In 1945, accordingly, fees were abolished in state and state-subsidised educational institutions. Free education in the English medium was extended to cover all fee-levying English medium schools, both government and private (all except for 15 schools who took the option to remain out of the scheme foregoing the government grant they received at the time) (De Silva 2013: 180). The Special Committee on Education also recommended that the change to the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction in all stages of education be phased over a number of years, starting with the primary schools in 1945 (Gunawardena 1980: 13). In 1947, the State Council approved The **Education Ordinance of 1947** which incorporated Kannangara's proposals. The free education system had tremendous impacts on the social, economic and political developments in the country (Warnapala, 2011: xi), which are described in Section 4 of this report.

Between 1950 – 1960 the number of students in grades 9 -12 rose from 65,000 to 225,000 primarily due to the network of Central Schools which provided rural districts with access to education (Warnapala, 2011. p.143)[14]. The impact on the quantitative expansion of education is illustrated by the claim made the Director of Education in 1958 that the number of pupils in the Higher School Certificate classes had risen by 70% (Government of Ceylon 1958[15], cited by Gunawardena 1980: 15).

However despite this expansion of the primary and secondary education system, popular criticism

[14] G. C. Mendis (1944, cited by Warnapala: 141), stated that the reforms advocated in the Report of the Special Committee on Education 'are of such great political and social significance that, if effectively carried out, this would affect privileged classes and institutions and alter the entire structure of our social system.'

[15] Government of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) 1958. Administrative Report of the Director of Education, Colombo.

of the existing university model remained, based on the view that university education was still exclusive and operated on the basis of a restricted admission policy. Nationalistic and political forces demanded an unlimited extension of university education to accommodate and provide opportunities for the large number of students generated from the secondary school system who aspired to get into socially esteemed jobs with higher education qualifications (Warnapala 2011: xi). There was a popular demand for university education to be in the national languages (Warnapala 2011: 214). The residential principle and the elite-orientation principle which existed within the university system at the time were the casualties of these social and political pressures.

The **Needham Commission** was appointed in 1959 to review the workings of the University of Ceylon. The main issues highlighted by the Commission were as follows: the atmosphere of the University was alien and hostile to the traditions of the country; the University increasingly promoted 'an ivory tower' attitude; it was not responsible even to Parliament; the type of graduate produced was unsuitable for the country; there was an absence of a research tradition; undergraduate indiscipline existed; the non-representative character of the governing bodies; there was an absence of departments devoted to the study of cultural traditions of the country (Report of the Ceylon University Commission Sessional Paper XXIII 1959: 5 cited by Warnapala 2011: 219). The Commission recognised the need for an expansion in university education but stated that such expansion without due consideration to adequate provision of facilities and ensuring corresponding employment opportunities would create a class of discontented unemployed graduates (Report of the Ceylon University Commission Sessional Papers XXIII 1959: 140 cited by Warnapala 2011: 220, 221). Warnapala states that in the end the difference in opinion among the commission's members affected its recommendations[16] and according to some critics the Needham Report had a limited impact on the evolution of the university system in Ceylon (Warnapala 2011: 221 - 223).

The expansion of university education began in the same year, 1959, with the two leading Buddhist centres of learning, Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas[17], being converted to Universities. On the eve of the general election of 1956, Mr. S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike gave an undertaking that his political party would give due recognition to pirivena education. ***Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas*** being the oldest and best known of the pirivenas were conferred with university status under the hastily drafted **Vidyodaya and Vidyalanakara University Act No.45 of 1958**. When presenting the Bill to grant the Pirivenas university status, the Ministry of Education stated that the following objectives would be met by the legislation: giving the Sinhalese language its due place in higher education, ensuring a supply of teachers who could teach in the Sinhalese medium, and opening the door to higher education to deserving pupils who were shut out of the University of Ceylon for lack of accommodation (Gunawardena 1980: 16). This was consistent with the Official Languages Act (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1956) also known as the 'Sinhala Only Bill' passed in 1956 by the government and the Prime Minister of Ceylon S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, making Sinhalese the official language of the country. The Vidyodaya and Vidyalanakara University Act No.45 of 1958 came into operation on 1st January 1959 (Jayasuriya 1969: 166). The unrest after the passing of the Sinhala Only Bill and the Sinhala-Tamil swabasha movement, saw the passing of the Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act (Sri Lanka Consolidated Acts 1958).

According to the Gunewardena Commission appointed in 1962 to look into education reforms (see Section 2.3 of this report for more details), political pressure was one of the main reasons behind the passing of the bill that gave the Pirivenas university status (Sessional Paper XVI 1963: 31). Political pressure from bhikkus in the early 50s played a significant role in the overthrowing of the earlier regime in the 1956 General Elections. According to the Commission, the Bhikku Peramuna that rose from these events dictated policies, dominated affairs and incited action. At the time, the Vidyodaya and Vidyalanakara Universities were being considered, the 'Bhikku Peramuna' is reported to have stated at a public meeting that "retribution will surely come upon those sophisticated anti-Swabasha elements in the senate for attempting to delay the Pirivena Universities Bill" (Senate Hansard Volume

[16] Recommendations were made regarding the expansion of university education; an additional University of Colombo, creating several independent Universities, decentralisation of university education, establishment of Regional Universities and a University for Tamil speaking people (Warnapala 2011: 223).

[17] Pirivenas were Buddhist Monk Training Centres. Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas were created in 1873 and 1875 respectively to promote Buddhist learning in the country (Warnapala, 2009: 108).

12 – Columns 1148-1152, cited in Sessional Papers XVI,1963. Chapter IV: 31).

With the creation of these two Universities, the University of Ceylon lost its monopoly over university education (Warnapala, 2011: xi). An impact of the formation of the two universities and the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil as mediums of instructions at universities can be seen in the increase in admissions to universities from 1960 (see Figure 2.1).

2.3: The 1960s: Swabasha and university admissions

1960s: Key socio-economic trends/events

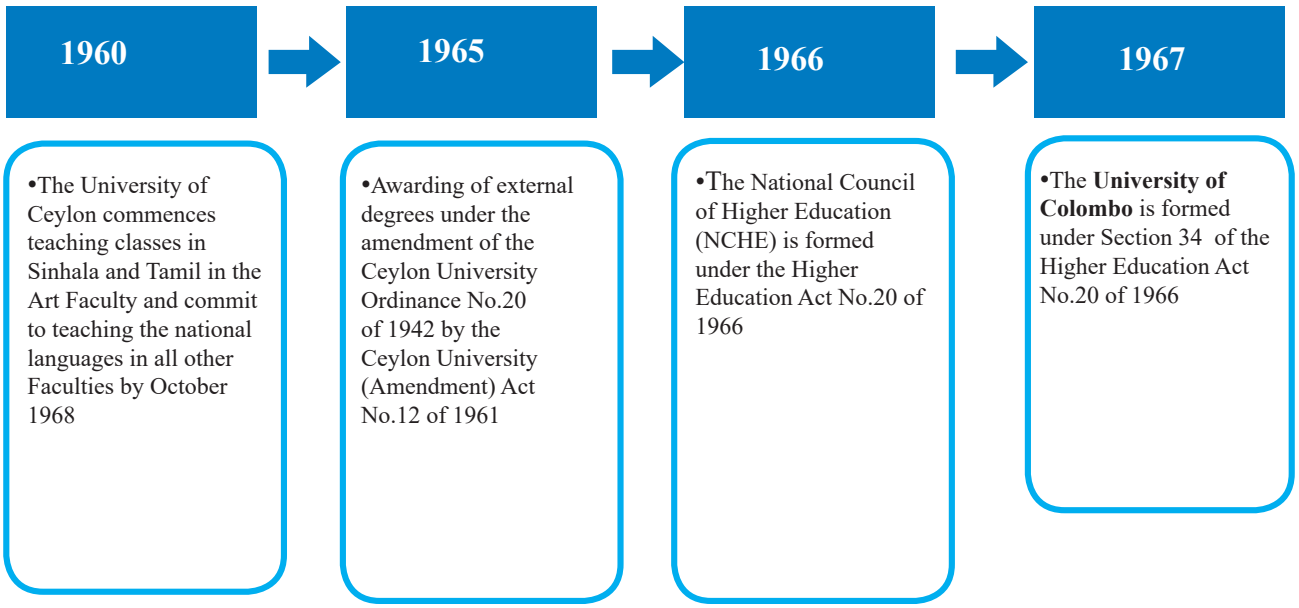
Economic stagnation – rising budget deficits, rising inflation, unemployment and under-employment.

Closed economy from 1956 until 1965.

1965 to 1970: limited liberalisation of the economy encouraging foreign investment, introduction of a dual exchange rate, and the Government's 'Food Production Drive'.

Source: Sandaratne 2014 Sunday Times; Little & Hettige, 2016: 46: Samaranayake 1991:104

Figure 2.4: Timeline from 1960 to 1970



The number of university admissions rose with the switch-over to swabasha (local languages) - Sinhala and Tamil - as the medium of instruction. Enrolment doubled at secondary schools by the end of the 1950s. In 1960, for the first time an opportunity was given to candidates who had received a secondary education in the vernacular languages (swabasha) to seek admission to the University of Ceylon (Malalasekara 1969b: 885). In 1960, the University commenced teaching classes in Sinhala and Tamil in the Arts Faculty and committed to teaching in the national languages in all other Faculties by October 1968 (*ibid*). Section 3.1 of this report provides more details on the impact of swabasha on university admissions. The University of Ceylon commenced awarding external degrees in 1965 under the Ceylon University (Amendments) Act No.12 of 1961 (please refer Annex 1 of this report for more details).

The conversion of the two Buddhist learning centres into universities also had an impact on the curriculum at universities which became dominated by traditional disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences (Warnapala 2009: 108). A majority of students who sought university entrance came from rural areas and offered subjects related to established traditional disciplines such as Pali, Sinhalese, Buddhist Studies, and Philosophy (*ibid*). The Vidyodaya University started with Faculties

in Arts and Languages and the medium of instruction was predominantly Sinhala, while Tamil also came to be used in the 1960s (Sanyal *et al*.:117).

The previously mentioned **Gunawardena Commission** was appointed on 25th August 1962 to inquire into and report on the workings and administration of the University of Ceylon, Vidyalankara University and Vidyodara University. The commission findings were critical of the universities. When reviewing the legislature that formed the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Universities the Commission stated that persons associated with the framing and the working of the Act have shown 'a somewhat regrettable lack of responsibility' (Sessional Paper XVI 1963: 30). The Commission recommended that the two Pirivena Universities should cease to exist at the earliest possible moment and that the Pirivena Universities Act of 1958 should be repealed (*op.cit*. p 168). According to de Silva (2013: 217), it appeared that the Commission felt that the two universities had only helped to sully the image of the institutions that they had replaced. The Commission was also critical of the University of Ceylon stating that the workings and administration of the University show evidence 'not merely of relaxation but of steady deterioration, which, unless promptly and decisively checked, will soon reduce this great institution of which so much was expected to a mere semblance of what a true University should be' (*op. cit*.:134). The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon responded to the findings, criticising them in a 41 page letter to the Governor General. According to Warnapala even though the Gunawardena Commission had made useful recommendations, the criticisms from the Vice Chancellor could not be ignored and the Commission's recommendations were not immediately implemented but provided guidelines to future policy changes (Warnapala 2011: 227). Jayasuriya (1969: 167) was of the view that the chief weaknesses of the Gunawardena Commission's recommendations was that they lacked finesse and an appreciation of the human problems involved in doing away altogether with two (Pirivena) Universities and with the administrative structure of the third.

With the two campuses of the University of Ceylon located in Peradeniya and Colombo having about 5,000 students each in 1966 and the administration of the Colombo campus from Peradeniya becoming increasingly difficult and unsatisfactory, there was a need to create a separate university in Colombo (Malalasekara 1969b: 894). Thus, the ***University of Colombo*** was formed on 1st October 1967 with the University of Ceylon Colombo campus as its nucleus, under Section 34 of the **Higher Education Act No.20 of 1966** (Malalasekara 1969b: 894).

The Higher Education Act No.20 of 1966 also repealed Ordinance No. 20 of 1942 (the 'charter' of the University of Ceylon) and Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara University Act No. 45 of 1958, and introduced instead a common academic and administrative structure for all universities under the overall control of a **National Council of Higher Education (NCHE)** (De Silva 1995: 21, cited by Weeramunda: 20). The heads of the three universities – namely the Vice Chancellors – ceased to hold office and were replaced by the Ministerial nominees. Thus the university autonomy which the University of Ceylon had enjoyed since inception was under threat (Warnapala 2011: 229). Jayasuriya (1969: 169) commenting on this legislation states that 'it was an atrocious piece of legislation, and yet the opposition from the academic community to these measures which dealt a death-blow to the concept of university autonomy was feeble.'

Between 1960 and 1965 Mrs. Srimavo Bandaranaike's government facilitated the further expansion of free education. The Government established a large number of schools and upgraded many to Central Schools (Maha Vidyalayas). It also provided free textbooks and introduced curriculum reforms. In 1970 educational reforms were further expanded and English, Math and Science education were introduced to all schools (Sedere 2005: 5).

However, the economic stagnation experienced in the 1960s led to the unfulfillment of the rising aspirations of the increasingly educated rural sector, resulting in disillusionment among semi-urban and rural youth and their politicisation by the mid-1960s. It is interesting to note that this problem was recognised by the policy makers, as stated by the Needham Commission in 1959 (refer Section 2.2 of this report) and the Gunewardena Commission in 1962. The Gunewardena Commission in parliament stated that it was '... aware of the dangers which may result from the release each year of a large number of young graduates who have no early prospects of profitable employment. While we do not under-estimate these dangers we are of the opinion that if the young graduate has acquired

along with academic training a good civic sense and a broad general education he would find ample opportunities to make a useful contribution to the life of a young developing nation' (Sessional Paper XVI 1962: 132).

The economic hardships of the 1960s and the growing leftist movement in the country formed the environment for unrest and attempts to overthrow the ruling classes. The socialist party Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)[18] mobilised the support of the Sinhalese youth and was supported in their efforts by the Socialist League of the University of Peradeniya (Samaranayake 1991: 195). Although the JVP started as an underground movement in the late 1960s its methods were not clandestine in nature (for example it conducted political debates, contested student council elections, and organised student strikes) (*op cit*: 196). According to Obeysekera's data[19], membership within the party was predominately Buddhist (and therefore Sinhalese), between the ages of 15 to 24 years, they were either students, cultivators or unemployed and had obtained a maximum of Grade 5-8 education or Ordinary Levels (O'Levels) (Obeysekara 1974, cited by Samaranayake 1991: 204-208). Obeysekera's data shows that it was those from the 'higher' caste (Govigama) that formed over half of the JVP's membership, and Warnapala[20] states that 'oppressed' castes were mobilised in certain areas of the country (Obeysekera 1974 and Warnapala 1972 cited by Samaranayake 1991: 210). University students who were either sympathisers or members were expected to contribute part of their scholarship or bursary funds towards funding the JVP (Alles 1971: 40[21] cited by Samaranayake 1991: 220). Thus, youth formed an important part of the JVP movement and universities one of the conduits for its activities leading to the insurrections in 1971 and 1987.

2.4: From 1970 – 1984: The expansion of university education into the provinces

1970 to 1985: Key socio-economic trends/events

Rapid population growth outstrips economic growth. Scarcity of essential foods and basic commodities

1970-1977 - Return to closed economy; tightening of exchange and import controls, tea and coconut plantations nationalised, private ownership of agricultural and paddy land restricted, ceiling on ownership of houses.

Youth insurrection in 1971.

1972 Constitution in which Sri Lanka becomes a Republic.

1977 UNP wins election and introduces open market policies; economic strategy dependent on export led growth, foreign investment, private investment and market forces. Reduction of food subsidies and welfare programmes. Economic programmes such the Mahaweli Development Programme, Free Trade Zone and urban renewal programme implemented.

Ethnic disturbances in July 1983 sets back the economy. Terrorist attacks undermine business confidence, foreign investment and tourism, disrupting agriculture and fisheries in the North and East.

Source: Sandaratne N, 2014 Sunday Times; Little & Hettige, 2016: 45, Wickremaratne 2010: 7,8

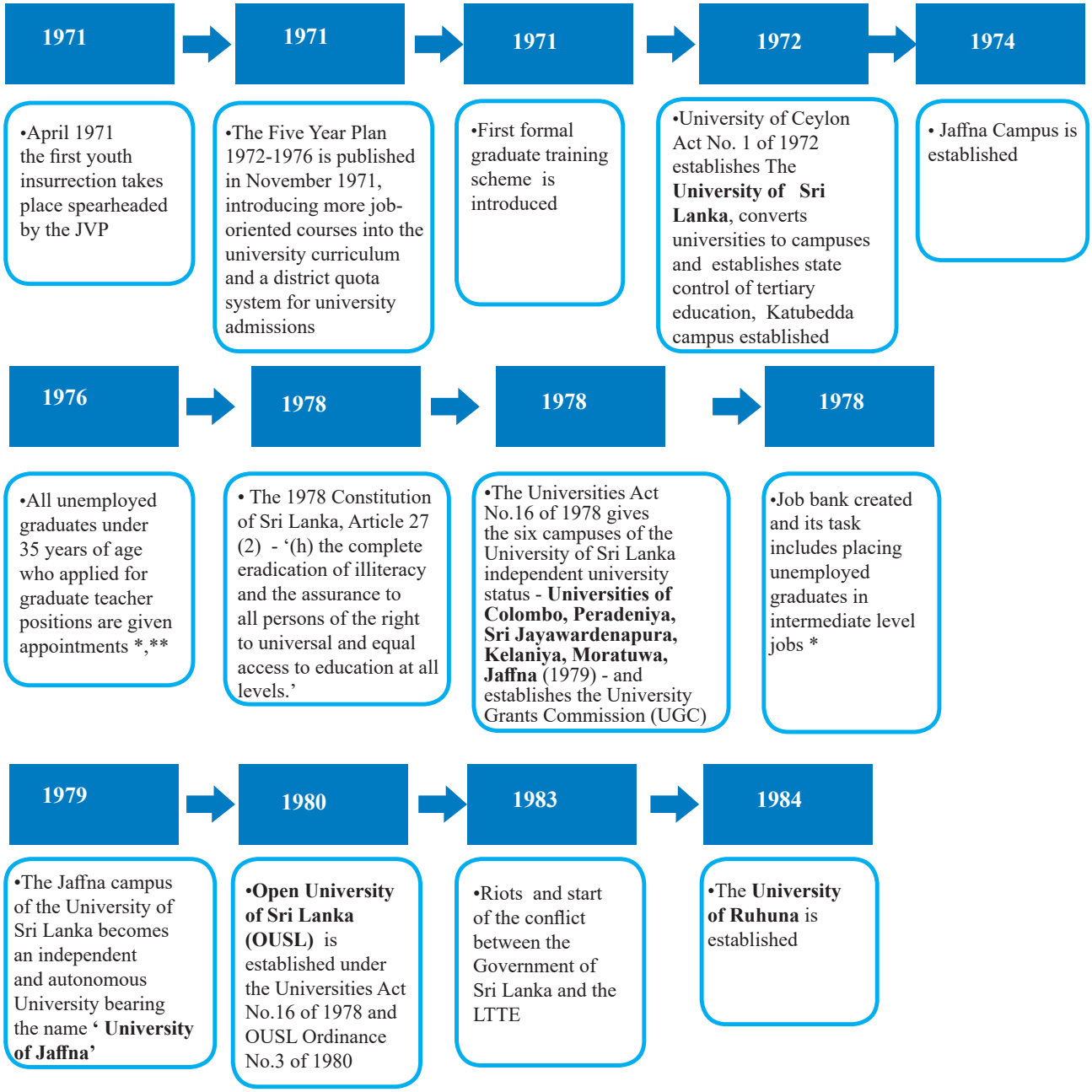
[18] The JVP started as an underground movement in the late 1960s during which time it conducted a number of indoctrination classes, successfully mobilising the support of the Sinhalese youth.

[19] Gananath Obeysekara, "Some Comments on the Social Backgrounds of the April 1971 Insurgency in Sri Lanka (Ceylon)", *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, (1974), pp. 367-383.

[20] Warnapala, W. A. W. (Politicus) "The April Revolt in Ceylon", *Asian Survey,* Vol. 12, No. 3, (1972), p. 268.

[21] Alles, A. C. *Insurgency-1971*. Colombo: Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1976.

Figure 2.5: Timeline from 1970 to 1984



* *Source: Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 12*

** *Source: Sri Lanka Federation of University Woman 1980: 9*

While political independence and equitable access to education drove the education reforms of the 1940s to 1960s, unemployment and youth unrest were the driving force behind education reform in the 1970s and 1980s. Post-colonial policies had focused on pacifying the rural lower classes and facilitating the upward mobility of the under-priviledged, giving rise to a new moral and social order, which the educated and under-priviledged youth felt they had to protect at all costs (Little & Hettige 2016: 235). This, coupled with welfare and redistribution-oriented policies which failed to generate economic growth to provide adequate levels of employment led to youth unrest and an anti-systematic youth movement among Sinhalese youth (*ibid*). In 1970 almost 80% of the labour force aged 15 – 24 were unemployed (Jayaweera 1986[22], cited by Little 2010: 9). The insurrection led to temporary closures in some universities, with the Vidyodaya University being temporarily converted into a detention camp for 1971 insurgent suspects, and normal university resuming by 1972 (Sanyal *et al*: 117 – 118).

[22] Jayaweera, S. 1986. *Educational Policies and Change – From the Mid Nineteenth Century to 1977*

The JVP spearheaded insurrection in 1971 impacted the university system, propelling reassessment and change. The 1970s also saw the beginning of radicalisation among Tamil youth. The government's measures to defuse unrest among the educated Sinhalese alienated the educated but under-privileged Tamil youth (Little & Hettige 2016: 235). Samaranayake attributes the standardisation of university admissions as one of the salient factors in the process of radicalisation, with this process of standardisation being viewed by the Tamil youth as a discriminatory measure (Samaranayake 1991: 183). (Details of this standardisation process are provided in Section 3.1 of this report). 'Just as the socialist state represented a multi-faceted solution to the problems of the Sinhala radical youth, for the Tamil youth a separate state represented a panacea to the problems of language, education and employment' (*ibid*).

The **Five Year Plan (1972 – 1976)** released in 1971 was part of the government's efforts to tackle youth unrest in the country. At the time the Five Year Plan was published approximately 12% of the labour force of 4.5 million was unemployed (Ministry of Planning and Employment 1971: 4). After the first youth uprising in 1971, there was an urgent need and pressure on the newly elected United Front government (led by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike) for reforms. According to Gunawardena (2010:2) the 1971 ILO report on Matching Employment Opportunities and Expectations (also referred to as the Seers Report of 1971), had a significant impact on official thinking in the 70s. (The summary of the findings of this report are provided in the text box in Section 4.3 of this literature review report.)

Thus, the subsequent Five Year Plan (1972 – 1976), prepared by the Ministry of Education to bring the country's education system in line with contemporary demands, reflected the view that the divorce of education from the world of work had prevented productivity within the country and pushed educated youth into white-collar employment. The plan included both economic and social objectives in its education plans, recognising the need to mould the attitudes and aspiration of its graduates (Gunawardena 1980: 88). The plan acknowledged the 'fundamental correctness' of the *manpower approach* (de Silva 2013: 13) and the main objectives of the curriculum change were '... to integrate academic and vocational aspects of education in the general education system' (Ministry of Planning and Employment 1971: 111).

Man-power Approach

'The man-power requirements approach to educational planning is an attempt to bring education into line with man-power requirements. In this approach, the focus is on how educational systems can meet the man-power requirements of a country's growing economy and produce the human resources which can give direction and strength to social and economic development.' Selvaratnam (1969: 1077)

Functions of this approach is forecasting manpower requirements and education needs and training to meet development objectives. It is also being able to estimate the number of people with varying educational qualifications and training which the educational system can produce, and when (Selvaratnam 1969: 1078).

The changes which followed were radical and meant a major overhaul of the country's education system. The reforms expected the majority of students who completed Junior Secondary Education not to proceed to the Senior Secondary Stage and instead, to have an option of entering Junior Technical, Polytechnic or Aesthetic Education Institutions or joining a National Service Camp (Education in Sri Lanka – New Horizons, cited by de Silva 2013: 19). It also proposed the abolition of the GCE (O/L) and GCE (A/L) examinations and its replacement with the National Certificate of General Education (NCGE) and the Higher National Certificate of Education (HNCE) respectively. The school entry age was raised to six years and total pre-university schooling years reduced from 12 to 11 years (Little 2010: 9). At the tertiary level of education, part-time technical training programmes were to be provided for employed students and those unable to get into university and

non-formal education for adults. At university level the philosophy of 'job-orientation' was carried out by introducing a number of new courses. A district quota system was also introduced to equalise educational opportunities at university level. Admission to the university was to be changed so that the intake from each district would approximate its percentage of the total population (see Section 3.1 of this report for more details) (Gunawardena 1980: 20). Such changes may help explain the increase in graduate admissions from 1975 onwards.

Thus, the changes were radical and meant a major overhaul of the country's education system. According to de Silva (2013: 23) 'they sought to de-link the education system from the so-called elitist mostly inherited from colonial times which even the Kannangara reforms had left largely intact, and move towards a system of mass education with a strong emphasis on practical and vocational skills.'

With the eruption of the youth insurrection in 1971 the United Front Government took a hostile attitude towards universities[23] and a strong policy was introduced to control the universities (Warnapala 2011:233). State control of the universities was consolidated through the **University of Ceylon Act No.1 of 1972**. Weeramunda (2008: 21) notes that the 1972 Act was part of a reversal of the philosophy underlying the university from being autonomous and politically independent to a period of state controlled tertiary education. Under this Act the **University of Sri Lanka** was established, with its headquarters in Colombo and the four universities which existed at that time (Peradeniya, Colombo, Gangodawila – Vidyodaya, Kelaniya – Vidyalankara) turned into campuses (Weeramunda 2008: 20-21). Thus, universities such as the University of Ceylon, Colombo became the Colombo Campus of the University of Sri Lanka until 1977. In 1972, the former College of Technology became the Katubedda Campus and the Jaffna Campus was established in 1974. Thus, the University of Sri Lanka had six campuses. This Act gave absolute control of all university affairs to the Minister of Education acting through a Vice Chancellor while campuses had their presidents also appointed by the Minister.

However, the speed with which the Five Year Plan legislature was enacted, the lack of public debate prior to enactment and the election of the main opposition to government in 1977 saw most of the controversial 1972 reforms being reversed in 1978 (de Silva 2013: 24)[24]. Gunawardena notes that the lack of adequate resources (in terms of teachers and finances) also impeded proper implementation. The constraints of finances prevented the establishment of additional institutions and introduction of new courses. Such shortfalls resulted in unemployment occurring at an early age (Gunawardena 1980: 21). The Five Year Plan and the 1972 reforms were not supported by changes in economic structure and environment (Jayaweera S. 1988, cited by de Silva 2013: 25, Gunawardena 2010: 2). Unemployment increased to 30% in 1975 and the change of government in 1977 saw the step back into the old examinations.

The new government which came in through the 1977 General Elections, abolished the unitary university structure through the **Universities Act No.16 of 1978**. This Act returned autonomy to the universities, where all campuses of the then single university, the University of Sri Lanka, became independent universities. Thus the Colombo Campus became the ***University of Colombo,*** the Peradeniya campus the ***University of Peradeniya,*** the Vidyodaya (Gangodawila) campus the ***University of Sri Jayawardenapura*** and the Vidyalankara campus became the ***University of Kelaniya*** (Universities Act No.16 of 1978: Part XX, cited on University Grants Commission website). The newly formed Katubedda Campus became the ***University of Moratuwa*** and in 1979 the Jaffna Campus became the ***University of Jaffna*** *(ibid)*. With the growth in the higher education sector, came a federal system of university education (Warnapala 2011: xii), and the establishment of the ***University Grants Commission*** (UGC) under Part I of the University Act No.16 of 1978. The functions of the UGC are; planning and coordination of university education, allocation of funds to higher educational institutions and the regulation of the administration of these institutions, maintenance of academic standards, and regulation of admission of students to higher education institutions (University Grant Commission 2011: 1). While the UGC may function as an independent

[23] Graduates were involved with the JVP and some Halls of Residence were used as places to manufacture bombs.

[24] De Silva states that it is not unlikely that the Education Reform of the United Front government and the manner in which they were implemented contributed considerably to their loss at the General Elections (de Silva 2013: 24).

administrative entity it remains dependent on the government in important areas such as funds, broad policy definition, and approval in appointing Vice Chancellors (Weeramunda 2008: 21).

In 1981, a White Paper (titled '**Education – Proposals for Reform'**) was released containing proposals for reforming general education, university education and tertiary (vocational, technical and professional) education. Proposed reforms relating to university education were that collegiate education will prepare pupils for the universities and other academically oriented higher education institutions under science and arts streams; separate University Entrance Examinations will be available for collegiate pupils who have completed Grade 13 and seek University admission (with failures being permitted a second attempt); collegiate pupils from under-privileged schools will be given an extra year (3 years in total) to prepare for the University Entrance Examination; there will be less academically demanding Special Qualifying Examinations for diverse groups outside collegiate grades to widen access to university and other tertiary education institutions; the number admitted to university will depend on the country's need for academically qualified personnel while Professional Colleges will train the personnel required for the economy; and an Education Advisory Board (EAB) will be set-up to review policies of the Ministry of Education and their implementation. E. J. de Silva states that in its introduction the White Paper recognises that 'Many an educational reform comes to grief because of hasty implementation without adequate preparation.' He attributed this to the lessons learned from the previous decade and the 1972 Reforms. However, most of the proposed reforms in the paper were never passed as it was caught up in a political hailstorm, with the White Paper being used to mount a frontal attack on the government (de Silva 2013: 125)[25]. According to de Silva, the JVP provided support for the street demonstrations, and agitation against the proposed reforms. 'Much of the debate that the White Paper sparked off was based not on what it contained but on hearsay and partisan political propaganda.'(*op.cit.*: 34) With the General Elections close at hand the government did not proceed with the White Paper except for a few non-controversial proposals.

Despite the growth in the number of universities in the 1970s (to six universities) there was a large number of students who, though obtaining the minimum marks, could not enter university. Thus, the government embarked on a new policy to provide more access to higher education (Warnapala 2011: 249). The *Open University of Sri Lanka* (OUSL), established in 1980, was in response to the expanding need within the country for professional education.[26] Being an Open and Distance Learning institute, the nature of its teaching methodology and infrastructure enabled it to serve a large student population spread throughout the country. The OUSL has the same legal and academic status as any other national university in Sri Lanka. It has a Central Campus in Colombo, as well as Regional Centres and Study Centres around the country[27].

In addition to the seven universities mentioned above, *The General Sir John Kotelawala Defence Academy* was opened in 1980 and came under the Ministry of Defence and *The Buddhist and Pali University of Sri Lanka* was established in April 1982 under the Act of Parliament No.74 of 1981 coming under the purview of the Ministry of Higher Education. The ***Ruhuna University*** College was established in 1978 and was given full university status in 1984 (University of Ruhuna 2014: 2) and the ***Eastern University, Sri Lanka*** was established in 1986 (Eastern University, Sri Lanka n.d.:1). This increased the total number of universities in the country to eleven with nine falling under the purview of the UGC. The Parliamentary Select Committee (appointed in July 1987) recommended the establishment of Regional Campuses and while the recommendations were not implemented immediately Affiliated University Colleges were formed through a similar recommendation from the Youth Commission of 1990.

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[25] Gunawardena (2010: 2) notes that the White Paper (1981) proposed school clusters to help share resources and rectify the imbalances between urban and rural schools. As a result each district was divided into several school zones and nearly 600 School Clusters were established. However, according to Gunawardena the sharing of resources was not achieved.

[26] The OUSL was established on 19thJune 1980 under Section 23 (1) and Section 18 of the Universities Act No.16 of 1978 and the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) Ordinance No.3 of 1980 which was subsequently amended as the Open University of Sri Lanka Ordinances No.1 of 1983 and No. 12 of 1996 (OUSL 2013: 2).

[27] As at 2012 the OUSL had six Regional Centres (in Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Jaffna, Anuradhapura and Batticaloa) and seventeen Study Centres located around the country (OUSL 2013: 4).

2.5: From 1985 – 1999: Red Brick model

1985 – 1999: Key socio-economic trends/events

JVP insurrections from 1987 to 1989.

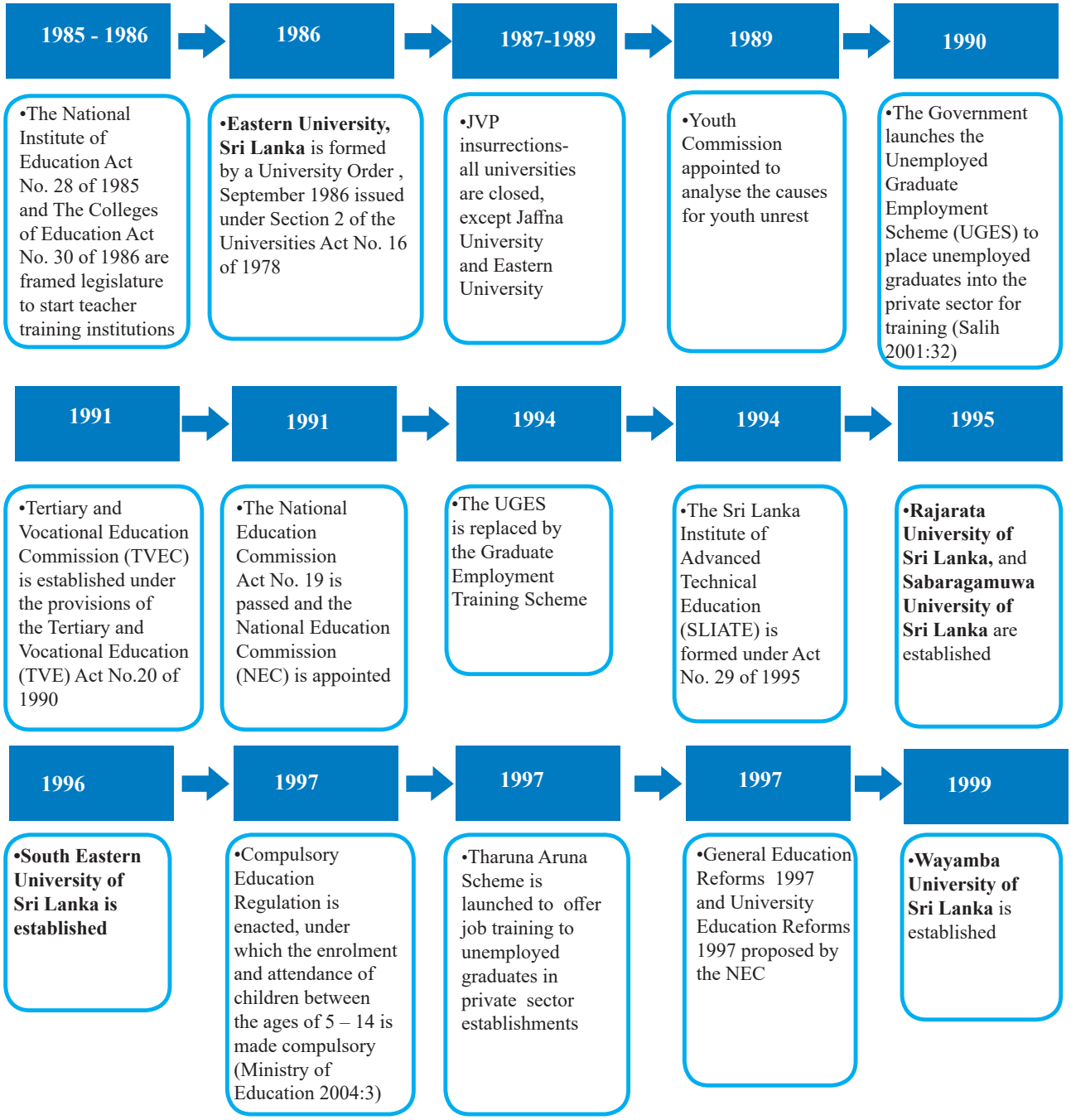
1989 - Economy further liberalised; government depreciates the rupee by 17%, cuts budgetary expenditure by 20%, restructures the tax system (reduction of corporate and individual taxes), export duties are reduced and ultimately eliminated.

By the end of 1993; 42 state owned enterprises privatised and 22 state owned plantations handed over for private management, state banks restructured and restrictions on foreign investment in the Colombo Stock Market lifted.

1994 – New government continues 'market-friendly' open economy policies ('An open economy with a human face'), continuing the policy regime of the previous government for the first time since Independence.

Source: Sandaratne N. Sunday Times 2014

Figure 2.6: Timeline from 1985 to 1999



The years 1987 to 1989 experienced the JVP insurrections and all universities except Jaffna and Eastern Universities were closed (refer Section 4.1 of this report, Table 3 for timeline of violence). The Youth Commission was appointed in 1989 to go into the causes of youth unrest. **The Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth 1990** (also referred to as the Youth Commission report of 1990) [28]stated that preliminary investigations found that a large majority of youth involved in the unrest belonged to the nearly half a million young men and women who had 'become disenchanted without sufficient avenues for self-advancement' within the education system (Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth –Summary 1990: 15). The Commission underlined education as one area that required national policies which transcend party politics. The ever widening disparity in opportunities for advancement between rural and urban youth, a pervasive sense of injustice, corruption and bureaucratic apathy, and the use of the English Language by the urban elite as a sword of oppression ('Kaduwa') to deny social mobility to rural youth were cited by the Commission as some of the main causes for youth discontent. This discontent had spilt over into violence (Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth –Summary 1990: 1).

The provision of a more rounded education for self-advancement was required. The Youth Commission recommended the restructuring of the school system into three tiers with changes recommended at each level. The centralised control by the education bureaucracy of Colombo was also cited as alienating the stakeholders of the education system (students, teachers, parents, etc.). The Youth Commission recommended the restoration of the 'community school concept' with school autonomy at the local level. The lack of continuity of education policy between successive governments and Ministers, the inequalities between urban and rural schools, and the diminishing status of teachers (inadequately paid, poorly trained, little opportunity for self-advancement) were also highlighted issues (Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth – Summary 1990: 1, 15- 18). Recommendations were also made to ensure equality of treatment with regard to the official languages as well as equal access to English (ibid: 29). Thus, the prevalence of these issues highlights the fact that the free access to English and equality in education envisioned by the founders of the Free Education Scheme in 1945 had not yet become a reality.

At the tertiary level the Youth Commission stated that 'tertiary education should be restructured to cater to the general body of students who sit for the Advanced Level (A' Level) and not the 6,000 exceptional students' (Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth – Summary 1990: 20). The 6,000 it refers to, are the students who gain entrance into universities from the 18,000 who qualify and apply to enter university. The Youth Commission stated that the system should gradually provide opportunity for the 18,000 who qualify and seek admission. It recommended that the tertiary education system be divided into two: 1) general tertiary education for those who wish to develop intermediary or general skills, 2) honours degrees and specialisation where the highest standards constitute the crucial consideration. Also recommended was the establishment of Regional Colleges and Affiliated Institutions (to provide courses geared towards general and intermediary skill provision for which there is current demand) for students who are not admitted to the National Universities. The recommendations regarding the formation of Affiliated Institutions materialised in the form of **Affiliated University Colleges** (AUCs) in 1991 and are discussed at the end of this section.

In 1991, under the **National Education Commission Act No.19 of 1991** the **National Education Commission** (NEC) was appointed to make recommendations to the President on educational policy (National Education Commission Act No.19 of 1991:Section 8(1)). Changes on the international front, the retreat of the welfare states in Western democracies and the almost complete collapse of communism marked the end of what could be called the 'statist' state (de Silva 2013: 128). Globalisation and international movements of labour, skilled personnel and capital became the backbone of economic development. De Silva (2013:128) states that these changes were followed by a breakdown in the state monopoly of education and a gradual shift towards the market. Thus, in this environment the NEC had the task of consensus building among the public and politicians and educating them on the changes that had to be made to the education system to meet new challenges. However, according to de Silva, '**The First Report of the National Education Commission**' submitted by the NEC in May 1992 failed to arouse public interest or change (de Silva 2013: 130). Interest in the National Education Policy was revived when the government changed in

[28] Sessional Paper No.1-1990

1994 and in September 1995 NEC submitted '**An Action Oriented Strategy Towards a Policy**' which again failed to lead to any reforms. De Silva states that this document marked the end of the journey enthusiastically commenced in 1991 towards a National Education Policy. The NEC subsequently released two reform documents in 1997 – **University Education Reforms 1997** and the **General Education Reforms 1997**. The recommended university reforms included increasing the number of students admitted into universities, increasing external degree and OUSL services, as well as the expansion of courses on offer (The Presidential Taskforce on University Education Sri Lanka 1997: 2,3); recommendations that were implemented in subsequent decades.

The spread of higher education to other areas of the country took the form of AUCs which were inaugurated in 1991 (Warnapala, 2011: 251). The idea behind the AUC was to establish new diploma awarding bodies, which were to be affiliated with several national universities. However, according to Warnapala, the eleven AUCs which were formed faced numerous problems from the beginning. Students showed continued opposition and resistance to these institutions, and they became hot beds of agitation and youth unrest. There was dissatisfaction among students regarding the facilities, courses and academic standard of courses provided (Warnapala, 2011: 251-254). Yet another cause for dissatisfaction was the lack of employment opportunities. As a result of this failure a complete reorganisation of the AUC scheme was undertaken. The Warnapala Committee recommended that six of the eleven AUCs be converted to two Universities, but this was considered insufficient for a country engaged in development (Warnapala, 2011: 254). The national interest that demanded the expansion of the intake into universities could not have been solved without establishing new provincial universities, and the universities formed followed the *Red Brick formula*.

Red Brick model

'Red Brick universities' was a term coined to refer to the civic universities that appeared in Britain in the 1900s. These universities were founded to meet the middle class's growing demand for higher education and to increase the nation's research capacity (Boggs 2010: 4). According to Warnapala, the new universities that were described as 'Red Bricks' came into existence in Britain to meet a demand which Oxford and Cambridge could not meet. The same was true for Sri Lanka (Warnapala 2011: 254).

The buildings of the new Universities were not as good as the more established universities and they were for the most part non-residential (Warnapala 2011: 255). The curricula of these universities were described by Warnapala as being diversified and based on economic and social relevance and local needs (Warnapala 2011: xii, UNESCO 2009: 1). Within a short time they provided opportunities for men and women who would have otherwise not had such an opportunity, to obtain a University education. The ***Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka,*** and ***Rajarata University of Sri Lanka*** were formed in 1995 (Rajarata University of Sri Lanka n.d.: 3). The establishment of the ***South Eastern University of Sri Lanka*** in 1995 (South Eastern University n.d.: 1) as a university college and then as a full fledged university in 1996 was partly in response to the increasing civil unrest in the North and East (please refer extract on the South Eastern University given below). [29] The ***Wayamba University of Sri Lanka*** was subsequently established in 1999. This increase in the number of universities also fell in line with President Chandrika Kumaratunga's 'Year of Education Reforms[30]' drive in 1997.

[29] Rajarata University was the amalgamation of Affiliated University Colleges at the Central, North-Western and North-Central Provinces. The South Eastern University College of Sri Lanka was established for the displaced students and academic staff from the Eastern University by an order through gazette notification 88/9 of 26 July, 1995 under the provisions of section 24A of the University act No. 16 of 1978 as amended by Act No. 07 of 1985.

[30] President Chandrika Kumaratunga's website summarises the education reforms undertaken in 1997, the 'Year of Educational Reforms'. In terms of reforming and modernising the higher education sector in Sri Lanka, the main initiatives focused on improving access to higher education, enhancing the number and quality of undergraduate programmes and modernizing infrastructure. Curriculum changes placed greater emphasis on new relevant areas such as IT, English and Management while peace and social cohesion were woven into the undergraduate programmes.

'The birth of the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka also coincided with more positive thinking and policy of the Government to broad-base University education further, by extending it to the periphery and less developed regions in the country such as the South Eastern region. But it was due to certain special and unfortunate circumstances in the country caused by the on - going militancy at that time and civil unrest in the North and East of the country, which actually hastened its establishment. When the militancy and civil strife in the North forced out the Muslim staff and students of the University of Jaffna, ad-hoc arrangements were made to accommodate them mainly at the Eastern University at Vantharumulai in Batticaloa District. But owing to deteriorating communal harmony between the Tamils and Muslims and several unfortunate incidents, which took place in that region, the Muslim staff and students were compelled to leave the Eastern University too, with their studies abruptly interrupted. This problem was promptly taken up to the notice of the Government to find a lasting solution. The government, which was already keen to expand university education to the less developed region, recognised the need for immediate relief.

It was under such circumstances that the South Eastern University College of Sri Lanka was established for the displaced students and academic staff from the Eastern University by an order through Gazette Notification 88/9 of 26 July, 1995 under the provisions of section 24A of the University act No. 16 of 1978 as amended by Act No. 07 of 1985.' (Source: South Eastern University of Sri Lanka website)

In addition, the *Buddhasravaka Bhiksu University* in Anuradhapura was established in 1996, and came under the Ministry of Higher Education. This increased the number of universities in the country to 16 with 13 universities falling under the purview of the UGC.

2.6: From 2000 to 2014: Diversification of higher education

2000-2014: Key socio-economic trends/events

2000- 2004 – Continuation of open-economy policies.

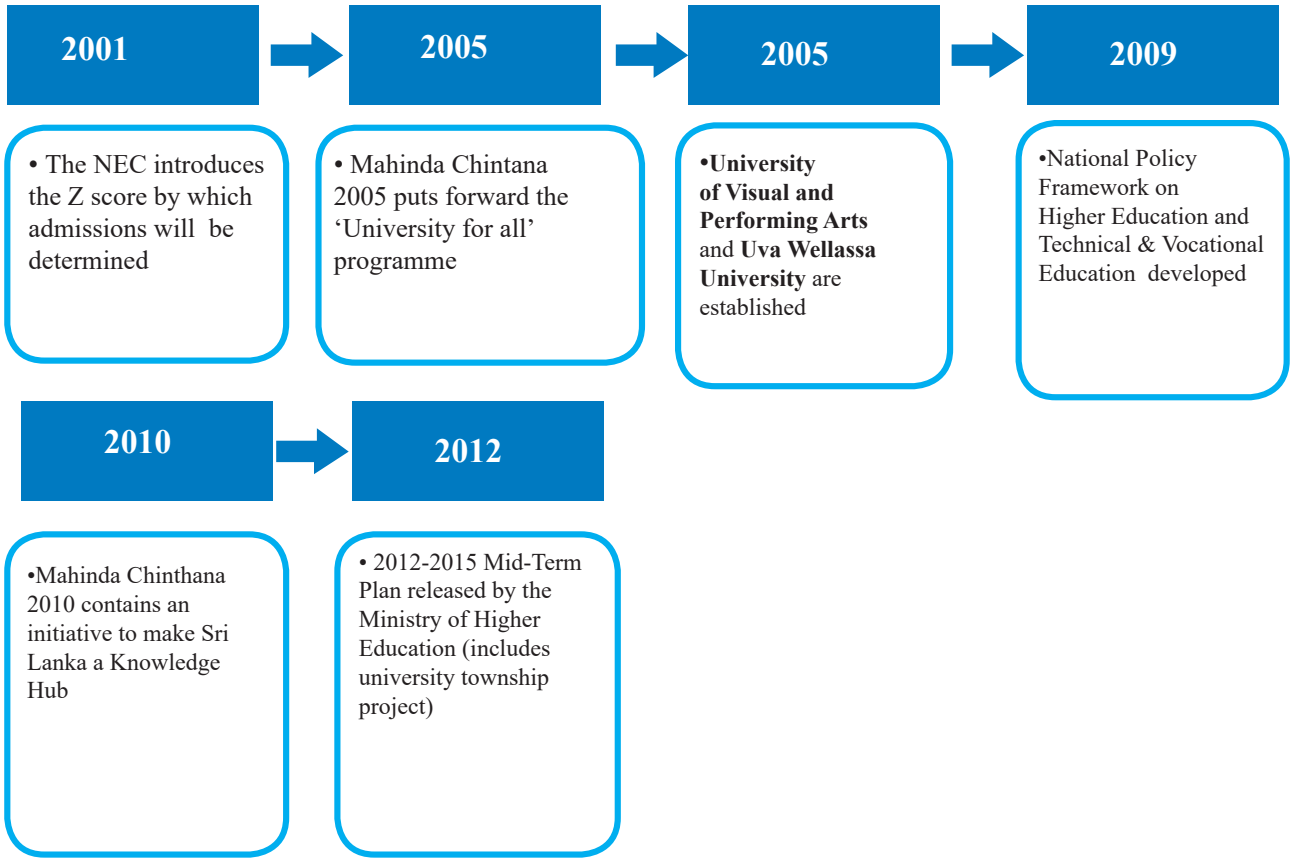
2004 – Role emphasised, privatisation of key state owned enterprises ruled out, new import taxes and levies, expansion of state-owned enterprises, high expenditure on civil services and armed forces.

2009 – End of the civil war.

Drive for infrastructure development.

Source: Sandaratne N. Sunday Times 2014

Figure 2.7: Timeline from 2000 to 2014



Warnapala (2011: xii) states that the expansion of university education did not take place based on a well integrated plan, leading to ad hoc decisions and adjustments being made in response to political pressure. This is a view which is shared by E. J. de Silva (2013: 138) who describes post 1997 policy making in education as 'being up for grabs… leaving it open for agencies which had no policy-making mandate, and ad hoc groups and even individuals to take important policy decisions.' This unplanned development has led to a haphazard system which interferes with the emergence of a national system of university education, leading to differences and disparities in the education system.

In 2001, the NEC reviewed the progress of the reforms through independent evaluations and public consultation. [31]As a result of these 2001 evaluations some of the recommended changes that directly affected university education were as follows; students should be given the option of studying in English for O/L and A/L grade subjects depending on teacher availability, the Z score should be used to rank students in each stream for university admissions[32]. The sharp increase in admissions to universities after 2000 (see Figure 2.1) could be a direct result of the aforementioned changes.

The universities that were opened after the year 2000 appear to have been formed along a more focused line of education and in some cases were formed from institutes. The ***Uva Wellassa University*** established in 2005 was the first all entrepreneurial university in Sri Lanka, where students received training via market oriented programmes aimed at facilitating national growth and private sector employment. The ***University of Visual and Performing Arts*** was also established in 2005 and replaced the Institute of Aesthetic Studies affiliated to the University of Kelaniya.

Two other universities which did not come under the purview of the UGC, the *University of Vocational Technology* and the *Oceans University of Sri Lanka* were established in 2008 and 2014 respectively. The University of Vocational Technology comes under the purview of the Ministry of Vocational

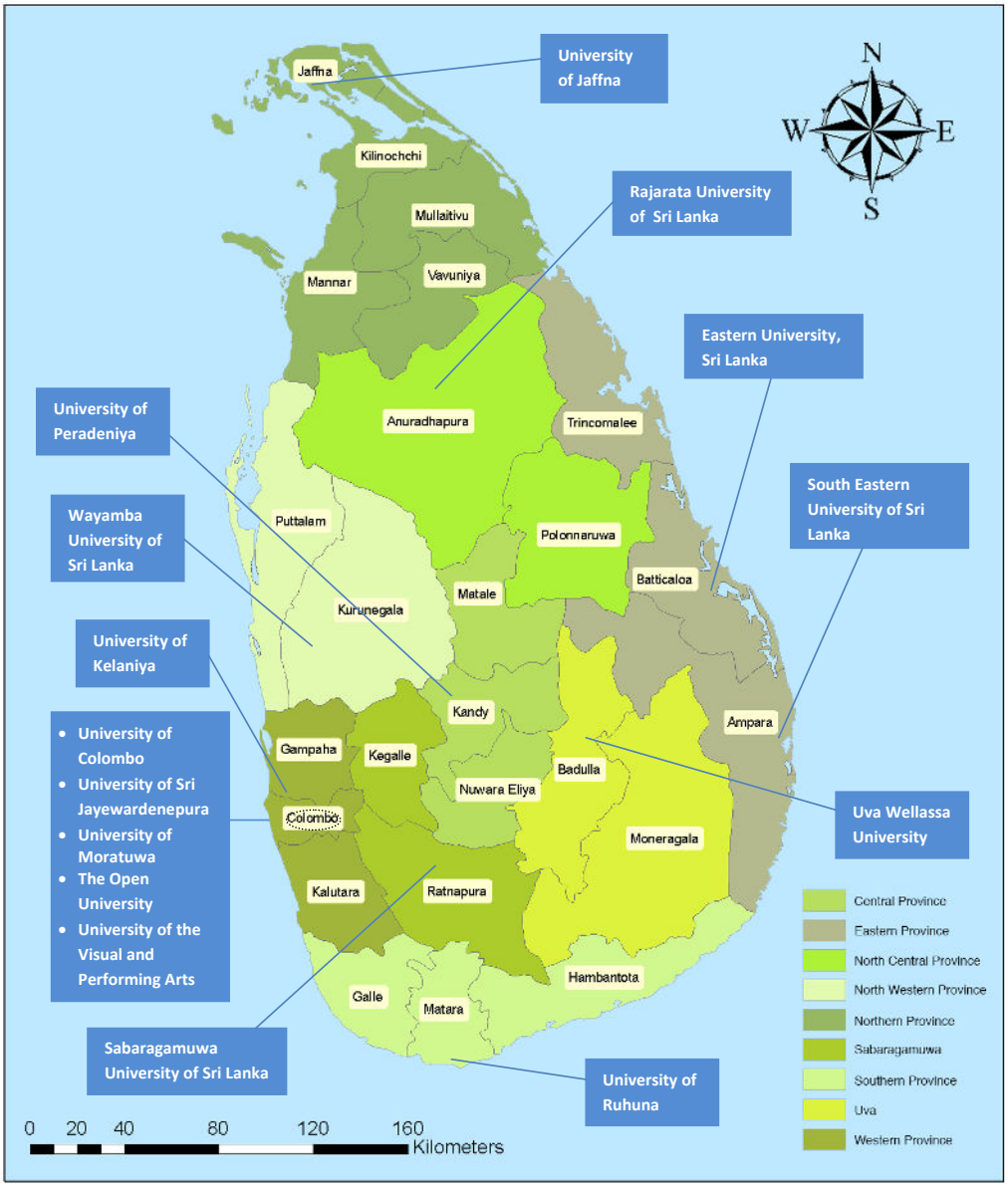
[31] Four research studies, and nineteen papers and studies were undertaken by the National Educational Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) for this purpose and to formulate proposals. (Gunawardena 2010: 4).

[32] 'The main changes included an increase in the all-island merit quota, revision of criteria based on facilities available in schools and for the district quote to be computed based on the number of candidates sitting for A/Ls and not the population ratio (Gunawardena 2010: 5).

and Technical Training. The most recent addition to the universities in the country is the Oceans University of Sri Lanka established in 2014 which was previously known as the National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering. It offers degree programmes in the fields of Marine Science and Nautical Engineering. This university comes under the Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training.

Thus the total number of universities in Sri Lanka as at 2014 was 20, with 15 coming under the purview of the UGC[33].

Figure 2.8: Location of universities under the University Grants Commission – Sri Lanka in 2014



Sources: Map obtained from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Districts_of_Sri_Lanka and adjusted based on information from the University Grants Commission's 'Sri Lanka University Statistics 2014' (2015: 1)

The orientation of higher education policies and programmes since 2005 has continued to focus on expanding access to university education, but with more of a focus on the quality of education provided, forming private partnerships and providing online learning facilities. The Mahinda Chintana 2005 put forward the '**University for all' programme**. The main initial step highlighted increasing the number of eligible students accessing university education. The addition of new courses,

[33] There were three university campuses (as at 2014): Sripalee Campus (of the University of Colombo), Trincomalee Campus (of the Eastern University Sri Lanka), and Vavuniya Campus (of the University of Jaffna). (University Grants Commission 2015: 6 - 12)

introducing distance education programmes, streamlining and expanding open university education, the development of university villages, paying a monthly allowance to Mahapola Scholarship scheme students[34], doubling the number of scholarships given by the President's Fund, and filling of academic vacancies in universities were some of the initiatives mentioned under this programme (Mahinda Chintana 2005: 75).

In 2007, President Mahinda Rajapaksa appointed a Committee to prepare a 'New National Education Act' and a report was submitted in 2009, '**New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka – Context, Issues and Proposals, Final Report'**. While a Parliamentary Committee on Education Reforms has been appointed to help finalise proposals for a new National Education Act nothing has come to fruition and ad hoc decisions continue to be announced to the public (de Silva 2013: 74,75).

However, the **National Policy Framework on Higher Education and Technical & Vocational Education** was also released in 2009 by the NEC,emphasising strategies to make higher education more accessible. Recommendations in this respect included (but were not limited to) introducing scholarships/bursary/student loan schemes, establishing public-private partnerships to cater to the rising demand for university education, increasing state funding towards higher education, introducing distance learning modes in universities and other higher education institutes, ensuring adequate physical and human resources for affiliated institutions, establishing degree awarding institutions outside the purview of the UGC, and promoting a scheme for lateral entry to universities (National Education Commission 2009: 13 - 47). The framework also considered other issues such as research and creativity, linkages between and among universities and higher education institutes, student discipline, and catering to national development needs (*ibid*). This policy report has been recognised as the sectoral national policy framework for higher education and technical and vocational training (Ministry of Finance and Planning 2012: 269).

One proposed solution in the higher education sector, and a point of ongoing debate, is whether the existing system should be diversified to allow private providers. Private participation in the sphere of what is currently a free education system is highly controversial and is viewed as going back to egalitarian political ideology and policies aimed at enthronement of the privileged and the rich in the country (Warnapala, 2011: xiii). P. Jayawardena's (2012) post on the 'Talking Economics' IPS blog highlights some of the arguments which have been put forward against the recently proposed **Private University Bill**. Among them are the state's ability to effectively regulate these institutions, fears that education will be turned into a 'commodity' and that the benefits of the free education system will be lost, lack of a proper financial assistance mechanism may not ensure equity in access, and public universities may find it difficult to compete for resources (for instance good lecturers may go to the private universities due to the higher salaries offered). Jayawardena (*op. cit*.) also points out that despite these arguments one must also consider the fact that even at present the access to education (even at collegiate level) is inequitable. The Ministry of Education has since allowed private universities to offer degrees, including medical qualifications, without seeking the approval of professional bodies – a move which has sparked contention with major professional groups (De Alwis 2014). This was done through anamendment to the University Act No.16 of 1978 through an administrative '**Extraordinary Gazette' in January 2014**.

The Mahinda Chintana 2010 stated that one of its initiatives is to make **Sri Lanka a Knowledge Hub**, facilitating world renowned universities to start their academic programmes in Sri Lanka. The hub would be used to 'make Sri Lanka a destination for investments in higher education and position the nation as a centre of excellence and regional hub for learning and innovation' (Department of Planning: 120). The strategy to accomplish this was as follows (*op. cit.*: 125):

- Provide the necessary infrastructure and cutting edge technology to universities and other higher education institutes to improve quality and relevance of degree programmes – this includes increasing local university enrolment rate up to 60% by 2020, at least 3 universities to be recognised/promoted among the top 250 universities in the world.

[34] The Mahapola Higher Education Scholarship Trust Fund was established by the Act of Parliament No.66 of 198 to provide scholarships to underprivileged youth to complete their higher education and create equal opportunities through development of facilities for higher education. As at 2011 it has awarded 197,000 scholarships to underprivileged students (Mahapola Higher Education Trust Fund, 2011: 84, 85).

- Implement a quality assurance and accreditation system, covering the entire higher education sector.
- Develop and offer internationally recognised and market-oriented degree programmes required by global employers.
- Establish a new modern Science and Technology/ ICT university as a partnership project.
- Facilitate world renowned universities to start their academic programmes in Sri Lanka.
- Establish Market Intelligence Units in each university.
- Designate and establish a Knowledge City.
- Enhance research and innovation capacities of universities.

Subsequently, the '**2012-2015 Mid-term Plan'** states that the major activities planned for the period would include finishing phase 1 of the university township project involving the Universities of Sri Jayawardenapura, Ruhuna, Moratuwa and Jaffna (Ministry of Higher Education 2012: 25) where the university and its surroundings can be used both by the town community and the university, thus integrating the two communities. Facilities such as shopping malls, banks, libraries, labs and research centres would also be set up in selected universities under this plan (University Grants Commission 2013: 24).

The Government's '**Higher Education for the Twenty First Centaury (HETC) Project'** was given the task of increasing the quality of the higher education system with assistance from the World Bank. It's also in the process of promoting online higher education in the country. The **National Online Distance Education System (NODES) project** is in the process of expanding online and distance education modes in the higher education sector. Both these projects are in line with the strategies set out in the NEC's National Policy Framework on Higher Education and Technical & Vocational Education.

CHAPTER II

3. Historical Trends

The second chapter of this report deals with the historical trends within the university education sector and related key socio-economic indicators. Divided into two sections, Section 3 of this chapter provides a summary of trends in admission policy and student numbers, as well as the social and gender composition of university graduates over the last seven decades. The variations in courses offered and the financing of universities is also briefly discussed. However, the emphasis of this chapter lies in the link between university education and social mobility. As such, Section 4 highlights findings from studies illustrating the impacts of university education on social mobility and historical trends in related key factors; employment, and socio-economic development.

3.1 University student numbers

> [Referring to the expected large annual increase in number of persons seeking admission to Universities and other centres of higher learning]`*This demand for higher studies which is not confined today to any racial, religious or social group is a healthy sign, and nothing should be done to deny University education to any student who has the capacity to benefit from it.' Gunewardena Commission* (Sessional Paper XVI 1962: 137)

Admission policies have changed over the decades from admitting students who sat for the University Entrance and could afford a university education to the more recent criteria of meeting a subject-wise standardised score system and district quotas. Admission policies have been adjusted over the decades to provide more equitable access to university education. There have been instances, however, where politics and societal pressure have led to inequitable admission policies and administration processes. Admission numbers have risen exponentially after the passing of the Free Education Bill, introduction of local languages as a medium of instruction, and the expansion of universities in terms of number as well as geographic location. The number of students enrolled in university in 1943 was 907 (Jayaweera 2002: Table 4.3). By 2014, this number had risen to 130,439 students enrolled in undergraduate programmes in the 15 public universities coming under the UGC (University Grants Commission 2015: 4).

Admissions policy

Jennings, in his paper titled 'Race, Religion and Economic Opportunity in the University of Ceylon' (1944; 1) stated that entrance to the 1942 established University of Ceylon was based solely on the number of candidates which sat for the University Entrance Examination and the standard they attained, as well as their ability to pass the internal exams and whether they had the funds (with or without assistance from the University) to maintain themselves. This practice continued through the years and prior to 1953 passing of a *viva-coce* was also made compulsory for admission into university. This changed and until 1964 each university organised its own Preliminary Examination. In 1964, the criteria for university admissions changed once again and until 1970 the applicant had to be 17 years of age or above, and he or she had to have successfully passed an entrance examination. For science based courses a practical test was also held (Sanyal *et al*. 1983: 139). From 1968 to 1969 university admissions were based solely on aggregate marks obtained by candidates at the GCE A/Levels. In 1970 the United Front Government made a controversial decision to admit science based courses on the basis of pre-determined minimum mark levels, which varied according to the language in which the students sat the examination. For example, for admission to Medical Faculties the minimum entry mark was 229 for Sinhala medium and 250 for Tamil medium. The same minimum mark levels were used for English medium depending on whether the student was Sinhala/ Tamil. This method of selection was abandoned the very next year. From 1971 to 1977 media-wise standardisation of marks obtained at GCE A' Levels, both in regard to subjects and language, were used to determine university admissions. This was based on district quotas which were in turn based on district population ratios. This method of admission lacked transparency leading to allegations of rigging marks in favour of Sinhala-medium candidates and there were also allegations that examiners in the Tamil medium inflated marks (de Silva 1978: 92-93). The Cabinet Sub-committee appointed

in 1978 made recommendations that gave special consideration to students in educationally under-privileged areas (University Grants Commission 1987: 6). A system of an all-island merit quota of 30%, a district-basis merit quota of 55% and the balance 15% to under-privileged district merit were introduced (Sanyal *et al*. 1983: 6). In 1984 the district quota was increased to 65% and the national merit quota remained at 30% (University Grants Commission 1987: 6).

Jayaweera (2007: 100) states that the district quota system for admission to universities introduced in the 1970s was imposed to solve the problem of regional imbalances in the provision of education. However, this system was introduced without any initiatives to reduce the inequalities in the secondary school system, particularly in science in the districts (in terms of resources such as facilities and teachers). Thus, inter-district and intra-district disparities continued to exist, and there was a rapid increase in the percentage of arts students in universities – from 42% in 1942 to 70% in 1970 - while there was a concentration of science education in developed districts such as Colombo and Jaffna (*ibid.*).

In 2001, the NEC introduced the z-score (average of subject-wise standardised values of raw marks) by which admissions would be determined. Prior to the year 2000 A' Level students were required to take 4 subjects. In 2001 this was reduced to 3 subjects and sitting for the Common General Test (general knowledge test). The z-score was introduced to deal with the different numbers of subjects taken by students for the A'Levels from 2000 to 2001. However, even after 2001, the z-score method continued as it allegedly eliminated the discrepancies between the different difficulty levels of subjects. (Warnapala & Silva 2011: 2). For university admission to courses in medicine, engineering and other sciences, the all-island merit quota was increased from 40% to 60% in 2004 and to 80% in 2006 (Gunawardena 2010: 5). The cut-off score also varied from district to district with lower cut-off scores for students from rural districts compared to urban districts (Warnapala & Silva 2011: 2).

According to the publication put out by the UGC pertaining to the university admissions for 2012/2013 the following admission criteria is required:

For Arts Courses [i.e. Arts, Arts (SP), Arts (SAB), Communication Studies, Peace & Conflict Resolution, Islamic Studies, Arabic Language] admission will be made on an all island merit basis and the total number admitted for a given district will not be below the total number admitted from that district in the academic year 1993/94 or 2002/2003, whichever is greater.

Admission to all other courses are made on a dual criteria, namely: All Island Merit, and Merit on District basis. Under the All Island Merit criteria up to 40% of the available places will be filled in order of z-Scores ranked on an all island basis. Under the District Merit criteria up to 55% of the available places in each course of study will be allocated to the 25 administrative districts (in proportion to the ratio of the population of the specific district to the total country's population[35]). A special allocation of up to 5% of the available places in each course is allocated to 16 educationally disadvantaged districts (in proportion to the ratio of the population of each such district to the total population of the 16 districts)[36] (University Grants Commission 2013: 6,7).

University admission numbers - Trends

When analysing university admission trends it was noted that student admissions increased dramatically after the introduction of the Free Education Scheme (as shown in Table 1).

[35] A few places were also reserved for special admissions, such as for blind and differently abled candidates, students who have excelled in fields other than studies, personnel enlisted in the armed forces, police, etc. (UGC 2013: 52, 53)

[36] Nuwara Eliya,Vavuniya, Polonnaruwa, Hambantota, Trincomalee, Badulla, Jaffna, Batticaloa, Monaragala, Kilinochchi, Ampara, Ratnapura, Mannar, Puttalam, Mullaitivu, Anuradhapura

Table 1: Student enrolment vs. admission figures – 1943-1990

Year	No. Admitted to University	No. Enrolled in University
1943	197	904
1950	438	2,036
1965	6,359	14,422
1970	3,457	11,813
1985	5,630	18,217
1990	8,970	31,447

Source: extracted from Jayaweera 2002: Table 4.3

In 1931, the University College and the Medical College had a total student population of only 405. By 1947 this number (in the University of Ceylon) had risen to 1,554 (Sumathipala 1968: 347). Malalasekara (1969a: 878) points out that the original Peradeniya scheme may have envisaged a University of 1,000 students. However by 1954 university admissions were still limited to around 500 students per annum. According to C. R. de Silva in the 1940s and 1950s more than one in three who sought admission successfully entered University (C. R. de Silva 1977: 423[37] cited by C. R. de Silva 1978: 85). The Council Report of 1954 reported that this restriction on admissions was 'Partly due to the restricted accommodation and partly due to a desire to relate output of graduates to the demands for graduate-employment...' (cited by Ratnapala 1991: 94). Public opinion was that the University was far too exclusive. Warnapala states that at a time when previous education policies had favoured primarily the formation of an English-educated elite, the historic introduction of the Free Education Scheme in 1945 had a dramatic impact on enrolment to the University of Ceylon which was still elitist in character. Thus, despite the aforementioned initiative to 'control' university admissions, student enrolment figures at the University jumped from 904 students in 1942 to 2,345 by 1955-56 (Warnapala 2011: 140).

Pre-independence, secondary education was still conducted in English, a language in which only 6.3% of the population were literate (Warnapala 2011: 140). Jayasuriya states that 'Education became indeed free for all, but what were free were a good education for the few and a bad education for the many' (Jayasuriya: 87; cited by Warnapala: 142). The need for guaranteed equality of opportunity in education saw the establishment of 54 Central Schools in the country and the switch-over to Swabasha - Sinhala and Tamil - as the medium of instruction.The resulting expansion in number of students at the secondary school sector added to the increase in university student enrolment. However, the ability of the university sector to meet this demand had improved. By the 1960s the proportion of students refused entry had risen to 80% and by 1970 this had increased further to 90% (de Silva 1978: 86).

The Government acting on the basis that a qualified applicant had a right to a university education compelled the University of Ceylon to admit a large batch of students to the Arts Faculty in 1961 who were non-residential ('External' students). In addition, in 1960 the University commenced teaching classes in Sinhala and Tamil in the Arts Faculty and committed to teaching in the national languages in all other Faculties by October 1968 (Malalasekara 1969b: 885). This was in line with the move to liberalise admission, as pressure was increasing to provide education in the Sinhala and Tamil mediums. Dr. D. L. Jayasuriya in his article 'Development in University Education: The Growth of the University of Ceylon (1942-1965)' points out that the increase in Faculty of Arts took place mainly after 1960 (the year of the first swabasha intake) with full-time art student figures increasing from 1,096 in 1957 to 7,108 in 1966 (cited by Malalasekara 1969b: 886). The faculty with the second highest increase in the number of students during that period was the Medical (including Dentistry) Faculty, with a student population of 864 in 1957 increasing to 1,646 students in 1966. For the Vidyodaya University which came into being in 1959, student enrolment increased from 466 in 1959/60 to 2,004 in 1967/68. There was also a shift from Bhikku students to lay students. For the

[37] de Silva C. R. (1977) *Education Sri Lanka: A Survey,* ed. by K. M. de Silva, London

Vidyalanakara University of Ceylon (established in 1959) the number of internal students grew from 543 in 1960/61 to 2,115 in 1966/67. Of these, the entire student enrolment consisted of men in accordance with the Pirivena Universities Act.

In the present context, the growth in student enrolment in the higher education sector has been attributed to the growth in the number of students completing secondary education and seeking higher education as well as a growth in the number and capacity of public and private higher education institutions. According to the LIRNEAsia survey of undergraduate degree programmes in Sri Lanka, as at 2011 there were 46 private institutions offering degree programmes.

In addition, access to public universities has grown to become extremely competitive. In 2014 the five universities with the highest numbers of student on roll were the University of Colombo (18,273), Peradeniya (13,789), Sri Jayawardenapura (12,594), Kelaniya (11,420), and Moratuwa (8,674). Except for the University of Moratuwa, the other 4 universities had all been established before 1970 and accounted for 49.6% of the 130,439 students enrolled in the 15 public universities coming under the UGC in the academic year 2013/2014. The Open University had 27,460 (21.058%) out of the total students on roll at universities for 2014 (University Grants Commission 2015: 4).

3.2: Social composition of university students

> [Kannangara referring to the country consisting of different racial origins, religion and national languages]` *This diversity should not be a source of weakness but a source of strength. Each community has some peculiar contribution to make to the common stock. It can effectively be made, however, only if there is equality of opportunity, and it is one of our tasks to iron out the inequalities so that every individual may contribute his utmost'* (Sessional Paper XXIV, 1943, Chapter XI: 10).

Pre-independence saw the under-representation of certain racial and religious groups in the university system. With increased access by students from rural areas to university education in the ensuing decades, the urban, rural and social disparities have reduced. However, disparities in terms of access to certain courses of study and hence occupations still exist mainly due to lack of adequate resources among secondary schools.

During pre-independence the racial and religious composition of university students was such that the Tamil and Burgher students were proportionately more numerous, and the Sinhalese and Muslims proportionately less numerous, than in the island's population (Jennings 1944: 2). Table 2 provides the breakdown of the student population into their respective races between 1942 – 1943 and compares it to the Island racial breakdown based on the 1921 census. Jennings attributed this composition to a combination of several factors; home residence of the student with an over-representation of students from the Western Province (mixed racial population) and Northern Province (with few Sinhalese population) and a heavy under representation of the Kandy-Sinhalese; most students came from urban areas and were English-educated; economic class level; specific socio-economic characteristics of the Jaffna District; and for Ceylon Moors the practice of purdah and business rather than professional careers being deemed important (Jennings 1944: 2-11).

Table 2: Race of university students (1942 – 1944)

	Island % (1921)	1942	1943	1944
Low-Country Sinhalese	69.6	57.4	56.5	57.8
Ceylon Tamil	18.7	32.1	34.1	32.7
Ceylon Moors and Malays	9.6	2.8	2.3	2.9
Burghers	1.1	6.0	5.7	5.5
Others	1.0	1.7	1.4	1.1
	100	100	100	100

Source: Jennings 1944: 2, Table II

High unemployment among arts graduates in the 1960s intensified the competition for entrance into science based courses. The science courses were popular with Sri Lankan Tamils[38]. For instance in 1964 Sri Lankan Tamils held '... 37.2% of the places in Science and Engineering courses, 40.5% of the places in Medicine and Dentistry, and 41.9% of the places in Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences in the University of Sri Lanka.' (de Silva 1978: 86). This high percentage of Sri Lankan Tamil students in science courses compared to their proportion in the total population remained until 1970.

The ethnic composition of students changed in the 1970s based on the admission criteria to universities[39] (Peiris 2001: 21-23). A statistical language-based standardisation method for university admissions between 1971 and 1976 was adopted, according to subject, for the Sinhala and Tamil mediums. During this period there was a drastic reduction in the percentage of Tamil students entering university for science-based courses. According to C. R. De Silva (1978: 92-93) this percentage dropped from 35.3% in 1970 to 14.2% in 1975. In comparison, the Sinhalese who constituted 71.9% of the country's population, obtained 75.4% of the places in science based courses in 1974. Increases were also noted in Medicine and Engineering. The Malays/Moors students who were grossly under-represented in terms of their total population, also increased in number. The number of Malays/Moors students increased from 21 places in science based courses in 1970 to 41 places in 1975. This process of standardisation was abandoned in 1978 and replaced by one based on district quotas and all island merit lists with no language distinction (see section 3.1 of this report).

For the academic year 2013/ 2014, the highest numbers of students admitted to universities and higher education institutions, and in terms of all the different ethnicities, was in the arts programme. The percentage of students in the arts programme according to their ethnicity were as follows: Sinhalese (80%), Tamil (11.9%), Moors (7.75%) and Others (0.27%) (University Grants Commission 2015: 39). Over 60% of the students admitted to all undergraduate academic programmes were Sinhalese (University Grants Commission 2015: 39, 36). The programme in which students of Sinhala ethnicity constituted the highest percentage was in the management and commerce programme (making up approximately 85% of admissions). The highest percentage of Tamil student admissions in an academic programme was for the arts programme (just under 20%), and for Moors and students of other ethnicities it was admission into the indigenous medicine programme (approximately 21%) (ibid).

The social composition of the student population has also changed as a result of the expansion in university education through free education and the use of national languages as a medium of instruction. Jayaweera and Sanmugam's study (2002) analysed the development of human resources through university education (impacts on national development and graduates'[40] employment and social mobility). According to this study, urban, rural and social disparities have reduced sharply as a result of the expansion of secondary education (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 3). They state that around 70% of the university students came from a rural environment by 1967 and the percentages admitted from professional and middle level families declined from around 90% in 1950s to around 35% in 1967. However, while access to university education increased, it took time for it to penetrate all levels of society and the momentum of change seems to have lessened after the 1960s. In 1977, over 30 years after the introduction of the Free Education scheme, Strauss (1951), Uswatte-Aratchi (1974) and Jayaweera (1984)[41] state that among the university entrants 71.6% were still first generation students (cited by Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 3). Jayaweera and Sanmugam's study (2002:115) found that 'while some students from poverty groups have had access to professional studies and employment, the social composition of the students was not markedly different from that in the 1970s'. Another finding was that middle-class students had participated in professional courses while students from less privileged families were in arts based courses. A significant number for students had come from secondary schools where only arts courses where available.

[38] 'The adoption of Sinhalese as the official language of Sri Lanka strengthened the tendency among Sri Lankan Tamils to concentrate on professional courses and science courses as they felt that administrative posts in the public sector would become increasingly difficult to obtain.' (de Silva 1978: 87).

[39] He bases the following observations on C. R. De Silva (1984), K. M. De Silva (1984) and Tambiah's (1986) work.

[40] The respondents were 1,234 graduates who were admitted to universities for the year 1987/88.

[41] Uswatte-Aratchi, G. (1974) University Admissions in Ceylon: The Economic and Social Background and Employment Expectations – *Modern Asian Studies* 8(4): 6 – 40; Jayaweera (1984) Access to University Education – The Social Composition of University Entrants, *University of Colombo Review* 4(1): 6-40.

Access to private tuition has also increasingly become a factor in secondary education achievements and gaining access to university education. This point is recognised in the 'National Policy Framework on Higher Education and Technical and Vocational Education' which states that despite the near-universal enrolment of students in primary education, the rich-poor gaps in secondary and tertiary enrolment and increasing use of private tuition suggests that children from lower income families are at a disadvantage at gaining admission to higher education (National Education Commission 2009: 15).

3.3 Gender composition of university students

> *Education with its potential for promoting self-recognition and positive self-image, stimulating critical thinking, deepening the understanding of the structures of power, including gender, and creating an expanding framework of information, knowledge and choices, is central to empowerment (UNESCO 2007: 2).*

In 1931 women students made up less than 4% of the student population (Sumathipala 1968: 347). In 1942 this percentage had grown marginally to 10.1% and came mainly from English educated professional elite homes (University of Colombo 1979: 298). With the policy of free university education in 1945 the number of women students enrolled in university increased to 28.2% (832 students) of the total enrolled in 1958 (*op cit*: 299). The adoption of the two national languages as the medium of instruction saw a further increase. This percentage dropped, however, (from 28.2% in 1958 to 24.4% in 1959) with the establishment of the Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Universities (*op cit.*: 301). Established from traditional Buddhist religo-cultural centres these two universities were open only to male students and the percentage of women enrolled into Universities declined further to 24.1% in 1960. In 1966 equal access was restored under the Higher Education Act No 20 of 1966 and women were admitted to all four universities which existed in the country at the time (Peradeniya, Colombo, Viyodaya and Vidyalankara Universities) (*op cit*: 301). Nearly 500 women were admitted into the Vidyodaya University in 1966 for the first time (Malalasekara 1969b: 889).

By 1970 the percentage of women in the university student population had increased to 44.4% and continued to rise to reach 45.7% in 1997/98 and 51.7% in 1999 (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002:3, Jayaweera 2007: 102). In 2014 female undergraduate admissions to universities was 62% (15,694) of total admissions (University Grants Commission 2012: 22). Thus women's enrolment into university education has risen to a point that there is gender equality in university admittance. However imbalances in the courses they take continue to exist (as described in section 4.3 of this report).

3.4 University courses

In 1942, the University of Ceylon was built around 4 major faculties – Arts, Oriental Studies, Science and Medicine (Sanyal *et al*. 1983: 114). The Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Science was added in 1947 and Engineering in 1949 (*op. cit.*: 114). The increase in the humanities and social sciences within the university curricula on the conversion of Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas to Universities in 1959 resulted in an increase in arts graduates. There was no attempt to diversify these subjects, and the extension in the educational facilities in the late 1950s and 1960s was mainly in the arts stream at secondary level (Warnapala 2009: 108). This led to a higher percentage of students in arts based courses in universities and an over-production of Arts Graduates even to this day (Jayaweera and Sanmugan, 2002: 2,Warnapala 2009: 108) – for the academic year 2013/2014 UGC enrolment of students in the pure arts and science streams was 25,049 and 11,884 respectively (University Grants Commission 2015: 41).

In the 1950s, second-level vocational institutions in technical, agricultural, fine arts and teacher education were few and inadequate, and had only 4% of the secondary enrolment (Gunawardena 1980: 18). At tertiary level there was a notable lack of diversification with the Law College, Junior University Colleges (now defunct) and 7 Polytechnics being the only alternative tertiary educational institutions available apart from the universities (*op. cit.*: 18). Post 1978 there was a diversification of programmes offered – with courses in commerce, management, journalism, food science, forestry etc. being added to most universities' course lists. Universities have also adapted to meet the evolving

demands in the market - such as introducing courses in telecommunications, estate management and valuation, polymer science etc. Over time some have become known for excelling in providing higher education in certain areas of study, such as the University of Moratuwa which is known for its engineering and related streams.

3.5 Financing universities

The University of Ceylon was financed wholly by the state, unlike many foreign universities at the time (Malalasekara 1969b: 895, Ratnapala 1991: 93). The Recurrent Government Grant to Universities increased from LKR 16 million in 1964/65 to LKR 18.944 million in 1966/67. The government was also granting financial assistance to students, and in 1944 168 students received financial assistance and this figure increased to 1,008 in 1958. (Ratnapala 1991: 8). The bulk of the finances allocated for university education was channelled to the University of Ceylon with the Pirivena Universities receiving approximately LKR 2 – 2.6 million in 1966/67 (Malalasekara 1969b: 895). Malalasekera (op cit: 900) states that in the 1960s approximately 6% of total expenditure on education was spent on the Universities, in comparison to other countries such as the United States spending 27%, India 17.2%, Germany 13%, and Sweden 8%. A similar observation was made by J. E. Jayasuriya (1969: 162) who stated that the increase in student enrolment in the 1960s had not been accompanied by a proportionate increase in the grants from the government to the University, and was less than the GDP percentage expenditure made by other countries on university education.

Low public expenditure on the education sector, as a whole, has continued to exist in the more recent past. Aturupane's study (2012: 56) points to government spending on education as being less when compared with other countries in Sri Lanka's development category. The main reasons cited for this low level of investment in education are; 1) relatively low salaries for teachers and academic staff, 2) the expansion of the capital stock of schools and higher education institutions during the 1950s-1970s, which reduced the need for major investment in the construction of new schools and universities, 3) competing uses for resources such as infrastructure development, free health care, etc. (op. cit.). There has been a drive by The Federation of University Teacher's Association (FUTA), to persuade the government to allocate more funding for education, a percentage of 6% of GDP, and to have government spending on higher education reach 1% (Federation of University Teacher's Association 2012: 4). However, as at 2014, government spending on education was 1.85% of GDP, a decrease from 2.08% in 2009 (Central Bank of Sri Lanka 2015: 60), while government expenditure on university education as a percentage of GDP was 0.38% (extracted from University Grants Commission 2015: 116).

The distribution of government funding among the universities has also been studied. Weeramunda (2008:12) states (based on 2005 university enrolment figures) that there is a mismatch between the universities which take in the most students and the universities which receive the most in terms of government expenditure on universities (government grants). The OUSL had the highest proportion of student enrolments in 2005 (25.6%) followed by the University of Colombo (12.5%), and the University of Peradeniya (11.8%). With regards to government expenditure in the same year however, the University of Peradeniya received the highest proportion of total expenditure (18.8%) followed by the University of Colombo (10.7%). The universities of Sri Jayawardenepura, Kelaniya, and Ruhuna had between 9% and 10% of total expenditure while the OUSL, the university with the highest proportion of students that year, only received 4.7% of the government grant (ibid).

Limited public resources have led to inequality in the facilities provided between universities. According to Warnapala (2011: xii-xiii) these disparities have led to the emergence of the privileged and the under-privileged among the University system. He cites the University of Peradeniya as part of the privileged sector as it was the first planned residential university in the country.

4. Impacts

'Education needs to prepare individuals to contribute to the social and economic development of the country and plays a role in the production and transmission of knowledge. In this context it can be viewed as a public service.' (Warnapala 2009: 43).

The two main research methods employed to assess the economic value of education are the correlation approach (correlating overall index of education activity with some index of economic activity) and the rate of return approach (where the earning of the 'more' educated are compared to those of 'less' educated individuals) (Gunawardena 1980: 3). This is reflected in the literature reviewed in this document. However, studies such as Gunawardena (1980) and Jayaweera and Sanguman (2002) go a step further and measure socio-economic impacts based on individual hopes and ideals at the time of receiving a university education and their satisfaction/frustration experiences with, and impacts of, achieved status at a later date[42].

In its publication 'Degrees of Value – How universities benefit society' (2011) the New Economic Foundations states that universities yield benefits beyond the traditional measurements of financial return and economic growth. It states that three social outcomes - greater political interest, higher inter-personal trust and better health – contribute to society over and above economic benefits in the UK.

This section of the report provides a background to social mobility definitions and highlights findings from research studying the social mobility of undergraduates in Sri Lanka. The remaining sub-sections are then divided into the main areas of impact researchers have linked to university education and related social mobility: national development and a country's global performance, employment, and socio-economic development.

4.1 Social mobility

'... education in a democratic society should be free at all stages. Talents and ability are not confined to any social class or group and any social system must provide for their emergence by the provision of equal educational opportunities.' (Sessional Paper XXIV 1943, Chapter XI: 64)

Social mobility refers to the movement of individuals or groups in social positions over time. It may refer to classes, ethnic groups, or entire nations, and may measure health status, literacy, or education; however, more commonly it refers to individuals or families, and to their change in income. There are different types of social mobility. *Horizontal mobility* refers to movement from one social position to another of equal ranking. *Vertical mobility* is movement up or down from one socio-economic level to another, usually through marriage or a job change. *Intra-generational mobility* refers to an individual's change in social status over a lifetime. *Intergenerational social mobility* refers to a change in social status between generations (Boundless n.d.).

Social mobility can be facilitated by economic capital (a person's financial and material resources), cultural capital (educational level, customs and rituals), human capital (traits, competencies and work ethic), and social capital (advantages conferred by an individual's social network). A distinction can be made between *absolute mobility,* the movement of a *group* of people between social classes, and *relative mobility* which is the movement of an *individual* between social classes. The provision of education to a social group/s of people who did not have access to education is an example of a factor that can result in absolute mobility (Boundless n.d.). It is this form of social mobility that the founders of the Free Education Scheme envisioned in Sri Lanka.

Goldthorpe (cited by Haveman and Smeeding 2006: 127) states that a merit-based higher education system can offset the role of social class in determining economic outcomes. In a merit-based system, post-secondary schooling acts as a filter which keeps parents' economic position from simply passing

[42] Gunawardena (1980) conducted a tracer study to gauge the socio-economic effectiveness of higher education in Sri Lanka on 440 Arts Graduates, who graduated in 1976, using questionnaire and interviews. Jayaweera and Sanguman (2002) conducted a tracer study to assess the development of human resources through university education, which looked at impacts of university education on graduates in terms of employment and social mobility as well as impacts on national development. The respondents consisted of 1,234 graduates who were admitted to universities for the year 1987/88.

straight through to their children. This simultaneously promotes economic efficiency, social justice, and social mobility. Goldthorpe also states that to move towards a less class-based society the link between a student's origins and their schooling should only reflect their ability, and the link between schooling and their eventual employment should be strengthened and constant. Referring to the American College system, Haveman and Smeeding cite two forces which cause growing inequalities. Increasingly affluent higher income parents with one or two children invest time, money, and influence to ensure their children's academic success while children of less educated and less well-to-do parents begin the 'college education game' later, with fewer choices and resources. Haveman and Smeeding state that as such, policies should focus on the long-term path from kindergarten to college graduation.

In Sri Lanka, the changing social composition within universities and the increased entry of graduates into the labour market in the 1960s reflect how universities have helped in the upward occupational and social mobility of youth during this period. However, there has been selective mobility. Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 15) state that the 1977 data underscores socio-economic differentiation in access to the different types of courses and vulnerability among art graduates with a low proficiency in English to low income occupations in the informal sector. The Marga study (1993, cited by Jayaweera and Sanmugam: 15) found that 55.9% of men graduates and only 20.8% of women graduates were employed in management jobs. In Jayaweera and Sanmugam's study on women agriculture graduates they found that there was upward mobility in educational levels but not significantly in occupational levels (1992a, cited by Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 16). A similar study on women engineers by the same researchers showed upward mobility in educational and occupational levels (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 1992b[43], cited by Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 15). They also state that recurrent state intervention programmes (described in Section 4.4 of this report) reduced graduate unemployment while increasing under-employment and a low progression rate from low level employment positions (Jayaweera and Sanguman 2002: 15).

The country's economic growth was unable to match the aspirations of the students graduating from universities in the 1960s, hindering their social mobility and leading to unrest. In other words, the high social mobilisation aspirations among the educated youth were not satisfied (Samaranayake 1991: 102; Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth - Summary 1990:15). Referring to Samaranayake's work (1992[44]) Weeramunda (2008: 29) states that the free education scheme, political freedom through universal franchise, and expansion of the education system led to a qualitative change in the students attending university. The social base of students entering university changed from urban middle class to rural working class backgrounds, making students more aligned with the working class and leftist political ideology. Weeramunda (2008: 29,34) identifies other external factors contributing to student violence as the lack of education and other facilities for the increasing student population, employment mis-match in job market and failure of the government to deal with graduate unemployment, increased limiting of university autonomy, and the methods adopted by the government to deal with leftist politics. Between 1969-1970, 13% of Sri Lanka's 15-59 aged labour force were unemployed (and 14,000 university graduates were unemployed in 1969) (Samaranayake 1991: 102, 107). Language and a sense of social injustice were also factors highlighted as leading to the unrest by the Report of the Presidential Commission of Youth 1990. The report (1990: 1) states that the English Language was used as a sword of oppression, 'Kaduwa', to deny social mobility to rural youth. (Section 2.5 of this document outlines the main factors and corrective measure recommended by the Youth Commission.) Weeramunda identifies the internal factors contributing to the unrest as; the physical layout of the university, the unsatisfactory state of student facilities, socio-economic background of students, poor academic performance, drop in the quality of teaching, ineffectiveness of university administration, increase in the intake of Bhikkhu students, student politics and the intrusion of JVP activities into campus life (Weeramunda 2008: 27-34). The situation was compounded by the unbalanced manner in which university students were

[43] Jayaweera and Sanmugam (1992b) *Women Engineers in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Sri Lanka Federation of University Women (1980); Jayaweera and Sanmugam (1992a) *Women Graduates in Agricultur*e. Colombo: Centre for Women's Research (Study Series No.3).

[44] Samaranayake G. 1992, "Changing Patterns of Student Politics in Sri Lanka: A Case Study of the University of Peradeniya". In R.A.L.H. Gunawardena,. ed. *More Open than Usual?: An Assessment of the Experiment in University Education at Peradeniya and Its Antecedents*. Colombo: Aitken Spence Printing (Private) Ltd. pp 101-114.

selected with a large number for certain subjects such as the social sciences but few for Engineering/ Medicine, and university admission from a system based on merit to a quota system in favour of those from disadvantages regions of the country (Samaranayake 1992:103, cited by Weeramunda 2008: 31). The gradual escalation in the type and intensity of unrest and violence particularly between the 1971-1989 periods are shown in Table 3, an extract of Weeramunda's timeline of conflicts in universities during this period.

Table 3: Timeline of incidents of violence and indiscipline (1953 – 1993)

Year	Incident
1953	Hartal: police-student clashes in Kandy and Peradeniya
1962	Harassment of the Prime Minister and assault on lecturer as a protest against punishment given for ragging
1963	Boycott of classes and satyagraha by students against punishment for ragging
1965	15 demands by students, student strike, police intervention at the lodge
1969	Student/Army clash
1969	Student strike
1971	University employee strike Student demonstrations
1971	Bomb explosion at Marrs Hall, arrest and interrogation of 150 JVP supporters
1971	Outbreak of JVP insurgency
1976	VC taken hostage, police operation, killing of student
1978	Student disturbances, attempted sabotage in science faculty
1980-81	Election related clashes between 2 student factions with one group having a 'sit in' at Getambe Buddhist Temple
1982	Post election clashes between the 2 student factions (pro and anti government)
1983	Attacks on Tamil students/staff due to deteriorating ethnic situation in the country
1984	Clash of the campus police post and killing of student
1985-87	14 one day strikes from March to May against government's failure to control the LTTE Storming of the Registrar's office and hostage taking until students arrested in Kandy for fund-raising activities were released
1987	Rioting over the signing of the Indo Sri Lanka agreement
1988	Token strikes after universities opened
1989	Period of turmoil and attacks on the JVP by security forces Killing of 3 men travelling in a jeep by students Killing of the Vice Chancellor of Moratuwa University and ex Vice Chancellor of University of Colombo
1993	Abduction of Science Faculty Dean
	PERIOD OF DORMANCY

Source: extracted from Weeramunda 2008: 24-25, Table 4

4.2 Global performance and competitiveness

> *'Economic development makes urgent calls on education, and in turn advancement of education and knowledge promotes economic development. It is difficult to determine which of the two should take the lead in effecting a break-through from a state of chronic backwardness.' John Vaizey, educational economist'* (1962[45], cited by Sumathipala 1968: 173).

Sri Lanka recorded exceptional economic growth and social development in the 1950s, surpassing the Asian Tigers (the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore). Given that Sri Lanka followed similar education policies and experienced similar demographic transitions, it was in its economic policy and the ethnic diversity of its population that it diverged from its Asian counterparts. The Import Substitution Industrialisation that took place from 1956 – 1977 reduced the country's ability for economic growth and there was a mis-match in the employment opportunities available and the volume and aspirations of qualified students seeking employment. These along with historic inequality factors sown in colonial and post-colonial periods and the 30 year war which ended in 2009 hindered the country's competitiveness and socio-economic growth (Little & Hettige 2016: 229, 230).

Based on the Global Competitiveness Report, Sri Lanka was ranked 65 out of 148 countries in 2013/2014 (World Economic Forum 2015: 15). It is interesting to note that the role that an inadequately educated workforce (2.2) plays as being a problematic factor for doing business in Sri Lanka is minimal, while access to financing (12.8), tax rates (11.2) and poor work ethics in the national labour force (10.9) are the most problematic (World Economic Forum 2015: 350).

The Global Competitiveness Report 2013/14 does highlight some of the weaknesses within the higher education and training sector in Sri Lanka and its comparative global performance. On a global level tertiary education enrolment and internet access in schools is low compared to the rest of the world (see Table 4).

Table 4: Global Competitive Index – pillars relating to education

	2013/2014	
	Value	**Rank/144**
Secondary education enrolment, gross %	102.4	26
Tertiary education enrolment, gross %	14.3	105
Quality of the educational system	4.6	28
Quality of math and science education	4.5	46
Quality of management schools	4.8	37
Internet access in schools	3.4	108
Availability of research and training services	4.4	53
Extent of staff training	4.2	52

Source: World Economic Forum 2015: 331

4.3 Socio-economic development

Sri Lanka pinned great hopes on education to achieve the level of economic and social well-being that developing countries aspired to (Gunawardena 1980: 4). Warnapala states that in the last fifty years [prior to 2009] universities in Sri Lanka have '…made a noteworthy contribution in producing

[45] Vaizey J (1962) *The Economics of Education,* p.143.

an educated labour force and advanced human capital... The expansion of education brought many a benefit to all social classes, and this was seen as an index of social mobility and social emancipation' (Warnapala 2009: 107). The socio-economic impacts of the free education scheme in Sri Lanka have been elaborated on by many authors/researchers. However, the 1971 ILO study highlights the inability of the education system to help fully overcome socio-economic disparities given existing internal and external contributing factors and biases – the text box below provides an outline of its conclusions.

`A study conducted by the ILO in 1971 on *'Matching employment opportunities and expectations: A programme of action for Ceylon'* drew the following four conclusions regarding equity in education:

First, in spite of high rates of unemployment for a number of years, most individuals with education end up with considerably higher incomes (and no doubt better future prospects) than those without. The differentials have been declining, but they are still large.

Second, and more significant, the distribution of those benefits by social class is far from even. The 1963 Consumer Finance Survey revealed a considerable disparity in earnings even between persons of similar educational levels. If experience elsewhere is a guide, higher earnings are likely to go to those from a higher social class and lower earnings to those with less educated parents, lower family income, less influence, etc. In this respect, education is a far-from-perfect equaliser of opportunities, though it may go some distance in this direction among persons of equal educational achievement.

On the cost side, differences in the ability of different individuals to supplement public provision of education can have very significant effects on results. A study of causes of non-school attendance showed that poverty was the most important cause of drop-out or non-enrolment. Even though education is nominally free, the costs of school uniforms, books and transport still exceed what some families can afford. Perhaps more significant, these expenditures are usually insufficient for a village child to get a good enough education to win a secondary place, even if he completes level I. To achieve promotion, most village children must get into a better school, away from the village, costing more for transport and often for other things as well. The result is that family income and location play a big part in selection.

Even if the system were free from bias between individuals in terms of family income or social background, it would still embody enormous social inequalities between the few who make the grade educationally and the majority who do not. The higher life-time earnings of the educated are paid for by public education, which is financed from general taxation. There is no obvious justification for this, either as an economic return on investment in education (since the State largely financed the investment) or as an incentive for seeking higher education (since there is no shortage of candidates). The higher rewards for the educated increase inequality within society as a whole, stimulate even more demand for education (in spite of unemployment among the educated) and lay the seeds of frustration among the very group who in the long run have most to gain.

This last point is probably the most serious aspect of unequal distribution of education in Ceylon. Although inequality internal to the educational system is far from negligible, it is probably less severe than in many other countries, particularly those where the crucial levels of education are not free. But the external aspects of educational distribution in Ceylon may be no less unequal than elsewhere. (ILO 1971: 160-161)

Many of the studies referred to in this sub-section of the report are quantitative in nature. A difficulty in researching socio-economic impacts is the measurement of impact such as gauging the effectiveness of education in terms of economic development, social equity and political socialisation. As stated at the start of this section, cost-benefit analysis and rate of return are the more widely used methods of measuring economic effectiveness. Gunawardena (1980: 89) cites Bowen (1977) on the deficiencies of using these measures, where the measurement of the matters of intellect, personality and value cannot be quantified or aggregated. Bowen states that ` a valid picture of the effect of higher education calls for a consideration of what happens in the lives of whole individuals,

not merely what happens to average scores on particular dimensions of achievement or interest.' (Bowen 1977[46], cited by Gunawardena 1980: 89)

Some of the positive and negative socio-economic impacts of Sri Lanka's education system are stated by Jayaweera (2007: 102, 103). There has been a cumulative impact of the expansion of education opportunities with a rise in literacy levels from 76.2% male literacy and 46.2% female literacy at the 1946 Census to 92.3% and 89.25% respectively at the 2001 Census. The gender gap has been reduced from 30 percentage points in 1946 to three percentage points in 2001, and urban and rural differences have declined. The following shortfalls in Sri Lanka's education system were also highlighted; universal primary education has still only 'nearly been achieved'; pockets of educational deprivations exist in low income urban neighbourhoods, remote villages, plantations with historic educational disadvantage in former colonial enclaves, and recently, in areas which were affected by two decades of armed ethnic conflict; only 5 to 6 percent of secondary schools offer science for the higher grades; and the 14 universities in existence can only offer places to 3% of the relevant age group with few alternative education opportunities available at tertiary level (Jayaweera 2007: 103).

Regional imbalances

Hallack's 1972 Sri Lanka study[47](cited by Gunawardena 1980: 36), which analysed statistical data, states that education was not playing its role as a factor of development with its output not fitting with the socio-economic requirement of the country. Hallack also refers to imbalances in the supply of education between urban and rural areas and states that to this extent the system is not effective in responding to the popular demand for equalisation of educational opportunity. Uswatte-Aratchi observed that in 1967 the districts which made up the largest number of university admissions (apart from Jaffna – 9.5%) were in the richer and more politically influential wet zone coastal belt (1974: 300-301). Colombo constituted the largest percentage of admissions at 29.4%.

Thus, districts which had secondary schools with adequate science facilities had more entrants in the university science courses. In 1967 out of the total number of university admissions 76% of students were admitted to the humanities and social science faculties, whereas only 20% of these students would have chosen to join these faculties (but were compelled to do so due to lack of adequate facilities and low marks) (Uswatte-Aratchi 1974: 310). Among the students who had been admitted to the humanities and social sciences, only 27% had come from schools which had facilities to study science. The entrants to university science courses were mainly (67%) students from Colombo and Jaffna (op. cit.: 300). However, since the introduction of the district quota in the 1970s to reduce regional imbalances, the break-down of students enrolled in science courses district-wise changed. According the Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 4) while the use of the district quota system to select 60% to 70% of university entrants has led to educationally disadvantaged districts having more access to university education it has prevented optimal utilisation of the quotas. This is mainly due to the fact that the introduction of the district quota system was not accompanied by measures to increase access to senior secondary science education in rural areas.

The access to science education at the secondary level has only improved slightly over the last decade. In 2006, the number of functional government schools with G C E Advanced Level (Grades 12-13) Arts/Commerce streams but without science streams was 1,854 (73.7% of the schools offering A-Levels) (Ministry of Education 2007: 13, Table 1). By 2013 this number had increased to 1,910 but the percentage had dropped to 68.75% (Ministry of Education n.d.: 9, Figure 2.2).

Socio-economic imbalances

The disproportionate increase in student enrolment in the arts stream in rural secondary schools led to the development of three hierarchical educational and socio-economic tiers in university courses within the university student population, which in turn have different and diminishing levels of

[46] Bowen H. R., 1977. *Investment in learning: the individual and social value of American higher education.* San Francisco: 22-29.

[47] Hallack J. 1972. *Financing educational policy in Sri Lanka.* Paris. UNESCO/International Institute for Educational Planning.

economic rewards and social prestige (Gunawardena 1980: 302, Jayaweera and Sanmugam, 2009: 3). The three tiers are based on those attending professional science based courses, other science courses and arts courses. Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 3-4) compare the findings of the Uswatte-Aratchi study (1974) and Jayweera's study (1984) which show the socio-economic differentiation in access to courses, leading to differences in remunerative and prestigious employment. Uswatte-Aratchi's study (1974: 306) found that in 1967 nearly half of the fathers of students admitted to all science based courses were in higher paid and more prestigious occupations, while 71% of students who gained admission to the humanities and social science had fathers engaged in occupations not considered to be 'prestigious'. According to the study 61% of fathers of arts students were from the working class. This disparity seems to have widened by 1977. Jayaweera (1984) reports that only 9.2% of fathers of arts students were professionally employed, compared to 42.3% of the fathers of students in science based courses and 34.7% of fathers of students in other science courses. 58.9% of fathers of students in arts courses were urban or rural workers while only 21% of fathers of students in professional science based courses engaged in this work.

Research shows that a person's socio-economic status is linked to his/her level of education and subsequent employment. Gunawardena conducted a tracer study to gauge the socio-economic effectiveness of higher education in Sri Lanka on 440 arts graduates, who graduated in 1976. The study used questionnaires and interviews as part of its research methodology. Gunawardena's study (1980: 302) found a close relationship between the employed status of graduates and their socio-economic status, and when outstanding educational achievement is lacking, employment opportunities are more restricted and that socio-economic background exerts an influence as to whether a graduate is employed or not. The study found that while education resulted in upward social mobility, it had not, for the majority, resulted in a satisfaction with their achieved status. Hundred percent of the upper socio-economic group were satisfied with their status while 100% of the lower group graduates were dissatisfied (Gunawardena 1980: 303). Gunawardena (1980: 304) states that 'as far as equity in achieving socio-economic status for graduates of differing socio-economic background is concerned, higher education in Sri Lanka has proved to be ineffective'.

Gender impacts

The positive socio-economic impacts on women through improved education were highlighted in Jayaweera's paper (2007) and Yatigammana's quantitative study (2006). The female literacy rate is less than 80% only in the plantation district of Nuwara-Eliya (Jayaweera 2007: 102). Similarly, female literacy in the most educationally disadvantaged population group (the plantation sector) rose from 45.8% in 1985/86 to 67.3% in 1996/97 (ibid.). Gender differences are minimal in the population below fifty years of age – the post-free education generations – but pockets of female illiteracy exist in the economically productive age groups. The gender gap in non-schooling has declined over the years, while there are more women than men with 12 years of education (Jayaweera 2007: 102). Similar findings were found in Yatigammana's quantitative study (2006) where the increasing enrolment of women in higher education has had impacts on infant mortality, life expectancy at birth, GNP growth rate, literacy rate, imprisonment and the labour force. The study analysed 1999-2003 data and revealed a negative relationship between education enrolment and infant mortality and female imprisonment, but also with literacy rate[48] and female labour force participation. Yatigammana states that the latter may be due to women spending more time on education and reducing their time in the labour force in that year (Yatigammana 2006: 314). A positive correlation existed in life expectancy at birth (ibid.).

However, there exists gender imbalances among the attendees of the earlier mentioned three tier groups of university students- those attending professional science based courses, other science courses and arts courses. By 2002, women students made up 77% of the student population in the undergraduate arts stream, while in the science and IT stream this percentage was only 48.4% (Jayaweera 2007: 104). For the academic year 2013/2014, the percentage of female students admitted to the undergraduate arts stream in Universities and higher education institutions (not including the OUSL) was 81.2% (University Grants Commission 2015: 21). The percentage in the undergraduate pure science programme was 46.8% (ibid).

[48] This may be due to the general literacy rates in Sri Lanka declining between 1999 – 2003 (Yatigammane 2006: 314).

In her paper 'Gender, Education and the Labour Market in Sri Lanka', Jayaweera argues that despite achieving gender parity in access to education, a range of factors have prevented women from translating the education they receive into economic rewards through employment. The lack of science facilities in non-city areas, education material continuing to reflect gender stereotypes, and the home economic syndrome influences the choice of vocational-related optional courses. Jayaweera states that at university level women students are poorly represented in engineering and technology courses, and argues that neither school nor higher education institutions have attempted to consciously empower women to challenge negative norms and oppressive social practices or to develop their personhood (Jayaweera 2007: 11).

Political socialisation impacts

Gunawardena also studied graduates' political socialisation to gauge the effectiveness of the education system. The study findings indicated a high degree of political alienation and apathetic and resigned attitudes – a result of heightened political awareness and critical-mindedness coupled with the realisation of the minor role educated youth play in the country's political culture. The respondents showed a low degree of dedication to national development or militancy to change the social order, an outcome which is not in line with the dynamic roles expected by intelligentsia. The study found a failure on the part of the higher education system in Sri Lanka to generate (potential) political leaders, facilitate political integration of society and participate in the political process (Gunawardena 1980: 305, 306).

Little & Hettige refer to an anti-systemic political youth movement in the country since the early 1970s as being attributed in part to the perceived social injustice perpetuated by continued political control of resources (Hettige, 1991, 1998[49], cited by Little & Hettige 2016: 190). Marxist ideology meant that these youth attributed their problems to systemic causes, hence their movement aiming to overthrow the perceived unjust socio-economic system.The National Youth Survey of 1999 and 2009 reveals the prevalence of a feeling among educated youth that society is unjust (Little & Hettige 2016: 190).

Economic welfare impacts

The impact that the level of education achieved has had on the welfare of households (from the mid-1980s) in Sri Lanka was studied by Himaz and Aturupane, and findings presented in their paper 'Education and Household Welfare in Sri Lanka From 1985 To 2006' (2011). Their quantitative study analysing data of male income earners from 1985 to 2006 provides some interesting insights into welfare trends in relation to the level of education achieved. The study found that the level of education of the household head had increased from 1.5 years to around 7 to 8.2 years during this period, as had the per capita consumption which almost doubled from LKR 2,228 to LKR 4,041 (Himaz and Aturupane 2011: 6). The study states that the positive impact of education on welfare has been rising over time for completed A/L, university and postgraduate categories, with the highest rise being for university and then postgraduate education. For education levels of 1-10 years the impact of an extra year of education on welfare is low. Comparatively, for higher education levels (A/Ls upwards) the impact on welfare is high – between 9 to 16 percent (op.cit.: 6,7). Aturupane (2012: 50) also studied the economic returns to education based on a 2008 data set. Among university graduates both men and women enjoyed returns of 21% while at postgraduate level, the rates of return to education were 9% for men and 17% for women. This implies that credentials are important in translating education to higher welfare. Aturupane (ibid) also states that the relatively low levels of return for primary and basic education[50] may be due to the fact that the supply of these levels of education is relatively high in Sri Lanka so returns on these levels of education are smaller. The supply of secondary and higher education levels is lower, resulting in higher returns.

It is interesting to note that the impact of education on welfare also varies based on the income group. The Himaz and Aturupane study found that improving the delivery of general education,

[49] Hettige S.T., 1992. *Unrest or Revolt: Some Aspects of Youth Unrest in Sri Lanka.* Ed. Colombo. German Cultural Institute.
Hettige S .T., 1998. *Globailsation, Social Change and Youth.* Colombo. German Cultural Institute,

[50] Returns to education for primary educated workers was 2% for men and 1% for women, while men and women who had completed their basic education achieved 7% and 10% respectively.

especially during years 1-7, can have a considerable impact on improving welfare of the poorest quartile. The impact of O/L and A/L education on their welfare was seen to be around 13% but that of university education being only 0.05. Himaz and Aturupane state that this may be due to the fact that ability and other characteristics become more important at the higher levels of welfare, and may reflect the fact that those with an university education aim for specific types of jobs (e.g. teaching, state-sector jobs) which may not necessarily pay much but have prestige and job security (Himaz and Aturupane 2011: 8). It was also noted that returns were systematically higher for the higher income quantiles. It was surmised that this may be due to richer individuals having skills (for instance English language, computer literacy, social and analytical skills) which complement formal education or a better quality education increasing their earning power (op. cit.: 12).

Aturupane (2012: 48) states that the impact of education on earnings is stronger for women entering the labour market than for men, as nearly all men of a working age participate in the labour market while for women education makes the probability of their entering the labour market greater. In addition, a male worker with a primary education earns about 16% more than a man with no schooling, while within the female gender there is an 8% difference. The percentage differences increase along the different levels of education, with the highest differences observed among men and women who have received a higher education. Male university graduates earn 284% more than uneducated men, while female university graduates earn 372% more than uneducated women. At the postgraduate level, men and women earn 322% and 459% more respectively than their uneducated gender counterparts. (op.cit.: 50)

4.4 Education and employment

Education has a history in Sri Lanka of being viewed as a means for increasing employment opportunities and improving one's living standards. According to Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 2) these perceptions were reinforced by existing socio-economic disparities and aspirations generated from the availability of free education and scholarships, even during periods of high unemployment from the late 1960s.

Corea (1969: 1071) states that educational policy cannot assume the sole blame for unemployment if it is caused by the failure of overall employment opportunities to keep pace with the growing workforce. However, educational policy may be held justly responsible for unemployment where there is no overall deficiency of employment opportunities, but there is an imbalance in the demand and supply for specific skills (ibid.). Sri Lanka seems to have gone through both scenarios as explained below.

During the 1950s and 1960s social policies reduced mortality rates while birth rates remained the same, resulting in rapid population growth and an increasing number of children in the population. Social policies also stimulated educational expansion which outran economic development (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 5, Samaranayake 1991: 102). This resulted in an increased number of graduates with expectations of remunerative employment in a high level of socio-economic structure. However, there was poor absorption of youth into the economy and a saturation of the services sector. This coupled with an increasingly restricted labour market and an increase in the proportion of arts graduates by the end of the 1960 led to increased unemployment.

The inability of the education sector to produce graduates with the skills to match manpower needs occurred in the 1960s. Gunawardena (1980: 17) states that the education reforms since 1940s, while expanding education, made no attempts to regulate the education system in response to the manpower needs of the economy. According to Gunawardena (referring to Karunatilake's (1971)'Economic Development in Ceylon') the unemployment and skill shortage which existed in the 1960s was blamed on the defects and imbalances in the educational structure. The high rates of unemployment and mal-employment among the art graduates in Gunawardena's study (indicating the inability of the economic system to absorb certain types of educated manpower) was stated as proof of the high degree of ineffectiveness of higher education to contribute to economic development (Gunawardena 1980, 305). The limited facilities for sciences and technical subjects at the secondary level and the lack of a sufficient expansion of vocational-technical education led to insufficient skilled manpower.

In the 1970s the Five Year Plan set out long overdue structural changes in the economy leading to the natonalisation of industries, land reforms, import policies which favoured domestic agriculture and other redistributive measures (Gunawardena 1980: 32). However, while this reduced the country's dependence on the developed world and reduced society's income inequalities, these changes also led to a rise in living costs (op cit.: 32)[51]. The unemployment figure in 1976 was 1,200,000 (roughly 20% of the employed group). While educational policy to use national languages and avoid past social differences through the focus on English education was recognised, it had to be reconciled with the existing need for proficiency in English and the need to promote quality in higher education (Corea 1969: 1074). Persistent high public sector recruitment of graduates (especially in the 1970s) and ad hoc solutions to graduate unemployment increased the tendency for graduates to queue for public sector jobs (Salih 2002: 33). In 1980, the macro-economic reforms expanded the private sector and reduced the size of the public sector. This had an impact on graduate employment as the state was the major employer of graduates for decades offering them employment security (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 7).

As shown in Table 5, unemployment rates have since fallen from 13.8% in 1993 to 4.3% in 2014.

Table 5: Unemployment rates: 1993 - 2014

Year	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
1993 *	13.8	9.7	21.7
2000 *	7.6	5.8	11.0
2005 *	7.2	5.3	10.7
2010 *	4.9	3.5	7.7
2012	4.0	2.8	6.2
2013	4.4	3.2	6.6
2014	4.3	3.1	6.5

* Excluding Northern and Eastern Provinces

Source: Department of Census and Statistics 2013: 22, Department of Census and Statistics 2015: 4

According to Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 6) three characteristics dominate the unemployment sector; the majority of the unemployed (roughly 60%) are youth between the ages of 18 – 24 years; unemployment rates are relatively higher for those with at least a secondary education; and unemployment rates of women have been consistently at least almost double that of men (both overall and among those in the secondary or higher education levels). According to Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 5) the rate of unemployed who have access to higher education is high – 11.5% in 1971 and 9.3% in 1996/97 – while the trends have also been affected by state intervention programmes to reduce graduate unemployment. Some of these state intervention programmes had political connotations as some were timed on the eve of the general elections as in 1976, 1993, and 2000. The government has consistently implemented special intervention programmes since the 1970s to reduce unemployment. The graduate training scheme in 1971, 1976 and 1978 included the employment of graduates into the public sector[52] (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 12). Later schemes, such as the Unemployed Graduate Employment Scheme[53], the Graduate Employment

[51] The Colombo Price Index increased from 138.2 in 1970 to 227.8 in 1978. (Jayasekera (1977) ' Sri Lanka in 1976: Changing strategies and confrontation and quarterly economic review of Sri Lanka', Annual Supplement 1979, cited by Gunawardena 1980 :32).

[52] The 1971 graduate training scheme employed graduates into state and corporate sectors. Of the 6,000 graduates that applied 4,000 were placed in teaching and regional development jobs, with gender and income levels as criteria for placement (preference was given to men by imposing stringent criteria for women based on a low valuation of women's economic contribution) (Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 12).

[53] This scheme involved the graduates receiving a minimum of 3 years training and receiving a small allowance, and at the end of the period the private sector was expected to absorb the trainees. However, only 200 out of the 12,000 in the scheme were absorbed and the Government had to launch a 'rescue operation', recruiting 4,500 as trainee teachers (Salih 2001: 32).

Training Scheme and Tharuna Aruna Scheme were more focused on training and subsequent employment in the private sector, but had little success – resulting in demand-supply mis-matches and poor absorption rates into the private sector (Salih 2002: 32).

The trends in unemployment over the last 33 years according to the level of education attained are provided in Tables 6, 7, and 8. In 1971, people who had obtained an education of GCE A/Levels or above constituted a small percentage of the unemployed populace (1.3%). The unemployment rate among those with the same level of education in 1980/81/82 was high, but was relatively low among graduates (9.7%) compared to those who had only studied upto A/Levels or were undergraduates. By 2014 the unemployment rate among those having attained an education level of G C E A/Levels and above had dropped to 8.1%.

Table 6: Unemployed population by educational attainment and sex (1971)

Educational attainment	Males	Females	% of females out of total unemployed
No schooling	58,041	43,216	42.7
Grades 1 – 4	71,859	36,140	33.5
Grades 5 – 10	269,545	200,922	42.7
G C E O Levels	42,405	63,347	59.9
G C E A Levels/equivalent	2,780	3,640	56.7
Degree/equivalent and above	1,770	2,528	58.8
Total	446,406	349,798	43.9

Source: University of Colombo 1971, Table 5.90, based on Census of Ceylon 1971

Table 7: Unemployment rates by educational level and sex (1981/82)

Level of education	Male	Female	Total
No schooling illiterate	2.1	2.6	2.4
No Schooling literate	2.4	-	1.9
Primary	3.8	7.8	4.8
Secondary	9.6	33.5	14.6
GCE (O/L)	14.5	42.0	24.5
GCE (A/L)	22.0	52.2	34.8
Undergraduates	42.9	40.0	41.2
Graduates	8.1	12.1	9.7
Other	-	-	-
Total	7.8	21.3	11.7

Source: Report on Consumer Finance and Socio-economic Survey 1981/82 Sri Lanka, Part 1, Central Bank of Ceylon (1984), extracted from Jayaweera 2007: 110

Table 8: Unemployment rate by level of education 2014

Level of education	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
Grade 5 & Below	0.9	0.6 **	1.3**
Grade 6 – 10	3.4	2.9	4.5
GCE (O/L)	5.9	4.4	8.9
GCE (A/L) & above*	8.1	5.3	11.0
Total	4.3	3.1	6.5

* It should be noted that this does not specify what proportion are graduates ** These figures are to be treated with caution as the corresponding CV (Coefficient of variation) values are high.

Source: Department of Census and Statistics (2015): 23, Table 5.5

Jayaweera (2007: 109) points out that the unemployment rates at each level of educational attainment has been much higher for females than for males over the last 3 decades (as shown in Tables 6, 7 and 8). The trends in unemployment reflect that women were (and continue to be) affected more than men, with unemployment rates being 8.9% for men and 7.6% for women in 1963 climbing to 14.3% and 31.3% respectively in 1971 (Jayaweera and Sanmugam, 2002: 6). While the unemployment rate for females has declined over the last 20 years from 21.7% in 1993 to 6.5% in 2014 (as shown in Table 5) it is still more than double the male unemployment rate which was 3.1% in 2014 (Department of Census and Statistics 2015: 4).

Social mobility and unemployed graduates

Research which has looked at the employment situation of university students after graduation (based on gender, social background and income level of families) highlight issues of inequity. The studies by the Sri Lanka Federation of University Women (1980), the Status of Women (University of Colombo, 1979), Gunawardena (1980) and Marga Institute (1991)[54] (cited by Jayaweera and Sanmugam 2002: 8,9) found that graduates with art degrees found employment less quickly than science graduates, many of the unemployed had parents from low income families and were school dropouts and graduates from affluent families had remunerative and higher level jobs. Gunawardena (1980: 5) found that 54.1% of the arts graduates were in jobs that did not require a university degree and that there was a clear correlation between their social class and employment. Thus, the incidence of intergenerational social mobility and absolute mobility for these groups of students was low.

The main findings from the above research studies according to Jayaweera and Sanmugam (2002: 10) was that i) poverty chiefly in the depressed rural sector and lack of access to science education and English proficiency were crucial agents of employment and upward mobility and; 2) the economy could not absorb graduates of 'job oriented' courses and could accommodate unemployed graduates mainly in jobs held by secondary educated employees. The perceptions of graduates reflected that they felt that the absence of political/ family connections/patronage, poverty, low status school and lack of English proficiency, as well as lack of career guidance, and curricula that increases employability and gender discrimination affect their employability.

Social mobility among women graduates has also been low compared to their male counterparts. The study conducted by the Sri Lanka Federation of University Women found that for 1972/73 and 1975/76 women graduates, there was poor social mobility. Only a small minority had changed jobs since securing their first permanent job, even in situations where the secured jobs were not at the aspired level (Sri Lanka Federation Of University Women 1980). Upward mobility in the prestige

[54] Sri Lanka Federation of University Women (1980), *Unemployment among Women Arts Graduates*, Colombo; University of Colombo (1979), *Women in the Economy in Status of Women: Sri Lanka*, Colombo; Marga Institute (1991) *Education Employment Linkages – University and Non University Tertiary Education, including Professional Education*, Colombo.

and economic scale of jobs, in other words vertical social mobility, was also poor. The observation was also made, based on unemployment rates in 1971, that the effectiveness of education as a mechanism for achieving economic mobility for women depended largely on the type of education received (science or arts stream) rather than the level of education attained (University of Colombo 1979: 415).

Jayaweera (2007: 12) determines that educational attainment has not necessarily meant a change in occupational status for women (especially in the plantation sector). While the social composition of students had changed (from the elite in the 1950s to a rural and more egalitarian representation in the mid-1960s), wide unemployment limited graduate occupational mobility. This was more so for women. Policies have been of little help as they were based on existing gender role assumptions and gendered norms. Thus, despite achieving gender parity in education a long time ago, gendered differentiations continue with the use of low cost female labour as 'secondary earners', the deskilling of educated women workers and the "housewifisation" of women in rural development programmes being symptomatic of this phenomenon (ibid).

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Annexure

Tertiary Education in Sri Lanka

Below is a description of the main types of higher education providers in Sri Lanka, apart from the public universities (which are covered in the main sections of this document). In the 1950s second-level vocational institutions in technical, agricultural fine arts and teacher education were few and inadequate, and had only 4% of the secondary enrolment (Gunawardena 1980: 18). At tertiary level there was a notable lack of diversification with the Law College, Junior University Colleges (now defunct) and 7 polytechnics being the only alternative tertiary educational institutions available apart from the universities (op. cit.: 18).

Since the 1980s the higher education system in Sri Lanka has evolved to encompass various types of educational institutions catering to the educational needs and the expanding number of students emerging from secondary schools. There are currently both public and private sector higher education systems. The public sector consists of universities, research and postgraduate institutions and advanced technical institutions. The advanced technical institutions provide employment-oriented courses at diploma/higher than diploma level. The private sector consists of institutions providing professional internationally recognised qualifications (such as CIMA and CIM) and (external) degree awarding institutions.

External Degrees

Sri Lanka has a long history of students who have received qualifications through external degrees. In 1859 the Colombo Academy prepared students for the London University external degrees and in 1921 the University College prepared students as external students of the University of London. With the establishment of the autonomous University of Ceylon it was expected that external degrees would be discontinued. However, specifically due to the need to encourage professional education there was an opinion that external degrees through the London External Examination, in specialised areas such as engineering and medicine, be continued. This arrangement remained until the University of London decided not to conduct their external examinations in Sri Lanka. In 1961 the Ceylon University Ordinance of 1942 was amended to enable the University of Ceylon to grant external degrees. The External Services Agency was established in 1972 to conduct external examinations and in 1978 the whole process was brought under the UGC. The Distance Mode of education brought into the University System through the OUSL brought in a more open policy to registration for external degrees. As at 2008 external degrees were being awarded through 11 local universities. Warnapala (2008) states that though the pass rate at the external examinations is low, the external degree programmes, largely because of their poor quality, have created a social situation where there is a volatile group of degree holders seeking employment (Warnapala, 2008).

To help ensure quality in the degrees issued The World Bank funded IRQUE project helped form the Quality Assurance an Accreditation Council (QAAC) of the UGC of Sri Lanka. QAAC has successfully established a national quality assurance (QA) function for public universities, which has helped to develop Codes of Practice (for students, staff development, postgraduate research programmes, external degrees, etc.) and a credit and qualifications framework (World Bank 2009: 40, Peiriset. al.2014: 1). It has established internal QA cells in universities in 2005 and obtained membership in the INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in higher Education) and APQN (Asia Pacific Quality Network) in 2006.(Periset.al. 2014: 1). In 2010 the QAAC also released a Code of Practices for External Degrees The main purpose of these Codes of Practice is `... to ensure that teachers and supervisors, their respective academic units and the students, are aware of and clear about their responsibilities, especially that of the university, to maintain the expected standards of their study programs' (Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council 2010: 1).

Institutes and Higher Education Institutions

There were 10 institutes of higher education as at 2012, the following five of whose admissions are selected by the UGC: Institute of Indigenous Medicine, Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, University of Colombo School of Computing, Swami Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic

Studies - Eastern University of Sri Lanka, and Ramanathan Academy of Fine Arts - University of Jaffna. (University Grants Commission 2013: 4-5, University Grants Commission 2011: 3) In the higher education sector there are also seven post-graduate institutes covering medicine, agriculture, Pali& Buddhist studies, archaeology, management, science and English.

The Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education (SLIATE) was formed under the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education Act No. 29 of 1995, and contains a set of Advanced Technical Institutes (ATIs) intended to respond to the rapidly evolving country's labour market requirements. SLIATE is mandated to establish ATIs in every province as well as advanced technical sections in technical colleges. (World Bank 2009: 20-21) It manages and supervises 12 ATIs and six sections. The technical institutions offer courses in accounting, agriculture, building services, business administration, business finance, English, engineering, management, information technology, food technology, tourism and hospitality management and quantity surveying. (SLIATE website)

The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) is the apex body in the Tertiary and Vocational Education Training (TVET) sector. TVEC was established in 1991 under the provisions of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No 20 of 1990. Its primary responsibility is policy formulation, planning, quality assurance, coordination and development of tertiary and vocational education in the country (TVEC n.d.: 3). It is responsible for accrediting and setting standards for over 1,400 institutions (World Bank Report: 50). TVEC provides financial assistance to public, private and NGO institutions for training programmes in the areas such as textile and garments, information and communication technology, and automobile repair and maintenance (TVECn.d.: 17).

Private Higher Education Institutions

There is a growing private fee-paying higher education institutions sector. According to the LIRNEasia survey of private institutions the proportion of graduates in 2010/2011 from private higher education institutions was 14% in 2011 (Gamage 2012: 3). There are a number of private higher education institutions which provide students access to professional qualifications (most commonly in the areas of IT, accounting, management and marketing) and degree level programmes (often affiliated to foreign universities). Degree-granting status can be obtained either by applying to the UGC under S.25 of the Universities Act 1978 or through affiliation with foreign universities (World Bank 2009: 9)

Since the 1970s, Sri Lanka's higher education institutions have been facing a barrage of criticism. While access has been an underlying issue through the decades, in the more recent past the quality of university education provided and the quality of graduates produced have also come into question. Often the lack of resources in terms of funds and manpower, as well as the mis-match between the graduates produced and the skills required by the labour market are cited as key issues within the education sector. This literature review provides an overview of the history of university education in Sri Lanka and trends in graduates' social mobility and other socio-economic indicators from the 1940s to 2014.

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