

Factors Influencing Student's Choice of Academic Disciplines in the Tertiary Education: A Case Study

Edirisinghe, L., Ranwala, L., Wathsala, D.

Faculty of Management Humanities and Social Sciences, CINEC Campus
lalith.edirisinghe@cinec.edu

The rapidly changing demands of the job market are outpacing university reforms globally. Literature suggests that high rates of unemployment and underemployment among university graduates point to a mismatch between supply and demand conditions for graduate employment. With the entry of non-state higher education institutes (NSHEI), the students are now exposed to all emerging academic disciplines. However, the demand for traditional academic programs are the most popular among students thus except for leading NSHEIs others would cater to this demand for commercial benefits. This situation may expand the 'mismatch' of education in labour market thus a visibility and awareness would be the key in making right choice of academic discipline. The objective of this paper is to investigate the factors that influence the choice behaviour of students in tertiary education. The mix of qualitative and quantitative approach was used in data collection. The sample consisted of 200 undergraduate students in various disciplines and the quantitative analysis was done using partial least

squares structural equation modelling. The research identified sixteen factors influencing students' choice of academic disciplines in the tertiary education namely, student perception, employment prospects, social recognition and prestige; access to programs, compatibility and self-efficacy; learning environments; quality of teachers; course design; graduate success, cost of learning, time duration to complete the first degree, opportunities for academic advancement, availability of the teaching staff, industry specific knowledge , global trends, limited choice of programs, and popularity.

Keywords: *Education, University, Employability, Academic disciplines*