

THE . SINGLE UNIVERSITY
AND
THE . MULTI-UNIVERSITY SYSTEMS
IN
SRI . LANKA

C₂ - 38

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
OF
THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO, SRI LANKA
BY
LORNA ANNETTE ABEYRATNE

UCLIB



403433

CR

MARCH 1986



ABSTRACT

Universities of the twentieth century are expected to be something more than only institutions of teaching and research. Most Universities all over the world are funded mainly by the state. The resources of the state are limited and have alternative uses. Therefore expenditure on Universities must be cost effective and of maximum utility. Universities are expected to be agents of national development. Universities are able through their admissions policies to provide for greater social mobility and social development and through their courses, curricula and research provide for the economic and cultural development of a nation.

The University of Ceylon was established as an autonomous, independent institution in 1942 with these purposes in view. University education expanded in the years following with the addition of new Universities, new faculties and new courses of study and expansion in admissions. The allegations against Universities in Sri Lanka from the time of their inception have been the lack of relevance of courses to national manpower and cultural needs, a waste of resources and discrimination in the opportunities available for ethnic and regional groups for a higher education.

The structure of the University has been changed several times in order to correct these imbalances in University education. Universities from 1942 to 1966 were independent and autonomous deciding on their own administration and academic policies. In 1966 the

National Council of Higher Education was established to control and co-ordinate the Universities which continued to be independent. As the problems in Universities continued and even increased despite the National Council of Higher Education, the Single University was established in 1972, making the independent Universities Campuses of a Monolithic University. The Single University existed from 1972 to 1978 and the structure was changed once again in 1979 to a Multi-University system with a University Grants Commission to control and co-ordinate Universities. Three distinct periods in the history of Universities is visible, that of the Multi-University system prior to 1972, the Single University from 1972 to 1978 and Multi-University system after 1979.

The objective of the present study is to assess whether the Single University structure was able to achieve greater democratization of University admissions through changes in admissions policy, greater relevance of courses to manpower and cultural needs through the reorganization of courses and economy in the use of resources, than the independent Universities prior to 1972 and after 1979.

Data collected from documents published by the Universities and other sources was analysed and the following conclusions were made. The Single University was able to provide greater opportunities for those who were less privileged before 1972, but reduced the opportunities for certain other groups, and this was corrected in 1979, The Single University was not able to achieve greater social mobility and relevance to manpower needs as job oriented courses failed to solve the problem of graduate unemployment. Economy in the use of financial



and human resources was not achieved as the administration was cumbersome and rationalization was not achieved fully. The University Grants Commission has been able to achieve these better as there is planning and consultation with Universities which was lacking in the Single University.

The present study has its limitations as it is based on documentary evidence alone and limited to three aspects of University organization. Suggestions for future research have been made to make a study of University Systems more complete.

MRS. L. A. ASEVRATNE.