

A need analysis of Sri Lanka's secondary education practices: Identifying required reforms for authentic teaching and learning to address skills mismatch

B. M. Hewa Siliyange¹, L. S. I. Liyanage², T. P. Rupasinghe³, N. de Silva¹, A. Tillekaratne¹

¹*Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka*

²*Department of Computing and Technology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka*

³*Student Affairs, Pennsylvania State University, USA*

Sri Lanka's labour market faces a skills mismatch, hindering economic growth. The study showcases the initial phase of a larger investigation to address this gap by examining how secondary education can better equip young individuals with essential skills. A mixed-methods approach was employed, starting with 23 in-depth interviews of stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and students with diverse backgrounds ranging from school to university students and professionals holding dual roles as teachers and parents. Participants were selected purposively. Interviews were followed by a nationwide survey of 911 respondents including professionals and students. The study highlights a consensus among the respondents for urgent educational reforms, primarily on curriculum content, teaching methods, and assessment. It highlighted the urgency for a curriculum appropriate to the labour market demand. Findings suggested curriculum revisions coupled with enhanced opportunities for authentic education via stronger industry collaboration, integrated with authentic teaching methods, emphasizing the importance of practical skill development and soft skills training. The study also highlights the need to consider external factors such as limited stakeholder awareness, resistance to change, and high competition within education systems to ensure a successful change of practices. Aligning authentic education with local needs and external factors, the study lays the foundation for educational practice reforms, bridging the gap between education and labor market demands while fostering sustainable social and economic development.

Keywords: *Skills mismatch, Secondary education, Authentic teaching*