# Higher Education Reform Discourse in Contemporary Sri Lanka and Its Ideological Commitment to Commercialization

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This paper analyzes three prevailing assumptions in public conversations regarding higher education: that university arts graduates are unemployable; that the rate of return on investment in higher education is too low; and that the opposition to private higher education is the leftover radicalism of a bygone era. The material used for this analysis will include recent reports by NGOs and the state, and publications in selected news outlets. The paper will lay out the different factors that are constituent elements of the above assumptions and argue that they indicate an ideological commitment to the commercialization of higher education and is uninformed by actual conditions in Sri Lanka universities. Further such positions are also not formulated in relation to the larger education context of Sri Lanka. Referencing the emerging global literature on the commercialization of higher education, the paper argues that these assumptions are inadequately informed by an understanding of the actual social need for higher education in Sri Lanka at this historical juncture. The paper also discusses how commercial higher education is currently being critiqued at the global level as a failed model.

**Keywords:** Commercialization of education, Education reform, Free education, Higher education