

MATCHING WITH THE JOB MARKET: ICT EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

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The school occupies a unique place in Sri Lankan education. If the skills imparted by the school match the future job market, the benefits will be more effective. The Sri Lanka IT-BPM Industry Review 2019/20 reports that the number of jobs in the IT sector is also increasing. Examining schools' efforts to prepare ICT students for the job market raises questions about its effectiveness. It examined whether the ICT subject taught in the school is suitable for the future job market. The theoretical basis of the study was human capital theory. The research study was conducted using a sample of 300 students, 30 teachers, and 50 employers under a survey to identify A/L ICT subjects and job markets. A questionnaire was completed to collect data from the teacher-student sample, and structured interviews were conducted to collect data from the employer. Content analysis was also undertaken to identify the subject content of the ICT curriculum. Descriptive statistical methods such as five-point scale mean values, percentages and absolute values were calculated using SPSS for quantitative data analysis. According to the analysis of teacher-student sample data, the curriculum was practical and academically-oriented but not exam-oriented. Lack of IT facilities and shortage of qualified teachers also hampered practical orientation. An average of 3.27% of the sample indicated that they strongly agree that students choose ICT subjects with the hope of getting a job in the IT field. According to the content analysis of the ICT syllabus, 56.2% of the syllabus is designed to meet national objectives. However, efforts to achieve labour market-related objectives are very low (1.96%). The curriculum should be practical. For that, the learning areas of the curriculum should be measured with a practical orientation. Education is divided among national objectives at a rate of 31.8%. Employers devised ten actions that the school can take based on the data analysis. Prominent among them was the need to implement joint programs between schools and workplaces and conduct training camps. To overcome these challenges, IT job market-based training and skills can be recommended to start from school. Looking at education from an economic perspective, human capital theory should be linked with higher human resource planning for the future. Schooling should be designed to produce skills that can meet the challenges of the future job market.

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