THE OPEN
UNIVERSITY
OF SRI LANKA

**Centre For Educational Technology and Media
(CETMe)**

Tracer Study of
the OUSL Graduates -2011

B Gayathri Jayatilleke
May 2012

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Special thanks and appreciation are conveyed to

Forward

It is with an enormous sense of satisfaction that I write this forward to the third issue of the 'Tracer Study of OUSL Graduates' compiled by the staff of the Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe) of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). The first of this series was initiated in 2009 when, Mrs Malini Peris, then Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education and an active member of the Council of the OUSL, highlighted the importance of building a solid database of our graduates. Since then the OUSL has conducted tracer studies and compiled comprehensive reports annually. This year's tracer study demonstrated in no uncertain terms that the OUSL has mastered the art of conducting and compiling tracer studies internally.

The university surveyed a cross section of graduates who were conferred degrees at the convocation of 2011. The sample comprised 747 graduates representing all degree programmes across faculties. The study enabled the University to garner management information on personal profiles, study programmes followed, rate of completion, learner expectations and satisfaction with respect to the content of degree programmes and the mode of delivery.

This study confirmed that the open distance learning programmes (ODL) as designed, developed and delivered by the OUSL is even superior to other alternative programmes in terms of providing educational 'opportunities of relevance' to the national development of Sri Lanka. Not only have OUSL programmes enhanced access to working adults and provided a second chance to those who missed higher educational opportunities they have also provided a high quality and cost effective platform for career advancement. The overall employment rate of 60 percent at the time of admission and 80 percent at the time of graduation corroborates this argument.

The second most important finding that impressed me was that an overwhelming majority of the graduates have rated the services provided by the OUSL as exceptionally learner friendly. This opinion compares very favourably with the ratings received by some of the best open universities around the world including the British Open University (OUUK).

I record my sincere gratitude to Dr B G Jayatilleke, Senior Lecturer in Educational Technology for undertaking this work and producing an excellent report within a short time. I request the Deans and Heads of Departments to use this information in their future deliberations and quality improvement decisions.

Professor Upali Vidanapathirana

Vice Chancellor

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Tracer Study of the OUSL graduates - 2011

1. Introduction

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is the only national university in the country where learning opportunities are provided for adult learners to pursue higher education by distance learning methodology. At the inception in 1980 and up to now, the OUSL has managed to provide learning opportunities for those who "missed out" from the conventional system and for those mature adults who aspired achieving higher educational qualifications to upgrade their career. As a result, the OUSL has rendered a national service for more than 30 years, providing life-long learning opportunities to adults; otherwise they would have been denied the opportunity of pursuing higher education.

Unlike conventional universities, the student community of the OUSL is heavily diversified. Their age, educational backgrounds and priorities differ considerably and most of them were already employed at the time of registration (Jayatilleke, Lekamge and Weerasinghe, 1997). Some deliberately pace their studies considering their priorities while others who are less successful in meeting the demands and pressure of studying with work and other commitments may gradually "drop-out" from the university. As a result, student progression varies not only in study programmes but also within a study programme.

Various studies have been conducted in students' progression with different cohorts of students of the OUSL starting with "non-starters" who have not started any activities after enrolling for the study programme (Dassanayake and Kulasuriya, 2004) and with "starters" (Lekamge, Weerasinghe and Ratnayake, 2004 and 2006; Weerasinghe and de Silva, 2004; Jayatilleke, Gnanakumar and Dassanayaka, 2005). Studies have also been conducted with OUSL graduates (Lekamge, Ranawake, Gunaratne, and Jayananda (1999), Senaratna, de Costa, and Bandara (2001), Jayatilleke et al, (2005), Jayatilleke, Dassanayaka and Ranawaka, 2009).

Having realized the importance of identifying graduate profile of the OUSL and their status of employment, the Council of the OUSL in September 2009 decided to conduct tracer studies annually (Gunawardena and Ekanayake, 2010). Since then research on tracer studies have been conducted and reported (Gunawardena and Ekanayake, 2010; Gunawardena and Gamini, 2011).

The main research objectives of this study are to find out the:

- extent to which the OUSL has succeeded in offering a second chance for higher education to employed adult learners
- employability of graduates, their career mobility and related benefits such as income levels
- outreach of the OUSL geographically, as well as to different ethnic and religious communities.

Addressing the above objectives, this report presents the analysis of data collected from the students who were conferred their bachelors degrees, postgraduate diplomas and degrees by the OUSL at the 24th annual convocation held on 15th December 2011.

2. Literature Review

In educational research the tracer study is sometimes referred to as a graduate or alumni survey since its target group is former students. According to ILO, Thesaurus (2005), a tracer study is considered as an impact assessment tool where the "impact on target groups is traced back to specific elements of a project or programme so that effective and ineffective project components may be identified". In view of this, conducting tracer studies of cohorts of students in any organization is very essential to identify their profile, achievements, ineffective teaching and learning practices etc. so that the institution can assess its current status and take remedial measures for improvement. This is especially crucial for Open and Distance learning institutions where the target audience is more diverse with different priorities and capabilities.

As pointed out by Schomburg (2003, p.36) these graduate surveys help to find the "relationship between higher education and work". Since the majority of OUSL learners are employed they are more likely to take a longer time than the stipulated time for completion. Some learners take some time off and resume their studies again. Thus it is necessary to find out the products of the OUSL, that is, whether the unemployed OUSL graduates are marketable or whether the already employed graduates are in a position to upgrade their career. Thus, tracer studies provide warning signals in relation to imbalances between employment and employment-generating systems (Harbison, 1973). Looking at the 'products' of the employment-generating system, the OUSL can assess how its educational 'processes' have impacted its graduates and take immediate remedial actions on the 'process' to improve the 'products'.

The next section will discuss on the methodology used for this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research methods

Quantitative research method was employed by means of a questionnaire to collect data from the OUSL graduates. Order of proceedings of the convocation - 2011 was also used as documentary evidence and to validate the results obtained from the questionnaires.

3.2 Sample

All the graduands of the OUSL who were conferred their degrees at the 24th annual convocation held on the 15th December 2011 were taken as the sample.

3.3 Research instrument (questionnaire)

The present questionnaire was re-designed after going through 2009 and 2010 tracer study questionnaires. The draft questionnaire was circulated by email to the members of the senior management (vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellor and deans of four faculties) to get their suggestions to improve the questionnaire. Their suggestions were incorporated in the final questionnaire. In total there were 16 questions covering students' demographics (age, ethnic and religious diversity, geographical distribution),

educational qualifications, employment status and income levels at the time of enrolment and at the time of graduation, their career achievements and the impact of the study programme they followed.

3.4 Administration of the questionnaire

The final version of the tracer study questionnaire was posted to all the OUSL graduands along with other documents related to the convocation by the examination division of the OUSL. The submission of the questionnaire was made mandatory to receive the cloak for the graduation ceremony in order to increase the response rate. Thus, graduands were compelled to bring the duly filled questionnaire when they came to collect their cloaks at the Colombo Regional Centre (CRC).

Collection of questionnaires was carried out from 11th - 14th December 2011 at CRC from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm. The four faculties were given the responsibility of collecting their respective questionnaires. Thus, the collection was facilitated by one or two faculty representatives of three faculties; Engineering Technology (Eng. Tec), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) and Natural Sciences (NSc). They were also assisted and supported by two members of the staff specially appointed for this research by the Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe).

Collected data was computerized, tabulated and statistically analyzed using SPSS 12.0 application software.

3.5 Limitation of the study

The number graduated in some of the study programmes was very small and the responses received were even less (Table 1). Even though the analysis had been carried out, the interpretation of the results should be done with utmost care. The findings could be used only as indicative figures and could not be generalized to the whole population especially in PGDE, PGD (Env), PGD Tec and MSc.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response rate of the questionnaires

Initially response rates were calculated omitting the number of absentia and considering only the graduates who participated at the convocation (no. collected /no. applied x 100=A). Later, further calculation was carried out considering the total number of awardees at the convocation (no. collected/total no. of awardees x 100=B) – Table 2.

There were no responses for the research degrees (3 PhDs and 1 Mphil) and PGD. Tech in Industrial Studies. The response rates for the rest of the programmes were above 60% for all the study programmes except for PGDE (14%), PGD Tec in construction management (36%), PGD in environmental science (40%) and MSc (50%). Response rates for all the above programmes PGDE (14%) in particular, are sources of concern as they were far below the accepted standard of 60% (Fincham, 2008). Some of the programmes have achieved more than 90% response rates. Therefore the interpretation of results would be valid and reliable except for the PGDE, PGD Tec, PGD (Env) and MSc.

Table 1 - Response rates by Programme of Study

Fac	Study Programme	No. of Awardees	Absentia	No. Applied for the convocation	Collected questionnaires	A=Response Rate (%)	B=Actual Response Rate (%)
Edu	Masters in Education	3	0	3	3	100%	100%
	Bachelors in Education	5	0	5	3	60%	60%
	Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)	28	22	6	4	66.7%	14.3%
	Total	**36**	**22**	**14**	**10**	**71.4%**	**27.8%**
Eng. Tec	Ph.D.	1	0	1	0	0%	0%
	Bachelor of Industrial Studies (BIS)	25	1	24	24	100%	96%
	Bachelor of .Technology (BTec)	58	1	57	56	98.2%	96.5%
	Bachelor of Software Engineering (BSE)	2	0	2	2	100%	100%
	Masters in Technology in Industrial Engineering	4	0	4	4	100%	100%
	Postgraduate Technology in Construction Management	11	4	7	4	57.1%	36.3%
	Postgraduate Technology in Industrial Studies	5	2	3	0	0%	0%
	Total	**106**	**8**	**98**	**90**	**91.8%**	**84.9%**
HSS	Masters in Business Administration -MBA (CEMBA)	39	2	37	34	91.9%	87%
	Masters in Development studies and public policy (DSPP)	9	0	9	7	77.8%	77.8%
	Bachelor of Arts in English and English language teaching (BAELT)	24	1	23	23	100%	95.8%
	Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences (BASS)	97	2	95	87	91.6%	91.6%
	Bachelor of Law (LLB) – old	59	1	58	56	96.6%	94.9%
	Bachelor of Law (LLB) – new	94	6	88	87	98.9%	92.6%
	Bachelor of Management Studies (BMS)	58	3	55	52	94.5%	89.7%
	PGD in Human Resource Management	25	1	24	21	87.5%	84%
	Total	**405**	**16**	**389**	**367**	**94.3%**	**90.6%**
NSc.	Ph.D.	2	0	2	0	0%	0%
	M.Phil	1	1	0	0	0%	0%
	Masters in Science	4	0	4	2	50%	50%
	Bachelors in Science (old structure)	19	0	19	18	94.7%	94.7%
	Bachelors in Science (new structure)	259	6	253	252	99.6%	97.3%
	Bachelors in Science (Nursing)	47	2	45	43	95.6%	91.4%
	Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Science	5	3	2	2	100%	40%
	Total	**337**	**12**	**325**	**317**	**97.5%**	**94%**
PGIE	Master of Arts in Teaching English as a second language (TESL)	6	0	6	5	83.33%	83.3%
	Total	**6**	**0**	**6**	**5**	**83.33%**	**83.3%**

Source: Survey data

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4.2 Output of the OUSL

The convocation held in 2011 conferred 747 (84%) Bachelors Degrees, 74 (8%) Postgraduate Diplomas, 65 (7%) Masters Degrees, 1 (0.1%) MPhil and 3 (0.3%) PhDs totaling 890 awardees (Convocation Proceedings, 2011) – Figure 1.
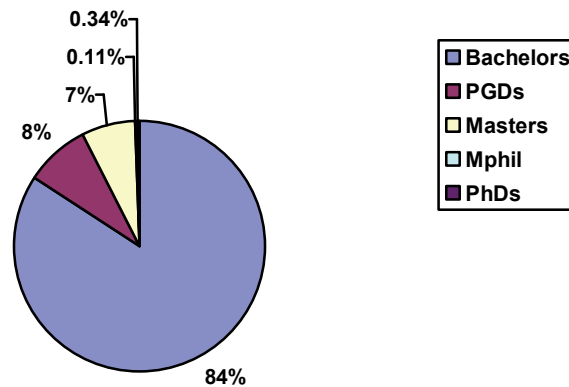
Figure 1 – Output of the OUSL
Source: Convocation Proceedings (2011)

The faculty of HSS conferred degrees/postgraduate diplomas/degrees on the highest number of awardees with 405 from 7 study programmes; which was closely followed by the faculty of NSc with 337 awardees from 6 study programmes (Figure 2). The faculty of Eng. Tec conferred degrees/ postgraduate diplomas/degrees on the third highest number of awardees (106) from 7 study programmes. The faculty of Education conferred postgraduate degrees/ postgraduate diplomas on 36 graduates from 3 study programmes and Postgraduate Institute of English (PGIE) conferred postgraduate degrees on 6 graduates from one study programme.
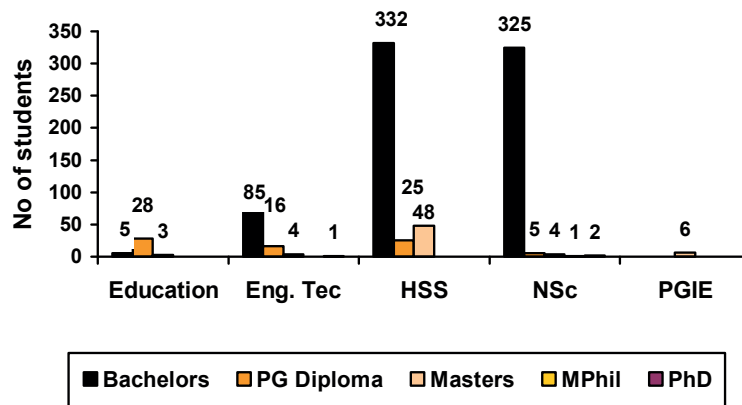
Figure 2 - Degrees conferred at the convocation 2011 (faculty-wise)
Source: Convocation Proceedings (2011)

All the categories of study programmes from taught degrees to research degrees including MPhil and PhDs were awarded by the faculty of NSc; 2 bachelors (BSc and BSc –nursing), 1 postgraduate diploma (PGD in Environmental science), 1 masters (MSc in environmental science) and postgraduate research degrees (1 Mphil and 2 PhDs).

The most number of taught degrees were conferred by the faculty of HSS with 4 bachelors degrees (BAELT, BASS , BMS, LLB), 1 postgraduate diploma (PGD in HR) and 2 masters degrees (MBA, MADSPP). The faculty of Eng. Tec closely followed with 3 bachelors degrees (BIS, BSE, BTec), 2 postgraduate diplomas (PGD in construction management, PGD in industrial studies) and one masters degree (MTec in Industrial Engineering). Faculty of Education conferred one bachelors, one postgraduate diploma and one masters (BEd, PGDE, MEd,) while Postgraduate Institute of English (PGIE) conferred one masters degree programme in teaching English as a second language (MATESL). Faculty-wise breakdown of all the conferred degrees are given in the Annex 1.

4.3 Graduate Profile of the OUSL in 2011

This section focuses on the current graduate profile of the OUSL based on the data obtained through the questionnaire from the graduates who received their bachelors degrees, postgraduate diplomas and degrees at the convocation held in 2011 (Figure 3).

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Age	
< 24	1.5%
25-29	38.6%
30-34	24.9%
35-39	14.7%
40-44	8.6%
45-49	4.9%
> 50	6.8%

Gender	
Male	37%
Female	63%

Civil Status	
Single	46%
Married	54%

Religion	
Buddhism	75.8%
Hinduism	5.1%
Christian	11.7%
Islam	6.5%
Other	0.9%

Graduate profile of the OUSL (2011)

Race	
Sinhala	84.7%
Tamil	8.1%
Moor/Malay	6.2%
Burgher	0.6%
Other	0.4%

Employment at registration	
Employed	60%
Not employed	40%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	80%
Not employed	20%

Figure 3 – Graduate Profile of the OUSL
Source: Survey data

The overall graduate profile of the OUSL mainly consisted of females (63%), majority were married (54%) and employed at the time of registration (60%). They represented all age groups; however, the majority was in the 25-34 age group (63.5%). A small percentage was in the below 24 years group (1.5%) which generally seeks conventional higher education but had opted to study at the OUSL. 20.3% of the target audience was over 40 years, out of which 6.8% was over 50 years, highlighting the uniqueness of OUSL as an ODL institution providing life-long learning opportunities for all the adult learners irrespective of their age.

Sinhala students predominate with 84.7%, followed by 8.1% Tamils, 6.2% Moor/Malays and a mere 1% Burghers and other communities. In terms of religion, the Buddhists were the majority (75.8%) to be followed by 11.7% Christians, 5.1% Hindus, 6.5% Islam and 0.9% other religions.

Out of the employed students at the registration, 50% of them were in the public sector while 38% were working in the private sector and 10% in semi-government sector. Still females (56%) were the majority. At the time of the convocation, the employment status of the students had increased by 1.3% reaching 80% from 60%; stillÿfemales (58%) outnumbered males (42%). The nature of employment was similar to that at the registration; where 51% was

in public sector, 34% in private sector, 13% in semi-government sector. An analysis of data carefully revealed that there was a 1% increase in the students engaged in self-employment from 1.8% to 3%.

Similar distribution was observed in 2010 and 2011 findings with respect to gender (females - 62.3% and 70% - only around one–third of males), ethnicity (Sinhala - 79.7% and 70.4%) and religion (Buddhists - 72.7%, and 67.1%).

Same distribution pattern was observed in conventional universities where female representation was higher than the males in most of the academic disciplines (79% in Arts, 84% in Law, 55% in Management and Commerce, 54% in Medicine, 57% in Dental Surgery, 58% in Veterinary Science, 64% in Agriculture (University Statistics, 2010). However, lower representation was observed in Engineering (18%), Architecture/quantity surveying (48%), Computer (40%), and in Science (46%).

In terms of ethnic minorities the present figures (Tamils – 8.1%, Moors – 6.2%) were much lower than in 2009 data (Tamils – 13.8%, Moors – 8.9%) and 2010 (Tamils – 19.2%, Moors – 8.7%). This may be due to the wider representation in terms of study programmes and number of respondents than the previous studies where the samples were drawn from 20 (2009 data) and 4 (2010 data) study programmes respectively.

With regard to the age composition, both in 2009 and 2010 data, the majority were in the 31-35 age group (33.5% and 41.8%) whereas in this study the majority were in the 25-29 age group (38.6%) slightly skewing towards much younger population than the previous years. The categorization of the age groupings in this study was based on the format used in the Department of Census and statistics for easy comparisons. Nevertheless, it may not affect the finding.

4.4 Graduate Profile of the faculties

This section explores the graduate profile of all the faculties; starting with the faculty of education. The low response rate is a source of concern and may not reflect the actual graduate profile of the faculty especially with regard to the PGDE where number graduated was comparatively higher than other study programmes.

Nevertheless, the majority were in the range of 30-39 years with predominantly females, Sinhala and Buddhists (Figure 4).

Age	
25-29	20%
30-34	30%
35-39	30%
40-44	10%
45-49	10%

Gender	
Male	40%
Female	60%

Civil Status	
Single	30%
Married	70%

Graduate profile of the faculty of Education (2011)

Religion	
Buddhism	90%
Islam	10%

Race	
Sinhala	90%
Moor/Malay	10%

Employment at registration	
Employed	100%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	100%
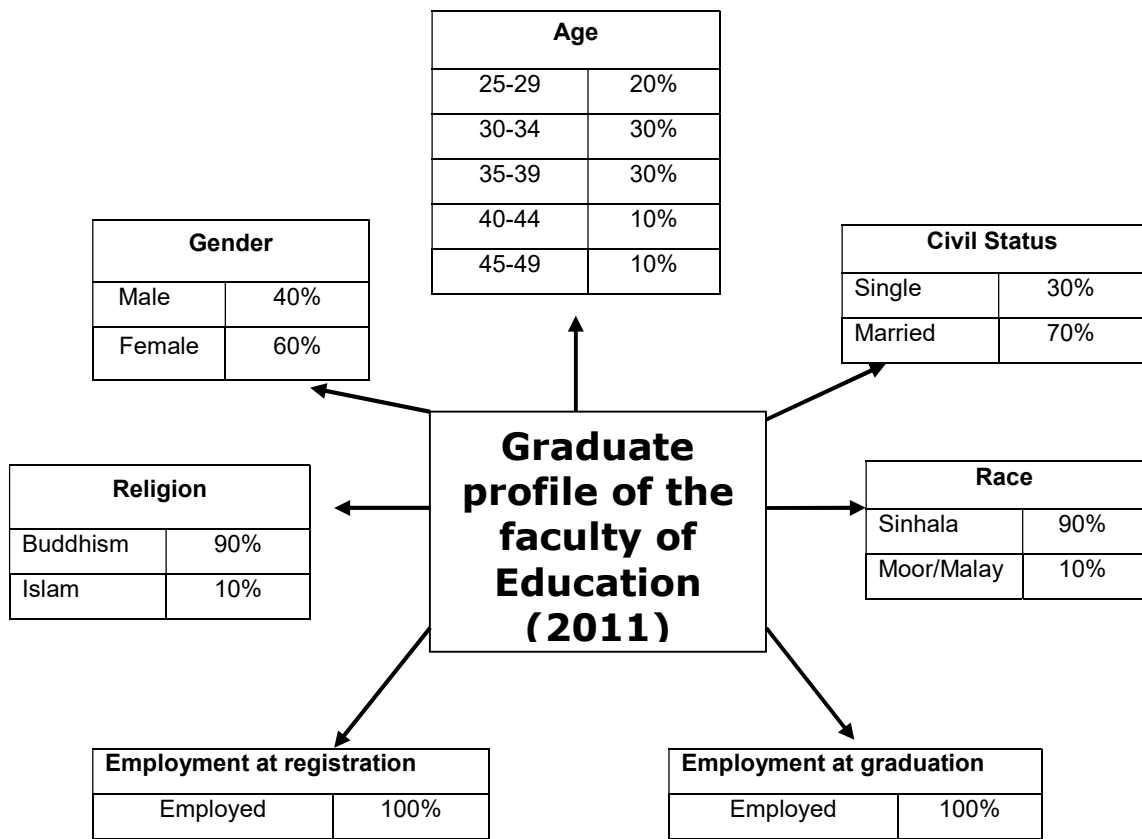
Figure 4 - Graduate Profile of the faulty of Education
Source: Survey data

The graduate profile of the faculty of Eng. Tec was comparatively younger, unmarried and belonged to the 25-29 age group (50%). Males (52%) were slightly more than the females (48%). The majority were Sinhala (95%) and Buddhists (88%) – Figure 5.

Age	
< 24	1%
25-29	50%
30-34	26%
35-39	15%
40-44	2%
45-49	2%
> 50	3%

Gender	
Male	52%
Female	48%

Civil Status	
Single	63%
Married	37%

Religion	
Buddhism	88%
Hinduism	2%
Christian	7%
Islam	1%
Other	2%

Graduate profile of the faculty of Eng. Tec (2011)

Race	
Sinhala	95%
Tamil	4%
Moor/Malay	1%

Employment at registration	
Employed	44%
Not employed	56%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	86%
Not employed	14%
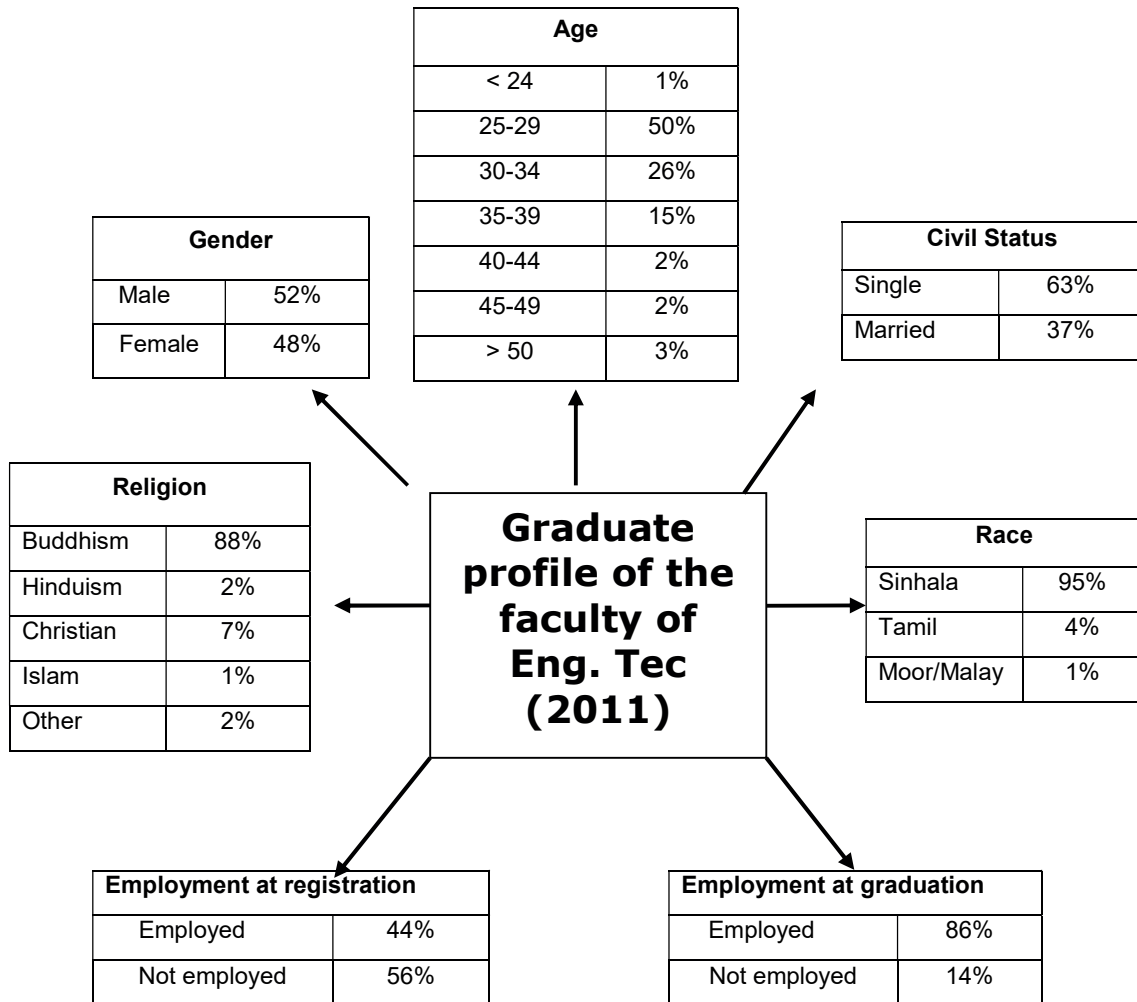
Figure 5 – Graduate Profile of the faculty of Engineering Technology
Source: Survey data

Gender difference was not so pronounced in the faculty of HSS; still more females (52%) than males (48%). 51% of the graduates were between 25-34 years and 13% were over 50 years. All the ethnic groups were represented; 80% Sinhala, 11% Tamil, 8% Moor/Malay and 1% Burgher (Figure 6).

Age	
< 24	3%
25-29	29%
30-34	22%
35-39	14%
40-44	11%
45-49	7%
> 50	13%

Gender	
Male	48%
Female	52%

Civil Status	
Single	39%
Married	61%

Graduate profile of the faculty of HSS (2011)

Religion	
Buddhism	68%
Hinduism	6%
Christian	17%
Islam	8%
Other	1%

Race	
Sinhala	80%
Tamil	11%
Moor/Malay	8%
Burgher	1%

Employment at registration	
Employed	67%
Not employed	33%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	78%
Not employed	22%

Figure 6 – Graduate Profile of the faculty of HSS
Source: Survey data

The majority of the graduates in the faculty of NSc were in the 25-29 years age group and the second highest number was in the 30-34 age group. There was a significant gender difference with 79% females to 21% males. The main ethnic groups were represented with over 80% Sinhala and Buddhists (Figure 7).

Age	
< 24	1%
25-29	47%
30-34	27%
35-39	14%
40-44	7%
45-49	3%
> 50	1%

Gender	
Male	21%
Female	79%

Civil Status	
Single	51%
Married	49%

Religion	
Buddhism	81%
Hinduism	5%
Christian	7%
Islam	6%
Other	1%

Graduate profile of faculty of NSc (2011)

Race	
Sinhala	88%
Tamil	6%
Moor/Malay	6%

Employment at registration	
Employed	56%
Not employed	44%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	79%
Not employed	21%
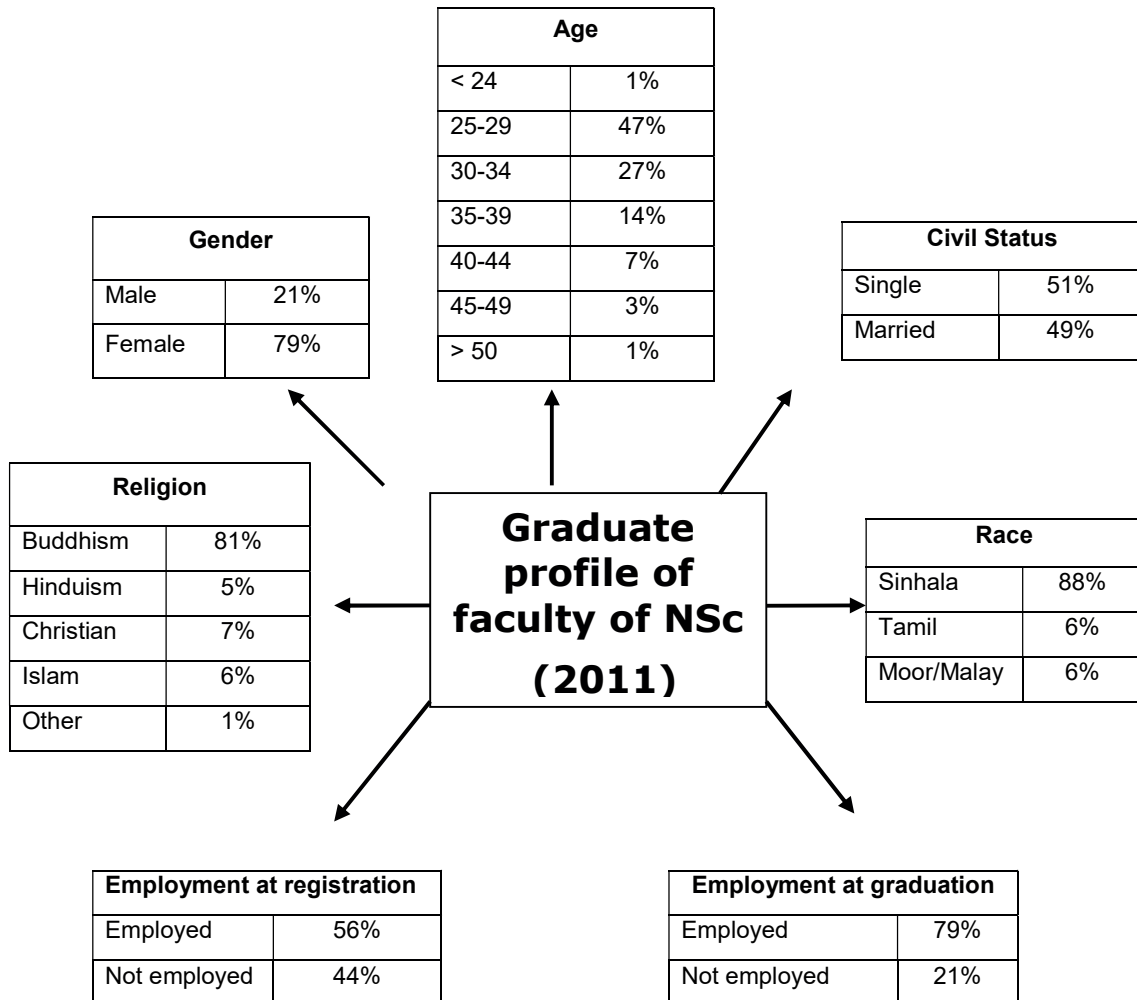
Figure 7 – Graduate Profile of the faculty of Natural Science
Source: Survey data

Only six graduated from the PGIE and their profiles were illustrated in Figure 8. All the graduates were married and the majority were females (60%) between 35-39 years. Two ethnic groups; Sinhala and Tamil were equally represented (40% each) and the balance was represented by Burghers (20%). There were no Muslims in this cohort of awardees.

Gender	
Male	40%
Female	60%

Age	
30-34	25%
35-39	50%
> 50	25%

Civil Status	
Married	100%

Graduate profile of PGIE (2011)

Religion	
Buddhism	40%
Hinduism	40%
Christian	20%

Race	
Sinhala	40%
Tamil	40%
Burgher	20%

Employment at registration	
Employed	100%

Employment at graduation	
Employed	100
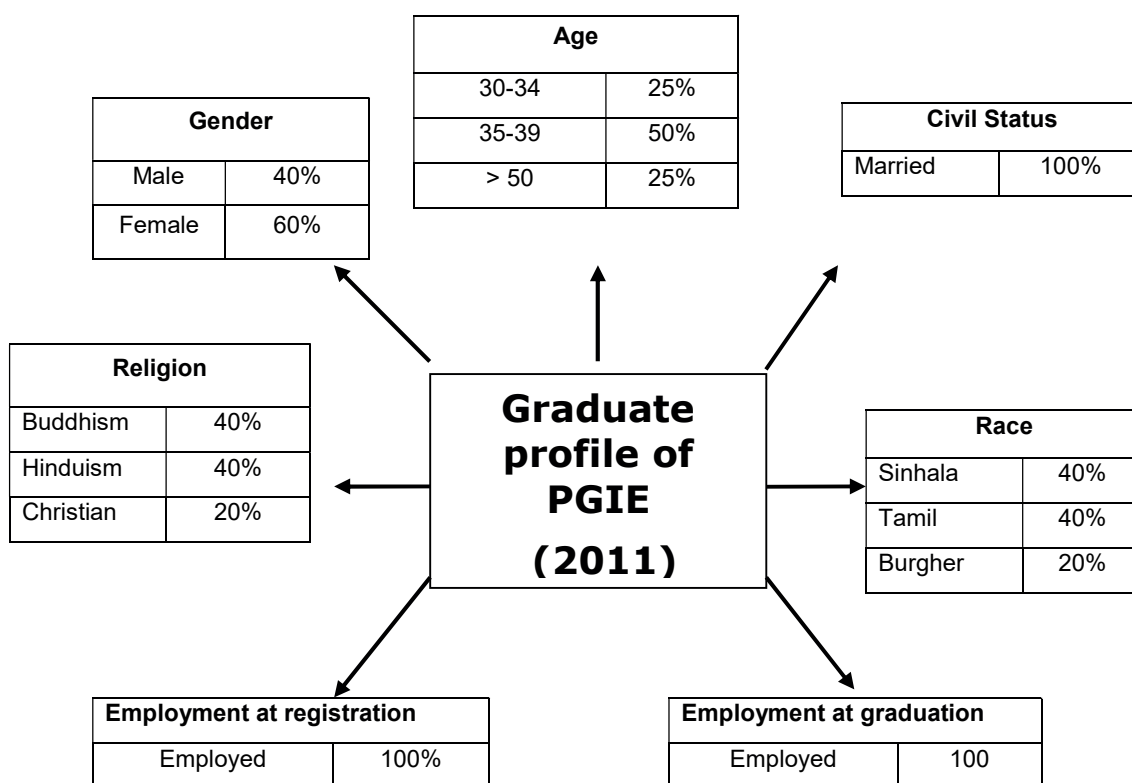
Figure 8 – Graduate Profile of the PGIE
Source: Survey data

Summary of the graduate profiles of the faculties

There is a variation in the graduate profiles in different faculties and the PGIE (Table 2). Females predominate except in the faculty of Eng. Tec. The percentage of females was considerably higher in faculty of NSc (79%). The gender difference was not so pronounced in faculty of HSS where 52% were females while 48% were males. More than 80% were Sinhala and over 68% were Buddhists in all faculties. All the ethnic groups were well represented in faculty of HSS indicating that the programmes offered were attractive to all the ethnic groups. The graduates were from all age groups; from below 24 years to over 50 years in Eng. Tech, HSS and NSc faculties illustrating the fact that the study programmes offered by them were attractive to all learners irrespective of their age. Graduate profiles of faculty of education and the PGIE were similar in nature as they offer postgraduate study programmes (except B.Ed).

Table 2 – Summary of graduate profiles of faculties

Fac.	Gender		Civil Status		Race					Religion					Age						
	F	M	S	M	S	T	M	B	O	B	H	C	I	O	< 24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	>50
Edu	60	40	30	70	90	0	10	0	0	90	0	0	10	0	0	20	30	30	10	10	0
Eng. Tec	48	52	63	37	95	4	1	0	0	88	2	7	1	2	1	50	26	15	2	2	3
HSS	52	48	39	61	80	11	8	1	0	68	6	17	8	1	3	29	22	14	11	7	13
NSc	79	21	51	49	88	6	6	0	0	81	5	7	6	1	1	47	27	14	7	3	1
PGIE	60	40	00	100	40	40	0	20	0	40	40	20	0	0	0	0	25	50	0	0	25

Source: Survey data

4.5 Graduate profiles of the study programmes

The graduate profiles of the study programmes are investigated in this section.

Graduate profile of first degrees

Females predominate in all bachelors programmes expect in B.Tec and BSE (Table 3). More than 70% were females in programmes such as BIS, BAELT, B.Sc and B.Sc (nursing). Equal gender distribution (50%) was observed in LLB and the difference was not that marked in BMS (females 52% to males 48%). Even in male dominant programmes such as B.Tec, the number of females was comparatively high (females 43% to males 57%) emphasizing the fact that OUSL has managed to provide more opportunities for females in terms of flexibility so that they could pursue higher education without disrupting their routine domestic and other work.

The majority of the awardees were in the 25-29 age group except for the BSc (Nursing) programme (refer Annex 2 for more details).

In 2009 data, when considering all the bachelors together, the majority were in the same age group and females were the highest (58.3%). When comparing the findings in 2010 data, female participation was higher in BSc (72%) and LLB (57.3%) and notably low in BTec (24.3%).

Table 3 - Graduate profile of Bachelors degrees

Fac.	Deg.	Gender		Civil Status		Race					Religion					Age						
		F	M	S	M	S	T	M	B	O	B	H	C	I	O	24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	>50
Edu	B.Ed	67	33	67	33	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	33	33	33	0	0	0
Eng	B.Tec	43	57	71	29	93	5	2	0	0	87	4	5	2	2	0	56	25	11	2	2	4
	BSE	0	100	50	50	100	0	0	0	0	50	0	50	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0
	BIS	71	29	63	37	96	4	0	0	0	92	0	4	0	4	4	48	35	13	0	0	0
HSS	BAELT	74	26	35	65	65	9	22	0	4	44	9	22	26	0	0	27	14	5	18	9	27
	BASS	65	35	38	62	61	26	10	2	0	46	9	32	10	2	6	27	22	11	14	6	14
	BMS	52	48	42	58	86	8	4	2	0	79	6	11	4	0	2	36	28	16	8	2	8
	LLB	50	50	49	51	91	3	6	0	0	82	3	9	6	0	2	40	24	17	5	5	7
NSc	BSc (NSc)	78	22	57	43	87	7	6	0	0	79	6	9	6	0	0	56	29	8	5	1	1
	BSc (Nur)	88	12	16	84	95	2	2	0	0	93	2	0	5	0	0	0	19	55	17	7	2

Source: Survey data

The more outreach programmes with respect to ethnicity were BAELT, BASS and BMS. The study programmes which penetrated through all the age groups were BASS, BMS and LLB. The most of the age groups of the community (above 25 to 50 years) were represented in the rest of the programmes such as B.Tech, BAELT and B.Sc.

Graduate profile of postgraduate diplomas/degrees

Since the number of awardees in most of the postgraduate study programmes was small and the number which responded was even less, the findings should be interpreted carefully as stressed earlier. For instance, the number of awardees in PGDE was drastically low compared with previous results. This will definitely have an impact on the nature of the graduate profile of the study programme and unquestionably reflect in the graduate profile of the faculty. The other programmes such as MEd with 3 awardees, BEd with 3 awardees, PGDE with 4 awardees, BSE with 2 awardees, MTec with 4 awardees, PGD Tec with 4 awardees, MADSPP with 7 awardees, MSc with 2 awardees, PGD in Environmental Studies with 2 awardees and MATESL with 5 awardees also need careful interpretations.

Unlike in the first degrees, the males outnumbered in most of the postgraduate programmes (approximately 3 times more than the females) – Table 4. Exceptions were observed in PGDE (75% were females), PGD (Env) and in MATESL. The findings in 2010 also indicated that males (76.9%) outnumbered the females (23.1%) in Masters programmes. However, in postgraduate diplomas the female percentage was comparatively higher (67.5%) than their male counterparts (22.5%) owing to the higher response rates in PGDE. The above finding was well supported in 2011 where 74.4% of females were represented in the PGDE.

Similar to first degrees the majority were Sinhala Buddhists in all postgraduate programmes. The major ethnic groups; Sinhala, Tamil and Moors/Malays were represented in both PGD in HR and MBA. MBA seems to attract all the age groups above 25 years. Unlike other programmes, the MADSPP seems to attract younger students between 25-29 years and over

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45 years. The other middle age groups were not represented at all. It would be an interesting area to explore further. MTec programme has catered to 30-44 age group; majority in the 35-39 group.

Table 4 - Graduate profile of Postgraduate Diplomas and Degrees

Fac.	Deg.	Gender		Civil Status		Race					Religion					Age					
		F	M	S	M	S	T	M	B	O	B	H	C	I	O	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	>50
Edu	PGDE	75	25	25	75	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	25	50	25	0	0	0
	MEd	33	67	0	100	67	0	33	0	0	67	0	0	33	0	0	0	33	33	33	0
Eng	PGD CM	25	75	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	75	0	25	0	0	0	0	50	0	25	25
	MTec	25	75	25	75	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	25	50	25	0	0
HSS	PGD HR	29	71	14	86	80	10	10	0	0	67	5	19	9	0	0	25	15	20	10	30
	MA DSPP	43	57	14	86	58	14	0	14	14	29	-	57	14	0	17	0	0	0	33	50
	MBA	26	74	18	82	85	9	6	0	0	79	6	6	6	3	3	19	19	28	22	9
NSc	PGD ENV	100	0	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0
	MSc	50	50	0	100	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	50	0	50	0	0
PGIE	MA TESL	60	40	0	100	40	40	0	20	0	40	40	20	0	0	0	25	50	0	0	25

Source: Survey data

Summary of the graduate profiles of the study programmes

It is clearly evident from the findings that different study programmes attract different learners; hence there was a variation in the graduate profiles. The majority of learners in bachelors degrees were females except in the BTec programme. However, males dominated in most of the postgraduate programmes by exactly reversing the order of the percentage to 3 times more than females. This may be due to the heavy family commitments associated with females when they become older and may have less time for education. MBA was the most popular postgraduate programme which penetrated to all the age groups and ethnic groups. PGD in HR is also somewhat similar to MBA reaching the target group of above 30 years.

4.6 Provincial Distribution of OUSL Graduates of 2011

As an ODL institution, the prime mission of the OUSL is to remove barriers to education and to reach the unreached. In view of this situation, the OUSL has expanded its services to regions and sub-regions with 6 regional centres 18 study centres and 7 teaching centres. The six regional centres are located in Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Anuradhpura, Batticaloa and Jaffna. The purpose of this expansion is to enable learners to pursue higher education while remaining in their own districts. Therefore it is necessary to "trace back" to find the impact of this expansion - whether the OUSL has achieved its mission.

It is clearly evident from the Figure 9 that the OUSL has reached out predominantly to the students in the Colombo district (34.5%) and adjacent districts such as Gampaha (13.9%) and Kalutara (8.5%). The number of students in the Kandy area were not that remarkable and the percentage

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was almost identical with that of Kalutara district. The next highest percentage was seen in the Galle district with 6% and Kurunegala district with student population of 5.1%. Even though there is a regional centre in Matara, the student population was only 3.8%. With respect to other regional centres, the outreach in Jaffna (1.3%) and Batticaloa (1.5%) was greater than Anuradhapura where the student population was a mere 0.7%.
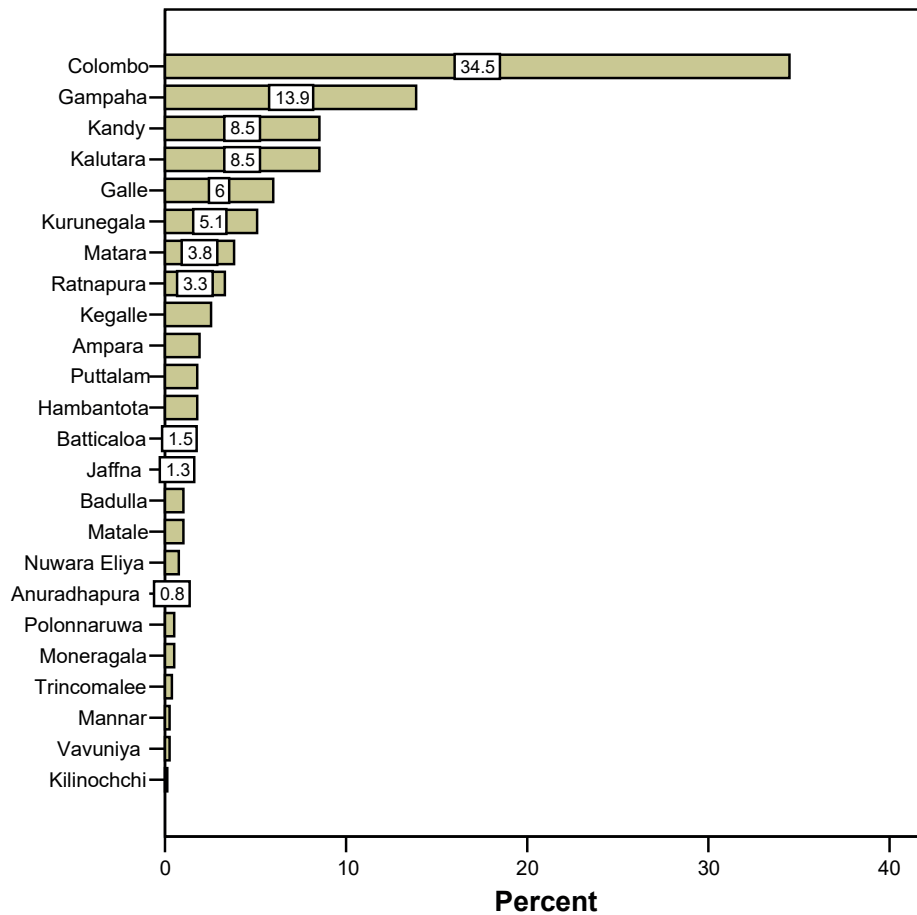

Figure 9 – Outreach of OUSL Graduates 2011
Source: Survey data

There were no students enrolled in the Mullativu district as in 2009 data and 2010 data. However, there was one student who followed the BSc programme from Kilinochichi and graduated this year compared to none in previous findings. This shows a very positive direction towards bridging war-affected districts. Still the percentages were remarkably low in the war-affected districts such as Kilinochichi (0.1%), Vavunia (0.3%), Mannar (0.3%) and Trincomalee (0.4%). For more details refer Annex 3.

The percentages of some of the other districts such as Moneragala (0.5%), Polonnaruwa (0.5%), Anuradhapura (0.8%), Nuwara Eliya (0.8%) Matale (1%) and Badulla (1%) were also low.

A comparison of the data for the past three years indicated that the distribution across provinces was almost identical where Western province was most privileged (Colombo - 34.8% in 2010 and 22.6% in 2011, Gampaha - 12.3% in 2010 and 2011, Kalutara 8.5% in 2010 and 7.7% in 2011) - Figure 10. It is disappointing to note that the percentages levels gradually decreasing in all the provinces except in the Eastern province.
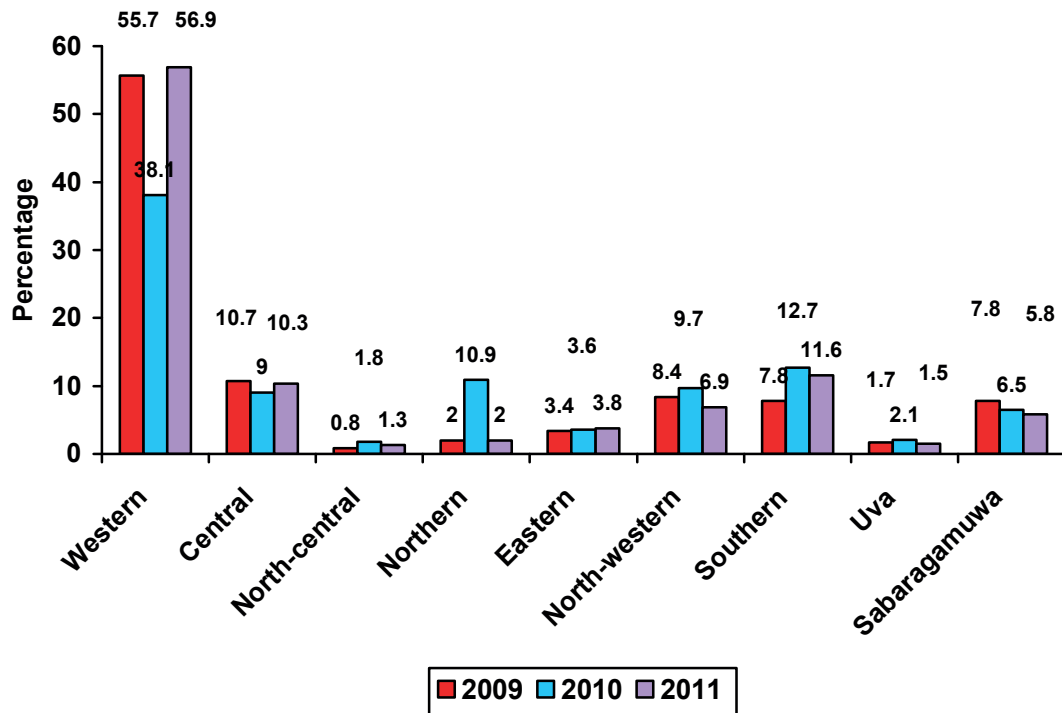

Figure 10 – Provincial Distribution of OUSL Graduates
Source: Survey data

Two most popular programmes were B.Sc and LLB reaching 23 districts (except Batticaloa and Mullativu) and 21 (Kilinochchi, Moneragala, Vavunia and Mullativu) districts respectively (Figure 11). BASS degree programme catered to 17 districts, BSc Nursing to 12 districts, BTec to 11 districts, BMS to 10 districts and BIS to 8 districts. The outreach of all the other degree prgrammes was very insignificant; BAELT programme only to four districts, Ampara, Gampaha, Kegalle and Colombo, BEd only to Colombo and Gampaha; and BSE programme only to Gampaha and Galle.

In contrast, there was an increase in the outreach for the three study programmes used in the tracer study in 2010. B Tec from 10 to 11 districts, BSc from 15 to 23 districts and LLB from 17 to 21 districts.

Reaching students in the Northern, Eastern, North central, Uva provinces were comparatively low in all the bachelors degree programmes.
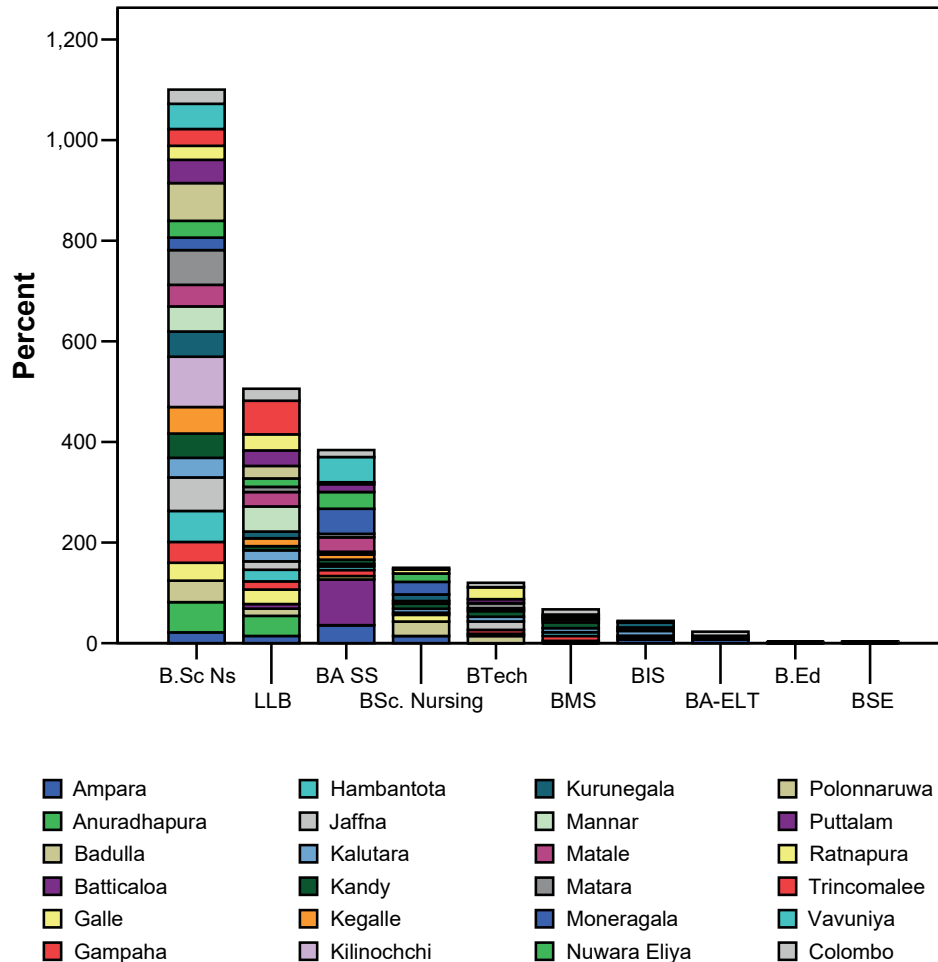
18

Figure 11 – Outreach of Bachelors degree programmes
Source: Survey data

Similar pattern was observed in postgraduate diploma and masters programmes where the main clientele was from Colombo (58% for the PGD and 42% for the Masters), Gampaha and Kalutara districts (Figure 12).

The PGD in HR reached 4 districts mainly Colombo (80%), Gampaha (10%), Jaffna and Kandy (5% each). PGDE reached only 4 districts; Galle, Hambantota, Kurunegala, and Colombo (25% each) in contrast to the findings in 2010 where it reached 22 districts. PGDE was the most outreached of all OUSL study programmes in 2010. The penetration of the PGD in CM was only for three districts (Gampaha (50%), Kalutara and Kandy (25% each). The PGD (Env.) managed only to attract students from Gampaha and Kalutara (50% each).

The most popular Masters level programme was MBA reaching 10 districts (Colombo - 35%, Gampaha - 29%, Kandy - 15%, Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Galle, Jaffna, Kegalle, Kurunegala, Puttalam - 3% each). The next outreach programme was MATESL catering to four districts; Jaffna (40%), Gampaha, Matara and Colombo (20% each).
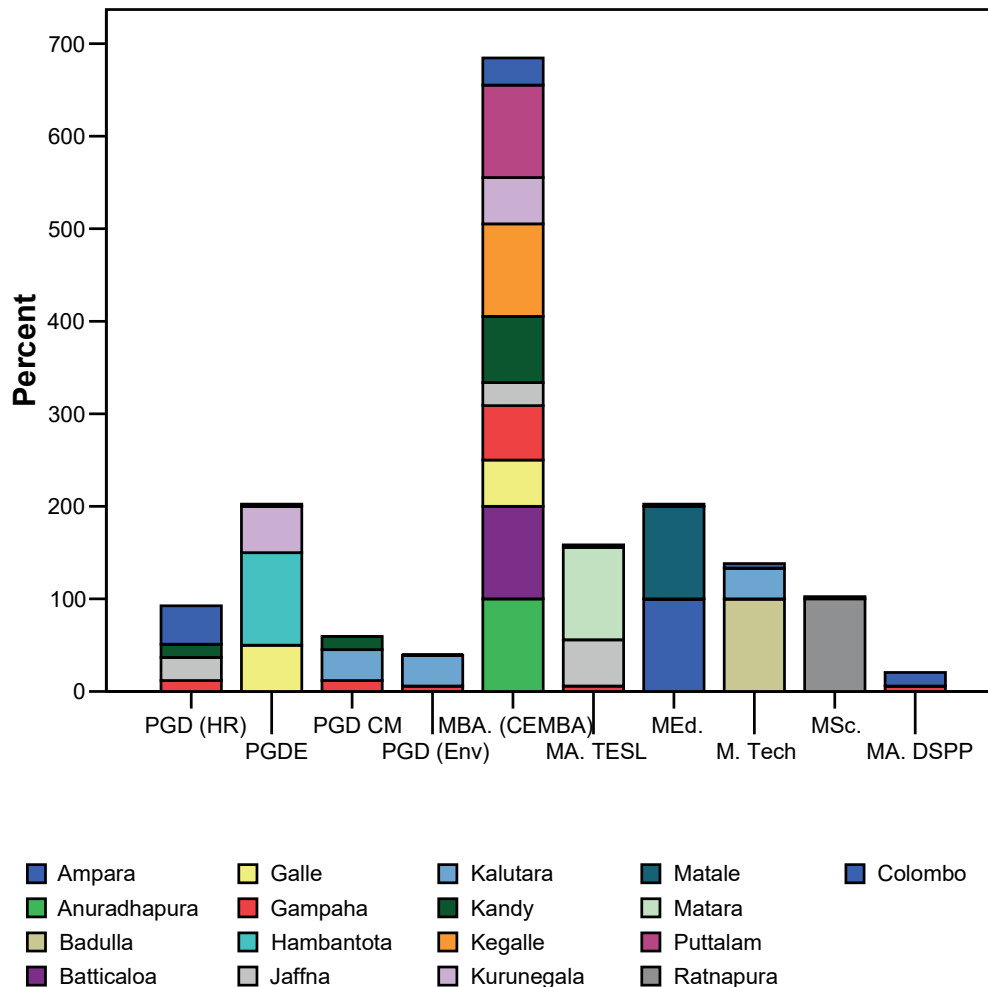
19

Figure 12 – Outreach of Postgraduate study programmes
Source: Survey data

Both MEd and MTec reached three districts. MTec reached Colombo (50%) Badulla and Kalutara (25% each) whereas MEd reached Ampara, Matale and Colombo (33% each). MADSPP and MSc both catered only to two districts, Colombo (86%), Gampaha (14%) and Ratnapura and Colombo (50% each) respectively.

4.7 Employment status of the OUSL graduates

Employment status at the Faculty level

Unlike in conventional universities, employment of OUSL graduates could not be considered purely as a product or outcome of their education. They may have already been employed at the time of registration or may have obtained employment while being a student. Or else they may have uplifted their career with other relevant qualifications or work experience. However, in certain professional areas such as nursing, engineering etc. the OUSL degree qualification would have "opened up" new dimensions for the students instead of stagnating in their previous occupation.

When comparing employment, all the students of the faculty of education and the PGIE were employed at the time of the registration. From the rest of the faculties, over 44% of the students were employed when they embarked on their studies and the percentage has increased to over 78% at the time of the convocation (Figure 13). The status of the employment at the convocation was highest in the faculty of Eng. Tec (86%) where the percentage of the employed students has approximately doubled when compared with the number employed at the registration. The employment at registration was highest in the faculty of HSS but the increase was not that pronounced; from 67% to 78%.
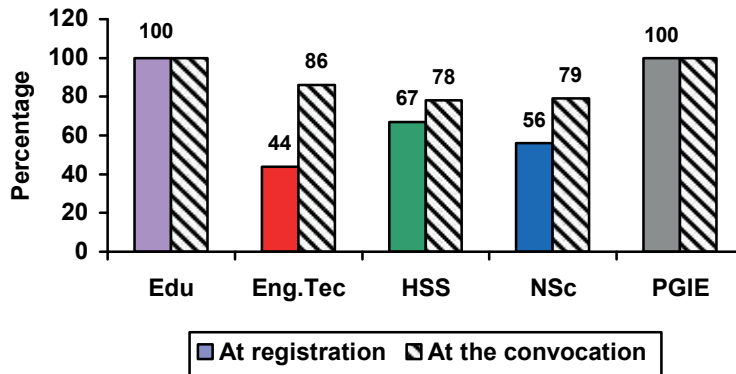

Figure 13 – Employment status of students at the faculty level
Source: Survey data

Employment status at the Study Programme level (bachelors degrees)

With respect to the first degrees, the students who were registered in the B.Ed, BSE and B.Sc (Nursing) were already employed indicating that they followed the relevant study programmes for career mobility.

Considering the rest of the study programmes, highest number of employed students at the registration was recorded in the BASS (78%), BMS (73%) and BAELT (61%) – Figure 14. At the time of graduation BIS outnumbered other study programmes by achieving 88% employment status. B.Tec and BASS closely followed with 83% each and BMS with 81% (Figure 9). The lowest percentage of employment was reported in the LLB degree programme (67%).
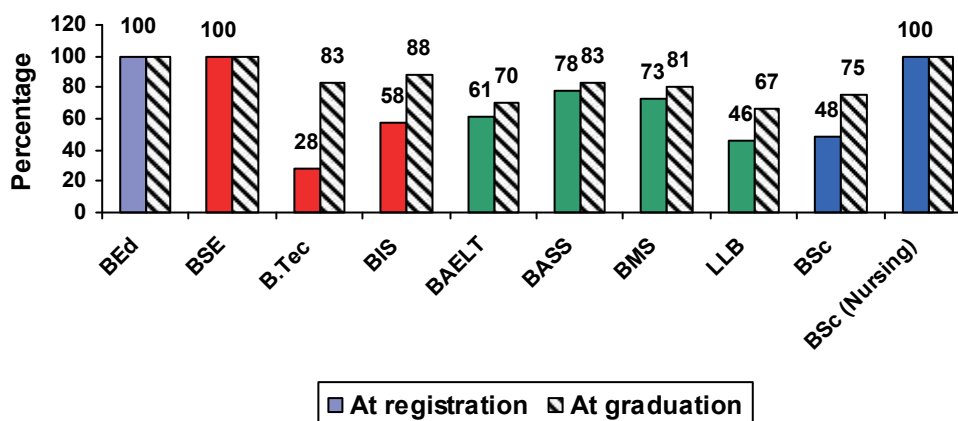
Figure 14 – Employment status of students at the programme level –
Bachelor's Degrees
Source: Survey data

When the increase of percentages was compared a remarkable increase was reported in the B.Tec programme where the lowest percentage of 28% at the time of registration has increased to 83%; a 3 fold increase (Figure 15). Second highest increase was observed in the B.Sc Degree programme from 48% to 75%. Third increase was recorded in BIS programme from 58% to 88% followed by the LLB degree programme with 46% to 67%. In all, there was an increase in the other bachelor's degrees. However, the increase was not that pronounced as the original employment status was comparatively higher in these programmes.
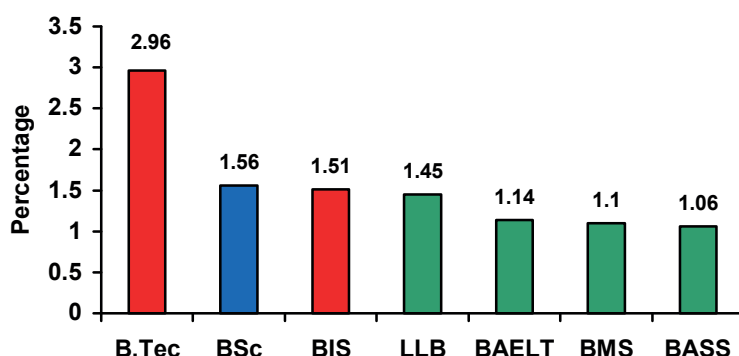
Figure 15 – Increase in the employment status of graduates
Source: Survey data

Findings of this study highlighted that the employment of graduates differed considerably from 2010 findings. BTec from 51.4% to 83%, LLB from 44.7% to 67% and B.Sc from 46.9% to 75%.

In the BAELT study programme, 61% of the students were employed at the time of registration. Out of which 67% were in private sector while 25% were in the public sector jobs (Table 5). At the time of the graduation, 21% were self-employed compared to 8% at the time of the registration. Hence there was a less number in both private and public sectors (57% and 21%).

In the BASS programme also the majority of employed students at the registration were engaged in the private sector (54%). However, this status has been changed at the time of the graduation where the majority were engaged in the public sector (40%) compared to the initial status of 37%.The number in the semi-government has also increased from 9% to 13%.

The considerable proportion of employed students in the BTec, BIS and BMS also were employed in private sector (53%, 79%, 84% respectively) at the time of registration. This pattern remained the same at the time of the graduation.

Employed students of BSc, BSc (nursing) and LLB were mostly engaged in public sector (65%, 93% and 71% respectively) and similar pattern was observed at the time of the graduation.

Table 5 – Nature of the employment at the Bachelors' level

Programme	At the registration				At the graduation			
	Public	Private	Semi-government	Self-employed	Public	Private	Semi-government	Self-employed
BAELT	25%	67%		8%	21%	57%		21%
BASS	37%	54%	9%	8%	40%	47%	13%	-
BSc	65%	21%	11%	3%	69%	16%	13%	2%
BSc Nur	93%	-	7%	-	89%		11%	-
BTec	33%	53%	7%	7%	35%	44%	19%	2%
BIS	21%	79%	7%	7%	37%	58%		
BMS	11%	84%	5%		10%	85%	5%	
LLB	71%	21%	5%	3%	59%	21%	10%	10%

Source: Survey data

Employment status at the Study Programme level (postgraduate diplomas/degrees)

Almost all the students who had enrolled for the postgraduate diplomas and degrees were employed at the registration except for the students who have enrolled for the PGD in HR (91%) - Figure 16 and MADSPP (86%) – Figure 17.
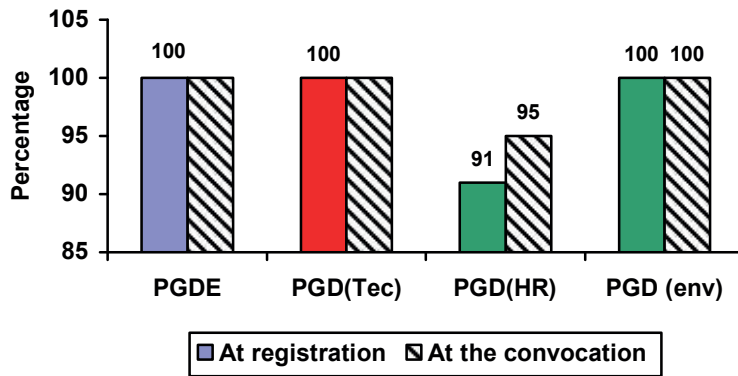
Figure 16 – Employment status of students at the programme level – Postgraduate diplomas
Source: Survey data

However, the pattern has deviated in MBA programme where 3% of employed students have become unemployed at the time of the graduation. This may be because the graduate is seeking a better career opportunity with a newly acquired qualification.
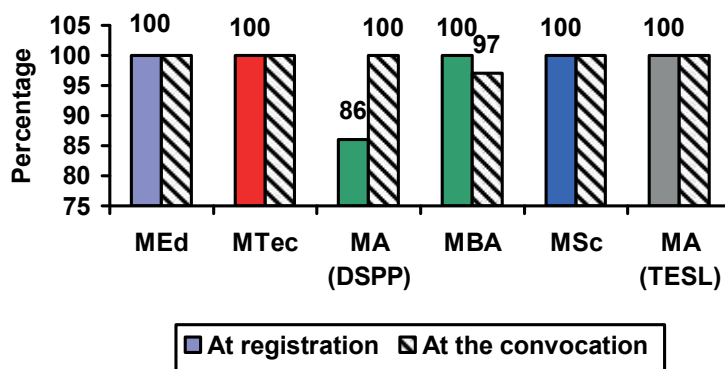
Figure 17– Employment status of students at the programme level – Postgraduate degrees
Source: Survey data

Most of the postgraduate diploma/degree holders were either in the private or semi-government sectors except for the PGDE where 100% of the awardees were in public sector as most of them were teachers (Table 6). Equal proportion was seen in the MSc. Study programme. Only one person from the MEd programme has responded to this question, and analysis was not carried out for the MEd study programme.

Table 6 – Nature of the employment at the postgraduate level

Programme	At the registration				At the graduation			
	Public	Private	Semi-government	Self-employed	Public	Private	Semi-government	Self-employed
PGDE	100%				100%			
PGDCM	25%		75%		25%		75%	
PGD HR	17%	77%	6%		6%	88%	6%	
PGDEn	-	-	100%					
MEd	33%				33%			
MTec	25%	50%	25%		25%	50%	25%	
MDSPP	20%	60	-	20	40%	60%		
MBA	27%	49%	24%	26%	55%	19%		
MSc	-	50%	50%		-	50%	50%	
MATESL	40	-	60%		20%	60%		20%

Source: Survey data

Occupation of students and their income levels – bachelors degree

The occupation of the graduates were based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 88) used by the Department of Census and Statistics (Sri Lanka). Doctors, engineers, teachers, lawyers and nurses are all included in the "Professionals" category. Generally, most of the students were in the professional category at the time of registration and the situation has remained the same at the time of graduation with an increase in the percentages. The exceptions were noted in BTec BASS, BIS and BMS (Table 7). Technicians and related fields were the majority (38%) in BTec. "Other" category was the highest in the other three programmes. However, at the time of the graduation the situation has changed in BASS where the professional category became the highest with 37%.

The percentage of the clerk category at graduation has been reduced in all the study programmes. In all, the findings indicated that there was upward career mobility in most of the graduates during their study period. This may be due to their acquired educational qualifications or work experience or both. This area needs further investigation to find out the actual reasons.

Table 7 – Occupation of the students

Programme	Registration						Graduation						
	M	P	C	MO	T	O	M	P	C	MO	T	Pr	O
BAELT	8%	77%				15%	14%	79%					7%
BASS	15%	31%	12	2%		41	15%	37%	10%	2%		2%	34%
BSc	5%	66%	7%	2%	2%	18%	3%	62%	8%	1%	5%		20%
BSc (Nursing)	9%	88%					9%	86%		2%			
BTec	6%	25%			38%	25%	7%	46%			21%		25%
BIS	-	7%		14%	29%	50%		15%			20%		65%
BMS	29%	3%	23%		3%	42%	49%	5%	12%		2%		29%
LLB	25%	29%	18%		6%	22%	24%	37%	14%		5%		20%

M- Managers, P-Professionals, C-Clerks, MO-Machine Operators, T-Technicians, Pr-Proprietors O-Other

Source: Survey data

The comparison of income levels; at the time of the registration and at the time of the graduation are illustrated programme-wise in Figures 18-25.

In the BAELT the majority (38%) at registration was below Rs. 15,000.00 category and there was a gradual decrease in the higher income levels in Figure 18. There was no representation in the Rs 35,000.00-50,000.00 category. In contrast, the majority at graduation was in the Rs. 15,000.00-25,000.00 category (47%) and there was a 1% increase in the above Rs. 50,000.00 income category. This is because most of the graduates were employed as professionals (77%) and as managers (8%).
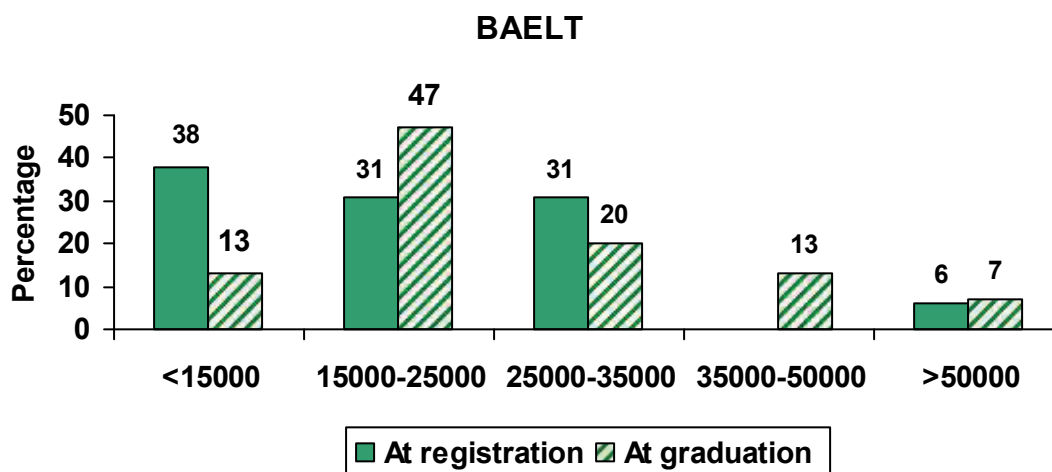

Figure 18 - Comparison of the income levels of the students - BAELT
Source: Survey data

In the BASS programme, the majority of the students in both at registration and at graduation were in the Rs. 15,000.00-25000.00 group (38% and 45%) – Figure 19. However, there was an increase of 45% from 38%. The remarkable observation was that 17% of graduates were earning more than Rs. 50,000.00 which was approximately a 3 fold increase as most of them were in the professional category (37%).
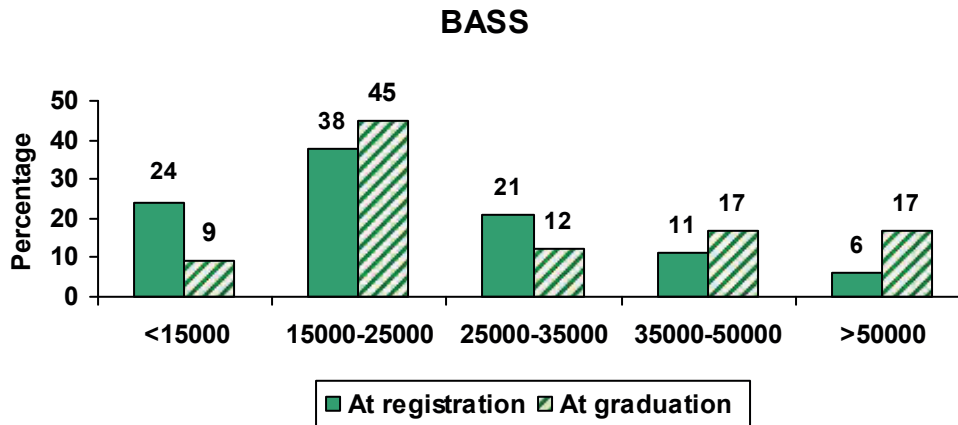
BASS

Figure 19 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – BASS
Source: Survey data

In the BSc degree programme, a higher percentage of students was in the below Rs. 15000.00 category (51%) and the pattern has changed to next high level of income level (65%) at graduation (Figure 20). There was a slight increase in other income levels but it was comparatively low when compared with other programmes.

BSc
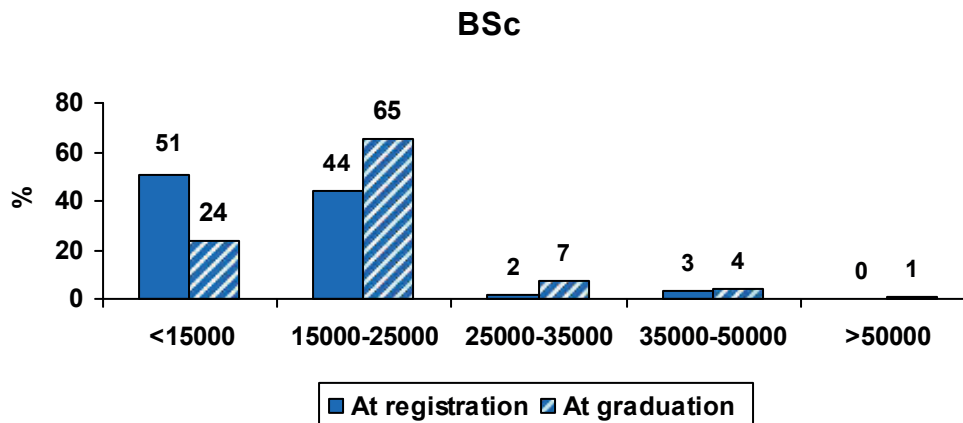
Figure 20 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – BSc
Source: Survey data

The majority of students who followed the BSc (nursing) degree, were at the Rs. 15000.00-25000.00 income level in both stages, however there was a slight increase at the graduation levels (Figure 21). There was a slight increase in the percentages of all the other levels.

In both BSc and BSc (Nursing) the professional category was high in both at registration and graduation.

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BSc (Nursing)

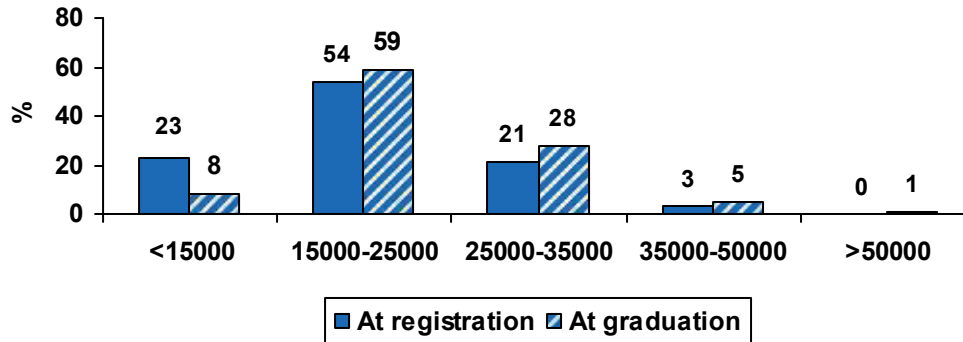Figure 21 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – BSc (Nursing)
Source: Survey data

In the B Tech programme the differences in the income levels of students were remarkably visible; where 53% of students were in the lowest income category and the percentage has drastically reduced to 4% at graduation level (Figure 21). There was a pronounced increase in the percentages of all the other levels too.

The percentages in the technicians category has reduced from 38% to 21% while there is a 1% increase in the managerial level in the BTec study programme. It was interesting to note that the 6% proprietors at the time of registration has lowered to 2% at graduation. Professional category has increased from 25% to 46%.

B.Tec
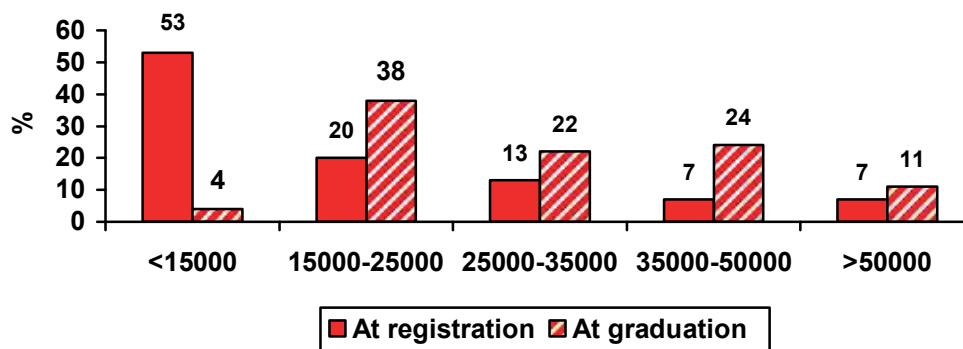
Figure 22 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – B.Tec
Source: Survey data

Similar pattern was observed in BIS programme, where the majority was below Rs. 50000.00 income level at the start of the programme and when they were graduated the income level has arisen to the next level (Figure 23). The main difference observed was that 19% of the students at graduation were in Rs. 35000-50000.00 category whereas there were no students represented in this category at registration.

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Looking at the categories, still the "other" category was the highest with an increase of 65% from 50%. However, career advancement has been clearly evident from the findings as there were no machine operators, a decrease was shown in technicians category (from 29% to 20%) and a two fold increase in the professional category from 7% to 15%.

BIS
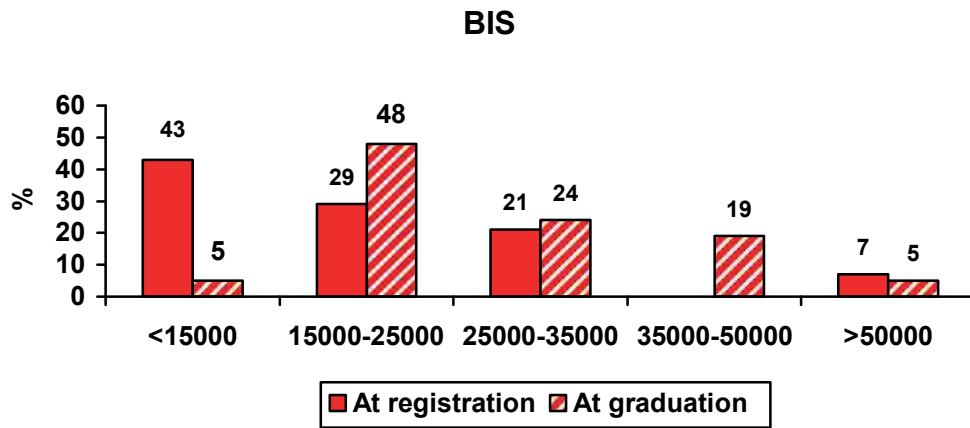
Figure 23 - Comparison of the income levels of the students - BIS
Source: Survey data

In the BMS programme, the majority at registration were in the Rs. 15000.00-25000.00 category (Figure 24). However, at graduation, 42% of them have moved to above Rs. 50,000.00 category. Even 20% of the graduates were in the 35000.00-50000.00 category indicating that their income levels were comparatively high. It was evident that the managers were the highest majority in the BMS programme increasing from 29% to 49% reducing "other" category drastically from 42% to 29%.

BMS
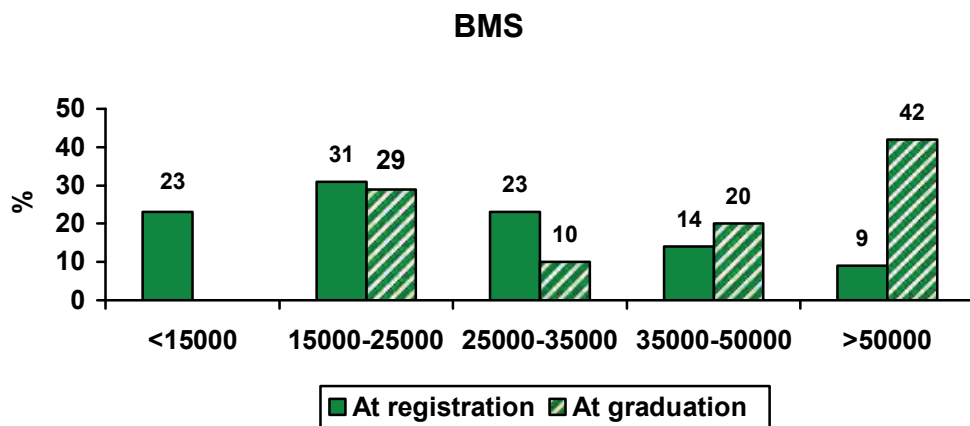
Figure 24 - Comparison of the income levels of the students - BMS
Source: Survey data

In contrast, 49% of the students in the LLB programme, were in the Rs. 15000.00-25000.00 which is the second lowest category and at graduation too the majority were in the same category (Figure 25). However, 18% had managed to earn more than Rs. 50.000.00 per month at graduation.

LLB
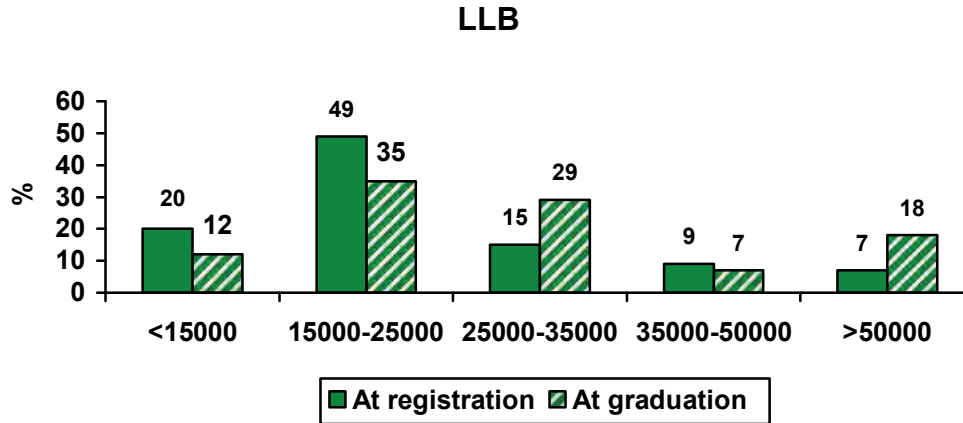
Figure 25 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – LLB
Source: Survey data

Occupation of students and their income levels – postgraduate diplomas/degrees

Analysing the occupation and the income levels at postgraduate level, it was observed that almost all the awardees were in the professional category at the time of registration. Still the professional category remained as the main category, however in certain programmes managers were the predominant category at graduation; PGD (HR) and MBA in particular. The comparison of occupations; at the time of registration and at the time of graduation is shown in Table 8.

Table 8 – Nature of the employment at the postgraduate level

Programme	Registration						Graduation						
	M	P	C	MO	T	O	M	P	C	MO	T	Pr	O
PGDE		75%				25%		100%					
PGDCM		100%					25%	75%					
PGD HR		75%				25%	75%						25%
PGDEn	100%												
MEd		67%						100%					
MTec		75%				25%	25%	75%					
MDSPP	-	33%				67%	29%	29%					42%
MBA	59%	24%			3%	15%	68%	21%			3%		6%
MSc	50%					50%	50%						50%
MATESL													

Source: Survey data

The income levels of postgraduate diploma/degree holders are illustrated in Figures 26-33).

PGDE/PGD (Environment)
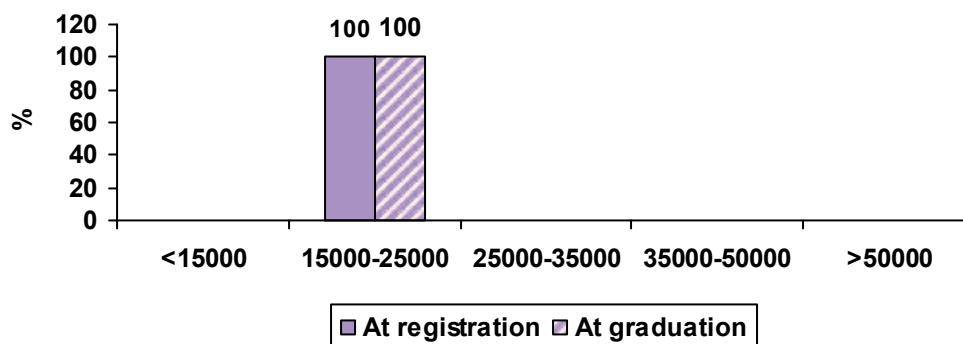
Figure 26 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – PGDE
Source: Survey data

There was no difference in the income level in both PGDE and PGD (Environment); where the students were drawing a salary between Rs. 15000.00-25000.00 (Figure 26).
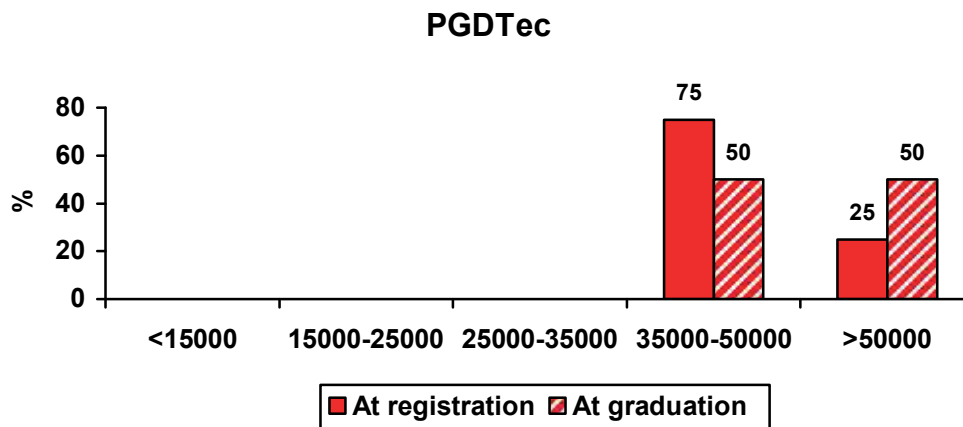
PGDTec

Figure 27 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – PGD Tec in CM
Source: Survey data

25% of the students have increased their monthly income to more than
Rs 5000.00 in the PGD Tec study programme (Figure 27).
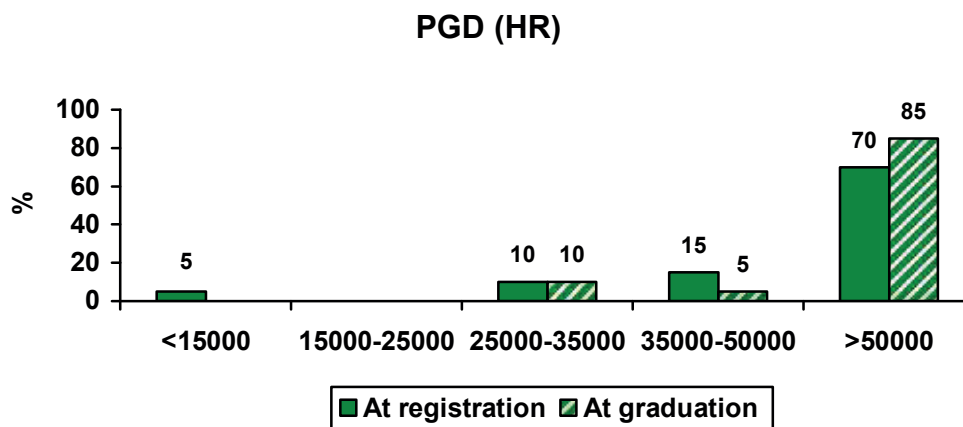
PGD (HR)

Figure 28 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – PGD (HR)
Source: Survey data

In PGD (HR), the majority were drawing a salary of over Rs, 50000.00 when
they enrolled for this programme and the number has increased to 85% from
70%. One student who had been in the below Rs. 15000.00 category was
drawing more than Rs. 50000.00 at graduation (Figure 28).
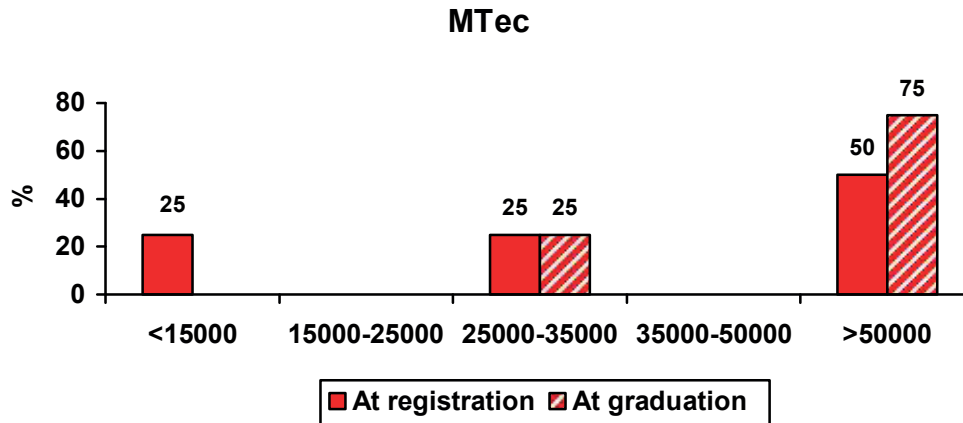
MTec

Figure 29 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – MTec
Source: Survey data

75% of the graduates of MTec programme at graduation were drawing a salary of over Rs. 50000.00. One student has increased his income level from below Rs. 15000.00 to Rs. 25000.00 – 35000.00 category and another from Rs. 25000.00 – 35000.00 to over Rs. 50,000.00 category (Figure 29).
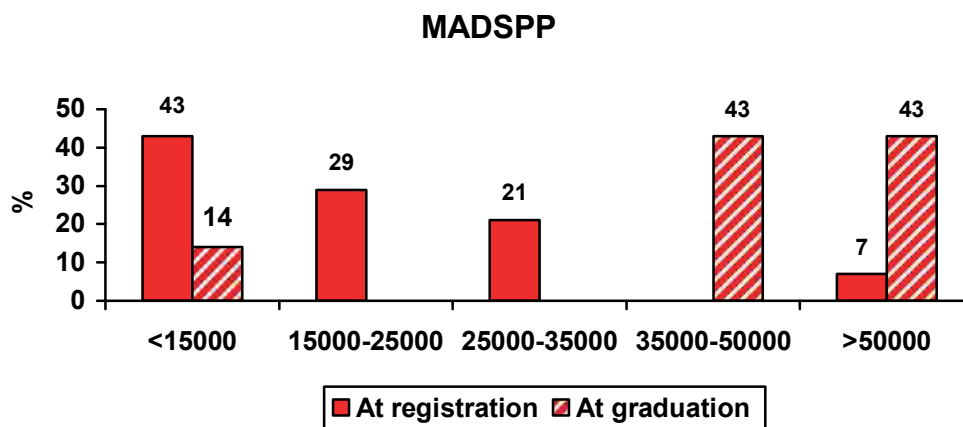
MADSPP

Figure 30 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – MADPP
Source: Survey data

There was a clear increase in the income levels of the graduates of the MADSPP programme where the majority were drawing a salary of more than Rs 35000.00 and over Rs. 50000.00 (43% each). However, 14% still remained in the below Rs. 15,000.00 category (Figure 30).

MBA
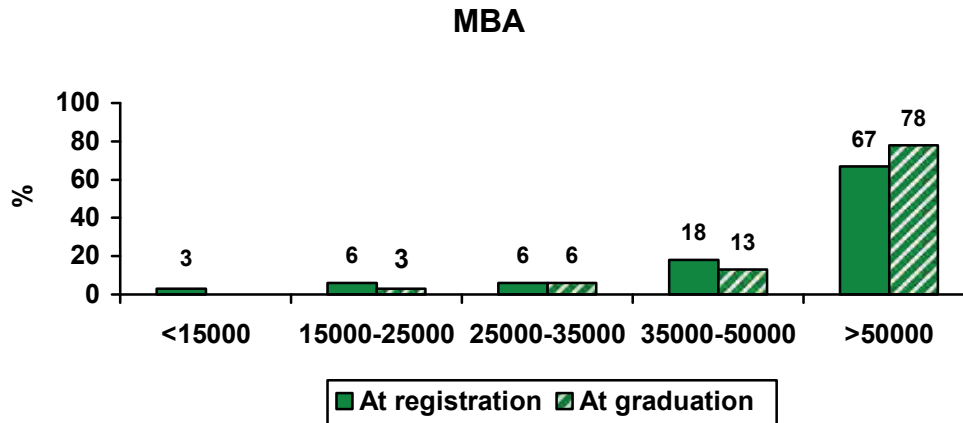
Figure 31 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – MBA
Source: Survey data

In MBA programme, the pattern was heavily skewed towards over Rs 50000.00 category indicating that gradual decrease in the lower income levels. 78% of the graduates were drawing a salary of over Rs. 50000.00 (Figure 31).
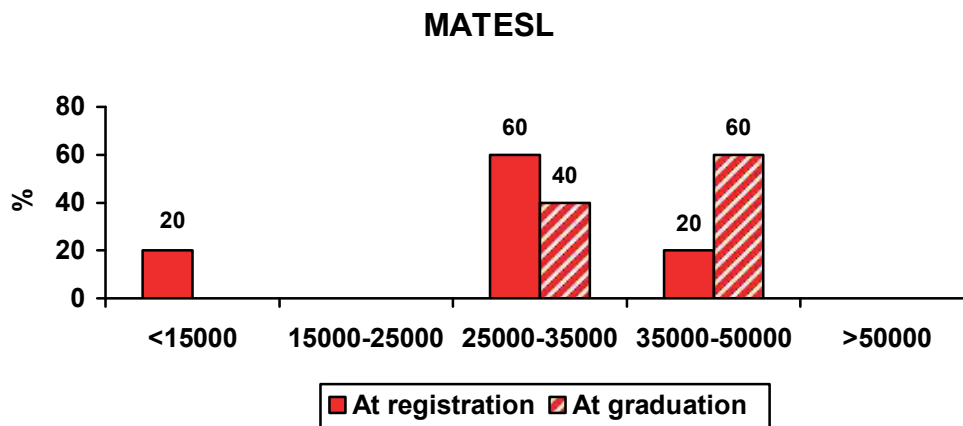
MATESL

Figure 32 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – MATESL
Source: Survey data

Like in many masters programmes, the income levels at graduation of MSc students were higher than the levels at registration. 60% of the graduates were drawing a salary of more than Rs. 50000.00. There were none in the below Rs. 25000.00 category (Figure 32).

MSc
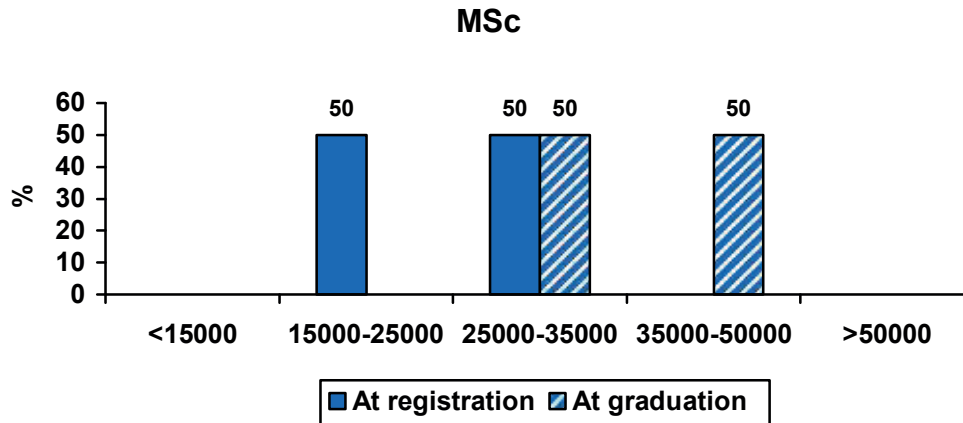
Figure 33 - Comparison of the income levels of the students – MSc
Source: Survey data

In the MSc programme, 50% of the students who were in the Rs 15000.00-
25000.00 category at registration had moved to the next highest income level
and the 50% in the Rs. 25000.00-35000.00 had moved to over %s. 50000.00
(Figure 33).

Summary of the employment status of postgraduate degree holders

Generally, the income levels of the postgraduate degree holders were higher
than the income levels of the graduates who had followed their first degrees
(Figure 34). In both cases, the income levels at the registration had
proportionately increased at the time of the graduation.
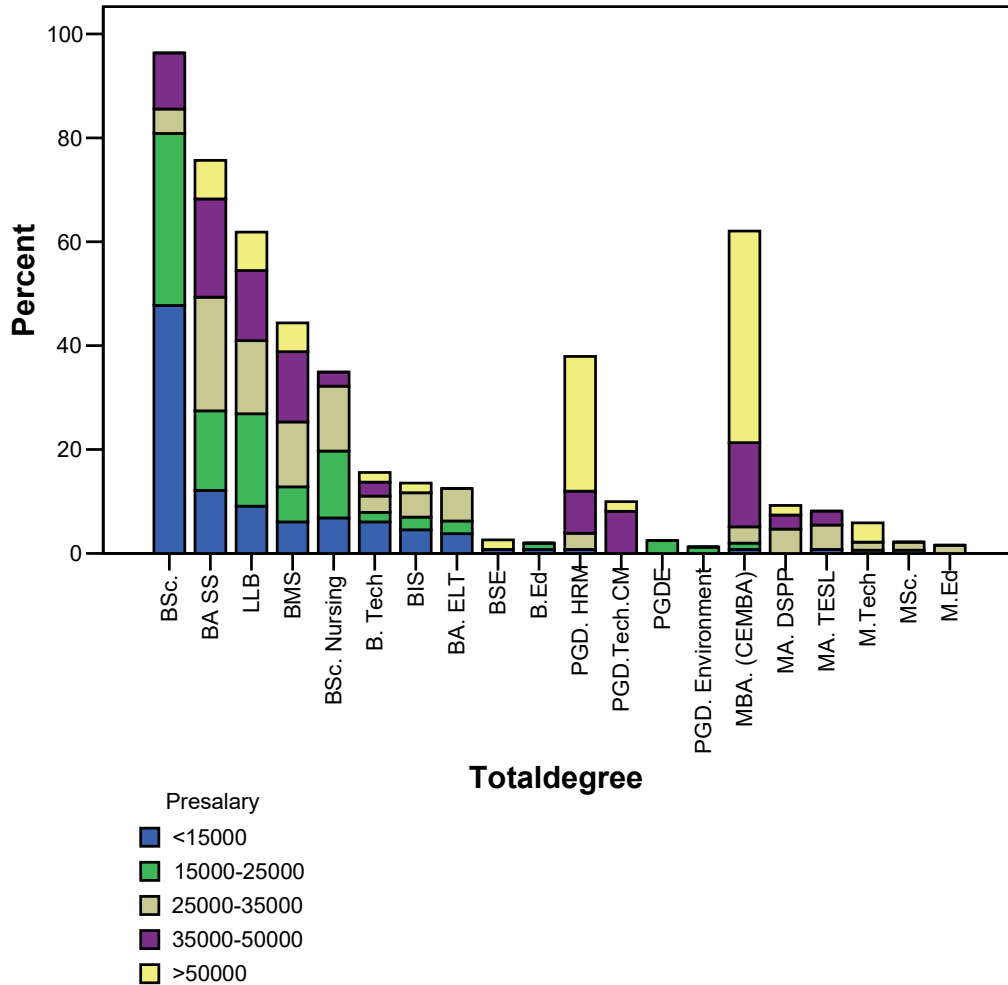
Figure 34 – Income levels of the study programmes at the registration
Source: Survey data

Findings indicated that the majority of students in all the study programmes were in the lowest income group (below Rs 50000.00) and they managed to uplift their income levels through career development. Some have managed to earn more than Rs.50000.00. This factor was clearly evident in the BMS programme where most of the students were in the managerial level.

The income levels of students who followed the PGD (HR) and MBA were comparatively higher even at the registration. As a result, certain study programmes would be more demand-driven than the others.
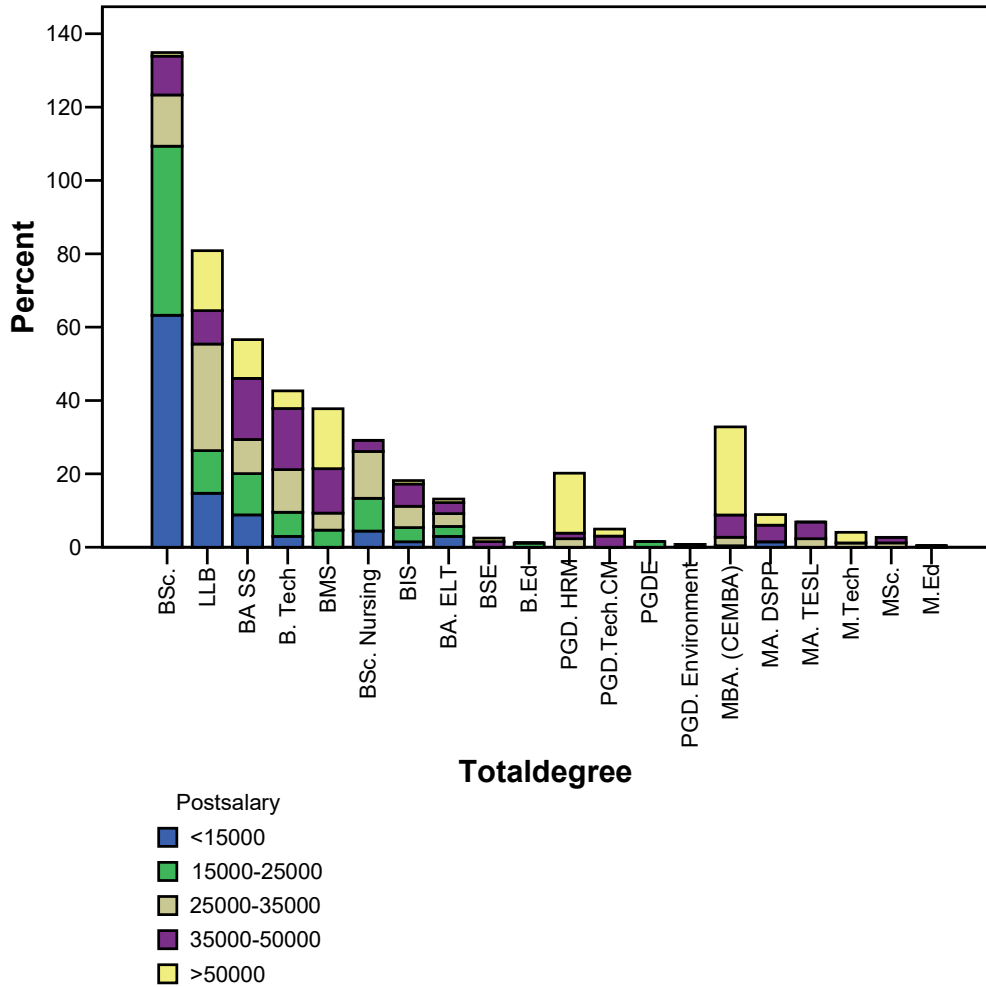
Figure 35 – Income levels of the study programmes at the graduation
Source: Survey data

4.8 Performance of OUSL graduates of 2011

This section focusses on the performance of the graduates; firstly on the time taken for the graduation and then on the impact of the followed study programme on students' career achievement.

Time taken to complete the bachelors degree programmes

When analyzing the time taken to complete the bachelors degree programmes, only the majority of students who had followed the BAELT have completed their degrees within the stipulated time of three years (Figure 36). Students of all the other degree programmes have taken more than 5 years to complete their degrees (BSS, BMS, LLB, BSc, BSc (nursing).
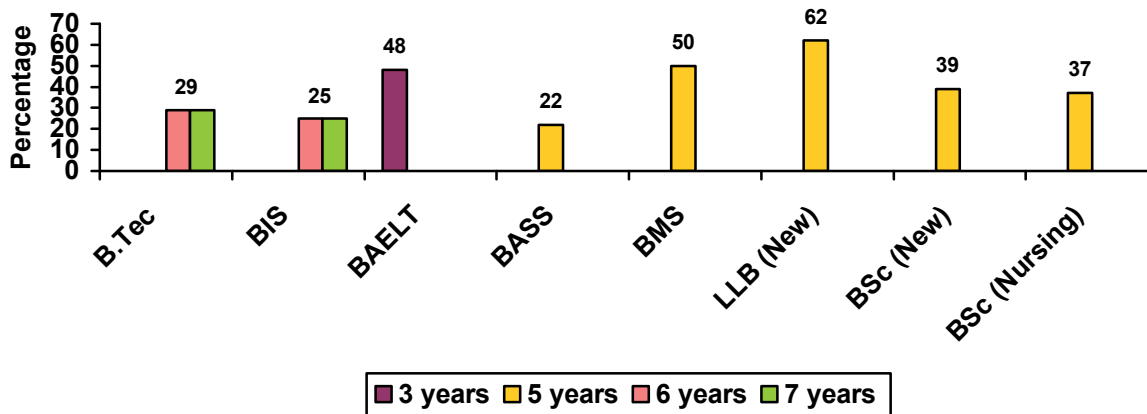
Figure 36 – Time taken to complete the Bachelors degree programmes
Source: Survey data

In BEd study programme, only 3 students graduated this year; one student had taken 1 year, the other had taken two years and the remaining student had taken 10 years to complete the study programme.

Two graduates of the BSE programme have taken two years to complete the programme.

The majority of BTec students had taken either 6 or 7 years to complete (29%). 16% have completed within 8 years. Only 2% have completed within 3 years (2%). The rest have taken more than nine years to complete the study programme (6% either in 10 or 12 years; 4% in 13 years, 2% have taken either 9/11/17/20/21). One person has graduated after 29 years.

Findings of the 2010 study also indicated that the majority (65.6%) had taken 5-7 years to complete and a mere 3.1% were successful in completing the degree in 3-4 years. 31.3% had taken 8-10 years to complete. In this study the cumulative percentage was slightly lower (22%).

Comparatively, students who had followed the BIS have taken less number of years than the BTech programme. All the students in this sample had managed to complete the study programme within 9 years; the majority managed to complete within 6 or 7 years (25%); 21% in 4 years, 13% within 3 or 5 years and 4% in 9 years.

When analyzing the BELT degree programme, 30% have taken 2 years, 13% have taken 4 years and 9% have taken 5 years to complete the BAELT study programme.

Students who had followed the BASS degree programme have taken 2-16 years to complete; the majority (22%) have taken 5 years, 20% have taken 3 years, 18% have taken 4 years, 15% have taken 6 years, 12% have taken 7 years, 8% in eight years and 2% in 9 years. 1% have taken either 11 or 16 years to complete the BASS study programme.

50% of the students in the BMS study programme have managed to complete the programme in 5 years, 23% within 6 years and 4% in 7 years. However, 8% managed to complete the programme within 3 years. 2% of the student population had taken 8/9/11 or 12 years to complete the program.

When considering the data of the LLB new study programme, all the students have completed the programme within 5 years; 62% in 5 years and 38% in 4 years. Earlier study also indicated that 52.7% had managed to complete the law degree between 3-4 years (Gunawardena and Gamini, 2011).

The students in the old programme have taken more time and some have taken more than 20 years to complete (4% in 5 years; 47% in 6 years; 9% in either 7 or 9 years, 7% in 10/11/13 years, 2% in 12 years and 4% in 14/21 years to complete.

The majority of the graduates (39%) of the BSc degree programme had completed the programme in 5 years. The time taken by the rest to complete the degree ranged from 3 years (only 1%) to more than 10 years (23% in 4 years, 20% in 7 years, 6% in 8 years, 3% in 9 years, less than 3% taking more than 10 years). Earlier studies also reported that the majority had taken a longer time than the stipulated time of 3 years. The majority (46.3%) completed within 5-7 years (Gunawardena and Gamini, 2011); 43% in 4 years (Lekamge, Weerasighe, and Ratnayake, 2006), 38% in 4 years (Jayatilleke, Dassanayaka and Ranawaka, 2009), 86% taken 4-6 years (Weerasinghe and De Silva, 2004),

In the 2011 study, 5.6% had taken 8-10 years. However, this current study revealed that more students (9%) have taken 8-10 years for completion.

7% of the graduates were from the old BSc degree programme and some have taken 21 years to complete it (56% in 17 years, 22% in 18 years, 11% in 20 years and 21 years).

The majority of students who followed the BSc (Nursing) programme have completed within 5 years (37%), 23% have taken either 7 or 8 years; 5% within 9/13 years and 7% in 10 years.

Time taken to complete the postgraduate diplomas

75% of the PGDE students had taken three years while 25% within one year. This finding was contradictory to the earlier research done in 2011 where it stated that 80% had completed the programme between 1-2 years (Gunawardena and Gamini, 2011). .

Graduates of PGDTec had taken a longer time to complete the one year diploma; 75% had completed the programme within three years whereas 25% had taken 7 years.

All the graduates who followed the PGD in HR, completed the programme within two years.

It is interesting to note that the diplomates of the PGD environment had taken an unusually longer time compared to students following other one year programmes (Figure 37). One took eight and the other took eleven years to complete the programme. Their commitment had to be appreciated for continuing their studies with the OUSL. However, investigation on the reasons for taking more than 8 years to complete a one year programme would be beneficial to the institution to findout the root causes for this long delay.
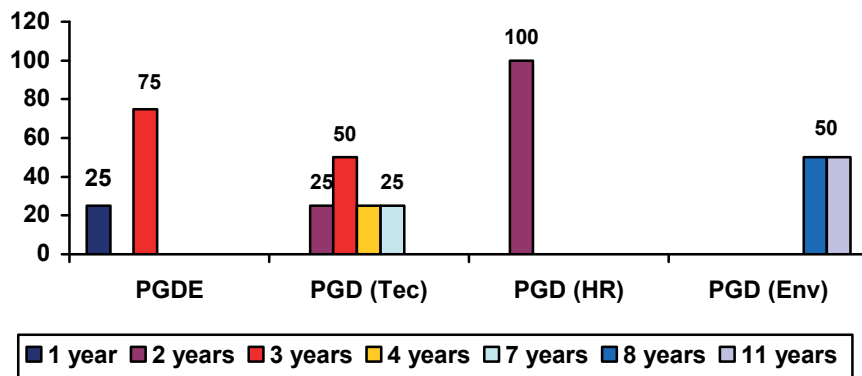
Figure 37 – Time taken to complete the Postgraduate diploma programmes
Source: Survey data

Time taken to complete the postgraduate degrees

All three graduates of the MEd programme had completed in two years (Figure 38).
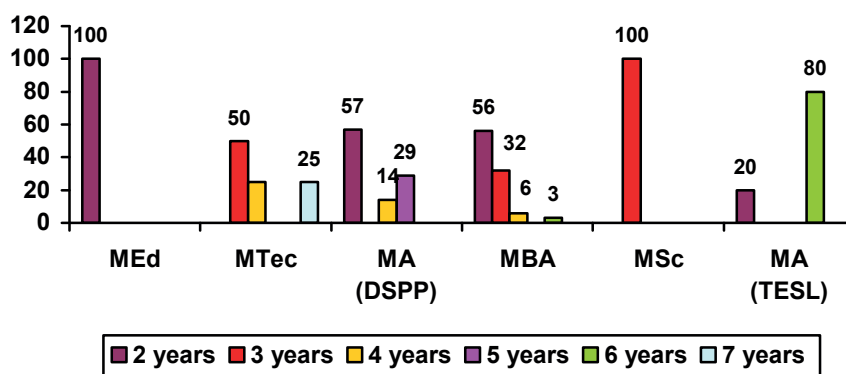
Figure 38 – Time taken to complete the Postgraduate degree programmes
Source: Survey data

50% of the graduates of MTec had taken 3 years to complete and the rest have taken either four years or seven years to complete the degree (25% each).

All the graduates of MADSPP (in Development studies and public policy) had managed to complete the programme within 5 years, 57% in 2 years, 14% in 4 years and 29% in 5 years.

When considering the MBA programme, 56% have completed in 2 years; 32% in three years and 6% in 4 years. 3% have taken 6 years to complete while another 3% have taken nine years to complete.

All the graduates of MSc had completed in 3 years.

The majority (80%) of graduates of MATESL had taken 6 years to complete while 20% have taken 3 years.
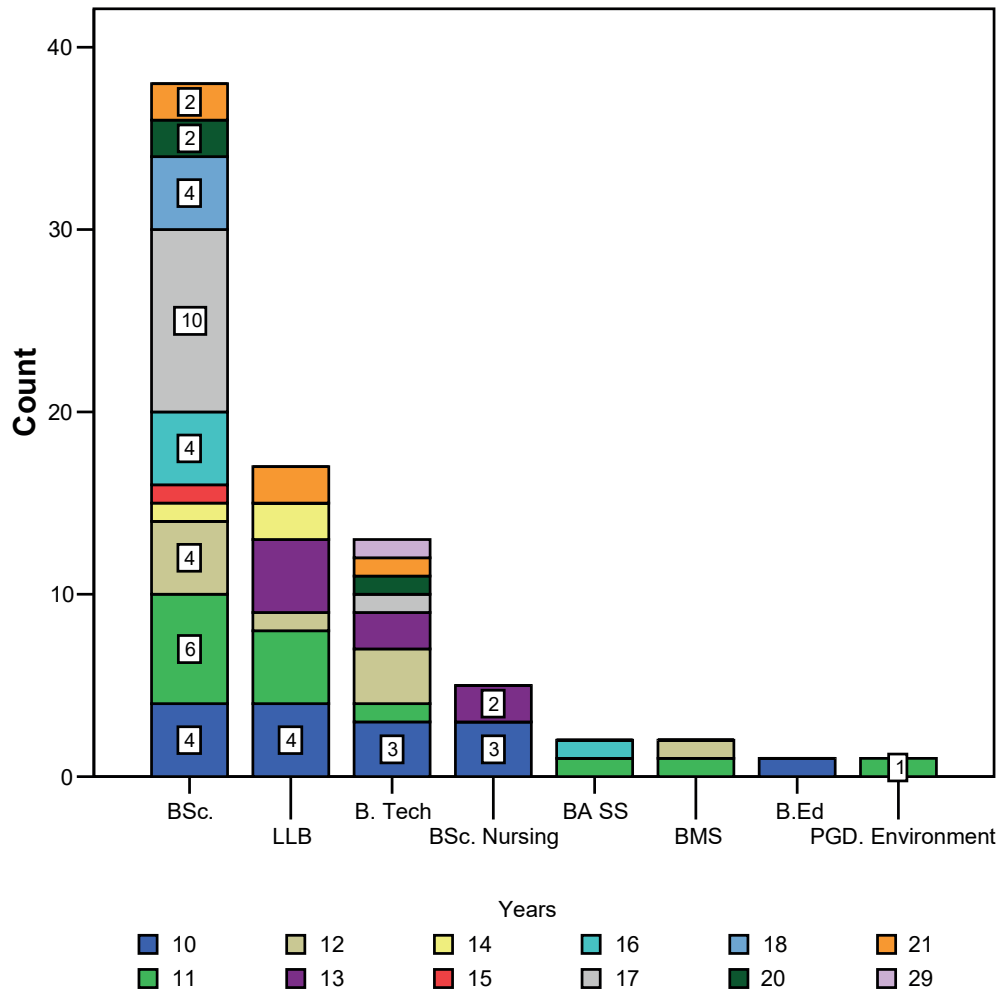
Figure 39 – Time taken to complete the study programmes - taken 10 years or more
Source: Survey data

In conclusion the majority of students who had followed the postgraduate studies have taken a shorter time period to complete their studies. However, two students who had completed the PGD (environment) had taken more than 8 years, one had completed in 8 and the other one had taken 11 years.

In the bachelors degrees, students tend to take a longer time and four extreme cases have been reported taking 20 or more years (BSc- 21 years, BTec – 20 and 29 years, LLB – 21 years). Students who had taken 10 years or more to complete their study programme is illustrated in Figure 39.

4.9 Impact of OUSL degree on their career enhancement

Figure 40 illustrates the percentages given by graduates when they were questioned on their opinion about the contribution made by the OUSL degree towards their present employment status.49% of the BTec degree holders consider that the OUSL degree was the key factor for their success. However, only 86% of awardees recommend the degree programme for others.
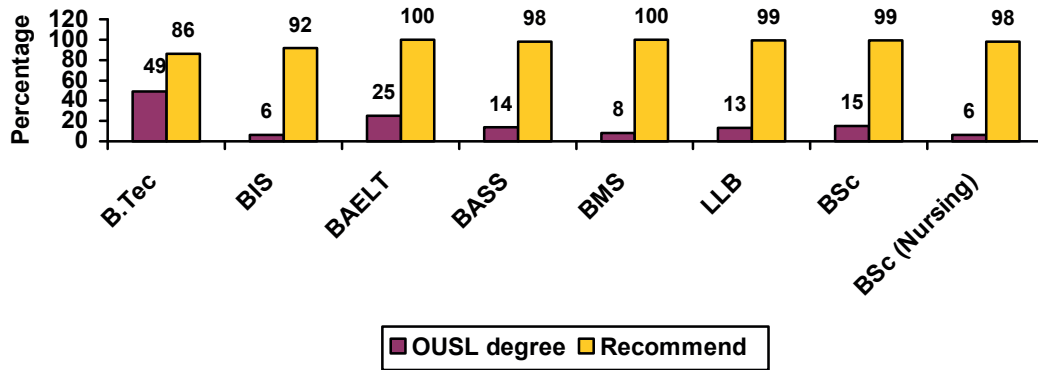
Figure 40 – Impact of the OUSL Bachelors' degrees

Source: Survey data

When considering other degree programmes 25% of BAELT, 15% BSc, 14% BASS and 13% LLB believe that OUSL degree has paved the way for their career enhancement (Figure 41).

All the Graduates from BAELT and BMS collectively recommend their study programme while 99% of BSc and LLB, 98% BSc (nursing) and BASS and 92% BIS believe that they could recommend the relevant study programme for future students. It would be necessary to get the responses from those who ticked "not recommend the programme" as they may have a valid reason for not recommending the programme.
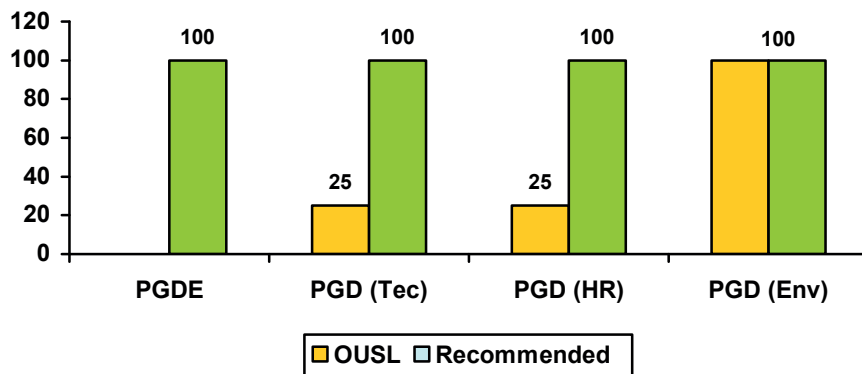
Figure 41 - Impact of the OUSL Postgraduate diploma
Source: Survey data

All the masters degree holders recommend their study programme fully (Figure 42). Their perceptions regarding the contribution of OUSL degree for their career advancement varied; 75% in MATESL, 50% in MSc, 25% in MTec, 18% MADSPP and 7% MBA felt that the OUSL degree contributed for their success. Students of MEd had not given a response to this question.

Figure 42 – Impact of the OUSL postgraduate degree
Source: Survey data

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings of this study highlights that the OUSL as an ODL institution has empowered many learners by providing life-long opportunities and removing barriers of education. It has become more "open to people" irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, lack of formal educational qualifications and "open to places" removing geographical barriers to education. Most of the graduates who received their first degrees were between 25-29 years. This shows that the OUSL has provided an alternative path for the adults who missed their education due to the limited access opportunities available in conventional universities. The OUSL has also expanded the learning opportunities for mature adults as the next highest majority were in 30-34 years age group. Findings also revealed that the OUSL has allowed "open to time" to students who have taken more than 20 years to complete the programme. This shows the greater flexibility of OUSL study programmes where students can pace out their studies to suit their priorities. This also shows that some of the OUSL students were very persistent. However, the university has to seriously re-consider the aspect of re-registration and maintenance of studentship for a longer period as pointed out by the previous two tracer studies. Furthermore, it is advisable to undertake a research study to find out the reasons for taking such a long period in completing their studies and the impact of 'eligibility' on their studies.

80% of the employed students were mainly in the public sector while a less percentage was in the private sector. However, the majority of BTec programme were in the private sector. The majority of all the awardees were employed as 'professionals' according to the Census classification at registration and at graduation. Income levels of the awardees varied widely across study programmes, bachelors and the postgraduate diplomas and degrees. The majority of postgraduate degree holders were on higher income levels; PGD (HR) and MBA holders in particular. This shows clearly why students demand certain study programmes over the others. However, the employability of LLB graduates was much lower than the anticipated levels. Since the graduates have to undergo professional training before engaging in the legal profession the true picture does not reflect immediately.

The majority of females have opted to study through OUSL; even in engineering subjects where the number has gradually increased from 14.8 in 2010 to 48% in 2011.

The predominant majority of awardees consider that the education they have received is relevant to their employment. Almost all the graduates recommend the study programme that they followed to others.

Even though the OUSL has strengthened the regional network by establishing 31 regional, study and teaching centres in order to increase the access to education, the desired effect has not been achieved as 57% of the total population was drawn from Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts. The remote districts and other disadvantaged districts have remained as disadvantaged and the OUSL has failed to penetrate these districts for the past 30 years. However, certain study programmes have managed to reach out to a greater extent B.Sc (23 districts) and LLB (21 districts) in particular but still the percentages were very low. The OUSL has to take measures to utilize its network fully by expanding its programmes further. At present, OUSL has not trapped its full potential and use the existing resources to the fullest. In 2010 and 2011 reports also stressed the importance of expanding services to the remote and disadvantaged districts and providing effective services with the resources that have been allocated by the Government under the Distance Education Modernization Project. However, after two years still the OUSL has the same distribution figures; sometimes lower than the previous years. Therefore it is high time to reflect back or trace back and assess its own practices. Has the mission been effective in realising towards its vision?

Since this research was conducted at the time of graduation and it is likely that the graduates were not in a position to secure suitable employment to match their educational qualifications. Some of the unemployed students pointed out that there was a job scarcity in the country at that time and that they faced the difficulties in finding suitable occupations. Therefore it would be advisable to conduct a similar survey after 6 months - one year to assess the full impact of the relevant programmes on the performance of graduates.

The sample of this study was graduates or "successful completers" of the study programmes. Generally, they are different from the majority who prolonged their studies or failed to complete their studies. Therefore it is necessary to track back the non-completers and to investigate the reasons why they were not "successful". Findings of that nature would be more illuminating to find the root causes and the gaps of the OUSL.

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Appendices

Annex 1 – Faculty-wise breakdown of conferred degrees/diplomas

Study Programme		Faculty					Total
		Education	Engineering	HSS	NSc	PGE	
Bachelors	B. Education	5	-	-	-	-	5
	B. Technology	-	58	-	-	-	58
	B. Industrial Studies	-	25	-	-	-	25
	B. Software Engineering	-	2	-	-	-	2
	BAELT	-	-	24	-	-	24
	BASS	-	-	97	-	-	97
	BMS	-	-	58	-	-	58
	LLB	-	-	153	-	-	153
	BSc.	-	-	-	278	-	278
	BSc. Nursing	-	-	-	47	-	47
	Total	**5**	**85**	**332**	**325**	**0**	**747**
Postgraduate Diplomas	PGDE	28	-	-	-	-	28
	PGD. Tech. Construction Management	-	11	-	-	-	11
	PGD. Tech Industrial Engineering	-	5	-	-	-	5
	PGD. Human Resource Management	-	-	25	-	-	25
	PGD. Environmental Sciences	-	-	-	5	-	5
	Total	**28**	**16**	**25**	**5**	**0**	**74**
Postgraduate Degrees	Masters in Education	3	-	-	-		3
	Masters in Technology	-	4	-	-		4
	MBA (CEMBA)	-	-	39	-		39
	MADSPP	-	-	9	-		9
	MSc	-	-	-	4		4
	MATESL	-	-	-	-	6	6
	Total	**3**	**4**	**48**	**4**	**6**	**65**
	PhDs	-	1	-	2		3
	MPhil	-	-		1		1
	Total	**3**	**5**	**48**	**7**	**6**	**69**
Total		**36**	**106**	**405**	**337**	**6**	**890**

Source: Survey data

Annex 2 - Age distribution vs. study programmes

	Age							Total
	< 24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	> 50	
BA. ELT	0	6	3	1	4	2	6	22
BA SS	5	22	18	9	12	5	12	83
BSc.	1	145	75	20	14	3	3	261
B.Ed	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
BSc. Nursing	0	0	8	23	7	3	1	42
B. Tech	0	30	13	6	1	1	2	53
BSE	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
BIS	1	11	8	3	0	0	0	23
BMS	1	18	14	8	4	1	4	50
LLB	3	54	32	23	7	7	10	136
MA. DSPP	0	1	0	0	0	2	3	6
M.Ed	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
PGD. Environment	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
MBA. (CEMBA)	0	1	6	6	9	7	3	32
M.Tech	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
MA. TESL	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	4
PGDE	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
MSc.	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
PGD.Tech.CM	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	4
PGD. HRM	0	0	5	3	4	2	6	20
Total	11	292	188	111	65	37	52	756

Source: Survey data

Annex 3 - Geographical distribution – OUSL graduates (frequency and percentage)

	Frequency	Percentage
Ampara	15	1.9
Anuradhapura	6	.8
Badulla	8	1.0
Batticaloa	12	1.5
Galle	47	6.0
Gampaha	109	13.9
Hambantota	14	1.8
Jaffna	10	1.3
Kalutara	67	8.5
Kandy	67	8.5
Kegalle	20	2.5
Kilinochchi	1	.1
Kurunegala	40	5.1
Mannar	2	.3
Matale	8	1.0
Matara	30	3.8
Moneragala	4	.5
Nuwara Eliya	6	.8
Polonnaruwa	4	.5
Puttalam	14	1.8
Ratnapura	26	3.3
Trincomalee	3	.4
Vavuniya	2	.3
Colombo	271	34.5
Total	786	100.0

Source: Survey data

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Annex 4 - Provincial distribution of OUSL graduates –frequency and percentage

Province	Percentage	Districts	Frequency	Percentage
Western	56.9%	Colombo	271	34.5
		Gampaha	109	13.9
		Kalutara	67	8.5
Central	10.3%	Kandy	67	8.5
		Matale	8	1.0
		Nuwara Eliya	6	.8
North Central	1.3%	Anuradhapura	6	.8
		Polonnaruwa	4	.5
Northern	2%	Jaffna	10	1.3
		Kilinochchi	1	.1
		Mannar	2	.3
		Vavuniya	2	.3
Eastern	3.8%	Ampara	15	1.9
		Batticaloa	12	1.5
		Trincomalee	3	.4
North Western	6.9%	Kurunegala	40	5.1
		Puttalam	14	1.8
Southern	11.6%	Galle	47	6.0
		Hambantota	14	1.8
		Matara	30	3.8
Uva	1.5%	Badulla	8	1.0
		Moneragala	4	.5
Sabaragamuwa	5.8%	Kegalle	20	2.5
		Ratnapura	26	3.3
Total			786	100.0

Source: Survey data

Annex 5 – Provincial distribution of OUSL graduates bachelors degree vs. Study programmes

District	BA-ELT	BA SS	B.Sc Ns	B.Ed	BSc. Nursing	BTech	BSE	BIS	BMS	LLB	Total
Ampara	1	5	3	0	2	0	0	1	0	2	14
Anuradhapura	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5
Badulla	0	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	7
Batticaloa	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11
Galle	0	3	16	0	6	2	1	2	2	13	45
Gampaha	2	11	38	2	4	7	1	3	9	15	92
Hambantota	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	13
Jaffna	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	6
Kalutara	0	3	25	0	5	6	0	6	5	14	64
Kandy	0	5	29	0	6	7	0	1	7	5	60
Kegalle	1	2	10	0	1	0	0	1	1	3	19
Kilinochchi	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kurunegala	0	2	19	0	5	2	0	4	1	5	38
Mannar	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Matale	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7
Matara	0	2	20	0	0	3	0	0	1	3	29
Moneragala	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Nuwara Eliya	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	6
Polonnaruwa	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
Puttalam	0	2	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	13
Ratnapura	0	1	7	0	2	6	0	0	1	8	25
Trincomalee	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
Vavuniya	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Colombo	19	32	65	1	8	20	0	6	24	55	230
Total	23	86	269	3	43	56	2	24	52	142	700

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Annex 6 – Geographical distribution vs. postgraduate diplomas and degrees

District	Postgraduate diplomas and degrees										Total
	MSc.	MA. DSPP	MEd.	MBA. (CEMBA)	PGDE	PGD (Env)	PGD CM	PGD (HR)	MA. TESL	M. Tech	
Ampara	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Anuradhapura	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Badulla	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Batticaloa	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Galle	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Gampaha	0	1	0	10	0	1	2	2	1	0	17
Hambantota	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jaffna	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	4
Kalutara	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Kandy	0	0	0	5	0	0	1	1	0	0	7
Kegalle	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Kurunegala	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Matale	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Matara	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Puttalam	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ratnapura	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Colombo	1	6	1	12	1	0	0	17	1	2	41
Total	2	7	3	34	4	2	4	21	5	4	86

Source: Survey data