

## ABSTRACT

This study has sought to answer the research question as to why the Management Faculties of Sri Lankan State universities continue to produce graduates who find it hard to obtain jobs in the employment market. The previous studies in the same scope have found the skills mismatch and educational mismatches as the reason for unemployment and underemployment of graduates in Sri Lanka. However, none of these studies have focused on as to why this mismatch continues to exist. In this light, the preliminary study undertaken as a part of this study shows a lack of coordination and cooperation among various stakeholders as a reason for these mismatches, thus, this study is undertaken to explore the lack of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders in Sri Lankan state universities. More specifically, the objectives of this study are firstly, to deepen the understanding of the relationship between coordination, cooperation among the stakeholders, and employability of Management graduates; secondly, to analyze issues related to coordination and cooperation of stakeholders in the university system in respect of employability issues; thirdly, to evaluate the roles of power in relation to the coordination and cooperation of stakeholders in the university system with respect to employability issues; and finally, to make a contribution with a view to deepening the current policy debate on employability issues. After taking several theories into account, the theory of communicative action (TCA) is chosen as the theoretical lens since its focus on how people coordinate and cooperate. While there is no much of empirical works using the TCA even in late capitalist or advanced industrialist and capitalist societies, only a handful of studies are found in the rest of the world. Drawing from TCA, four propositions were developed to guide the study: a) the system overrunning the lifeworld, b) asymmetric power relations among stakeholders and c) instrumental and strategic rationalities overrunning communicative Action results in poor coordination and cooperation and this in turn lowers the employability of management graduates. The empirical study conducted as a qualitative embedded single case study adopting the critical constructivism as the research philosophy. The Faculty of Management and Commerce of a state university near the city of Colombo was selected as the case cite. Twenty nine in-depth interviews, two focused-group interviews were conducted covering students, academics, academic administrators, alumni, industrialists who are related to the case sites and representatives from University, UGC, MoHE and Industries. In addition, review of key document was xii also conducted. Interviews were first transcribed in verbatim and analyzed following recommended methods of qualitative data analysis with the help of the data management software Nvivo. The analysis shows, as it is theorised in the TCA, that the pattern of implementing bureaucratic systems in the case site has negatively influenced coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders. It is reflected further in the analysis that coordination and cooperation has become worsen because of asymmetrical power relationships among key stakeholders. Accordingly, these findings revealed that neither the bureaucratic system nor mutual understanding (i.e. through communicative action) provides a conducive-platform to realise coordination and cooperation in this particular Management Faculty, thus it has failed to reach the goal of graduate employability. It is found that some academic administrators/academics gain power through their position (i.e. systems), personal achievement and/or through seniority which is mainly define in terms of period of service does not permit people to engage in open dialogue resulting loss of mutual trust and commitment towards achieving the common goals of the departments/the faculty. What is more interesting is that lifeworld itself prevents the people to engage in free speech. Therefore, there is a lack of coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders in the management faculty in state

universities. This scenario contradicts with the TCA. The bureaucratic system controls freedom of the academic, ultimately influencing the lives and values of academics and institutional autonomy are taken away from the university set up in Sri Lankan state universities. This cooperation highlights the importance of coordination, dialogue and reasoned arguments in order to achieve trust and understanding in the university community, which are found weak and resulted in low employability among Management graduates. This study suggested transformative practices at individual, university and national levels which support to develop a dialogue culture to free speech situation in state universities which is highlighted by Habermas in the Theory of Communicative Action.