



The unstable situation continued well into the 1970's. Steps to centralise universities, and from around 1978 to decentralise, were among the changes attempted in reorganisation of the higher educational set-up in the country. Most significant of the recent changes was that a single University system was converted into a system covering six formally autonomous universities, functioning formally under a University Grants Commission, which is expected to oversee the disbursement of university funds and the maintenance of academic standards. Government expenditure on higher education (see table 1) which averaged Rs. 13 million a year at the end of the 1950's and increased to about Rs. 28 million a year at the end of the 1970's is estimated to reach an average sum of Rs. 450 million annually for the three years 1984-1986, a significant increase, and an indication of the growing importance that Higher Education is due to receive.

HIGHER EDUCATION

This Special Report examines some of the major issues associated with university education in Sri Lanka.

During the last 30 years the University has been a subject of growing concern to teachers, students, parents, politicians, administrators and all others associated with the country's development. Over the 1960's and 70's the problems created by the ever increasing demand for higher education reached serious proportions. A growing population, faster expanding primary education facilities and rising expectations of a broader spectrum of society all emerging together over the 1960's brought increasing pressure on the social, economic and political institutions of the day. The economy, for a variety of reasons, was never able to accommodate these pressures and ad hoc solutions resulted. The developments in the sphere of higher education during these last three decades have moved closely with the social, economic and political changes occurring during each phase of change.

Table 1 GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Year	Rs. Million		3 Year Annual Average Rs. Million (approx.)
1958 - 59 (1)	11.0		
1959 - 60 (1)	12.1		
1960 - 61 (1)	15.5		13.0
1979 (2)	33.3		
1980 (2)	22.1		28.0
1981 (2)	28.5		
1982 (Est) (2)	47.2		
1983 (Est)	125.6 (2)	223(3)	
1984 (Est) (3)	377		
1985 (Est) (2)	538		450.0
1986 (Est) (3)	430		

(1) Report of the Universities Commission, 1962.

(2) Annual Government Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure.

(3) Public Investment 1983-1987, Ministry of Finance & Planning.