



NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK (2020-2030)

FULL TEXT



NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
JUNE 2022

*NURTURING A SOCIETY OF
PRODUCTIVE, CARING, AND PATRIOTIC CITIZENS*

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Full Text



**National Education Commission
Sri Lanka**

June 2022



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PREFACE

The National Education Commission (NEC) was established by the National Education Commission Act No. 19 of 1991, as the apex policy formulation body to make recommendations to the President on Education Policy and on a wide spectrum of matters connected with education reforms and development. Going along with this mandate, and as directed by His Excellency the President, the NEC in October 2020 has commenced the formulation of the National Education Policy Framework – 2020-2030 {NEPF (2020-2030)} by taking into consideration of the government policy on education that is outlined in Government Manifesto, and giving due consideration to proposals made in other policy documents prepared by the NEC, Presidential Task Force and the Ministry of Education and also by perusing education sector review reports published recently by international donor and development agencies.

The NEC-commenced the policy formulation process by appointing a Steering Committee consisting of 25 members to steer the process and a drafting committee consisting of 10 Expert Groups; One for conducting an overview of the Sri Lankan economy, and national education system and key issues, another expert group for revisiting and reformulating the Vision of Education, and National Education Goals, and National Learning Competency Domains and level-specific National Learning Competencies, as well as-formulating Aims, Core Areas and Elements (Criteria) and Directive Principles (Standards) of National Education Policy Framework, and 8 other-expert groups for formulating policy proposals and recommended strategic activities for 8 sub-sectors of education – Early Childhood Education, General Education, Higher Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Pirivena Education, Special and Inclusive Education, Non-Formal Education, and International School Education. The expert groups have perused all relevant documents and conducted a series of discussions in person as well as via the zoom platform. The NEC also sought public comments by placing an advertisement in 5 newspapers and numerous individuals and organizations made submissions to NEC for consideration. Further, due consideration has also been given to the views and suggestions presented in the report prepared by the State Ministry of Education Reforms, Open Universities, and Distance Learning Promotion, titled “Analysis of Education Reforms Proposals Submitted on the Digital Platform”. Finally, the drafts of the policy documents were further discussed at the respective Standing Committees of the NEC, and the final version of NEPF (2020-20230) was ratified by the Commission.

The Full Text of the NEPF (2020-2030) provides detailed analyses of the national education system and its sub-sectors, backed by research and data, and the details of the policy planning framework adopted, and also the past education policy and review documents referred in during policy planning process.

Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena
Chairman
National Education Commission
June 2022

The Mandate of the National Education Commission

The mandate and the functions and powers of the National Education Commission are defined in Part II of the National Education Commission Act, No. 19 of 1991 [Certified on 19th April 1991]. An extract giving the functions and powers of the NEC is given below:

PART II OF NEC ACT

Functions and Powers of the Commission

A. Functions of the Commission

Section 8 (1)

- a. To make recommendations to the President, on educational policy in all aspects;
- b. To review and analyse periodically the national education policy plans or plans in operation and when necessary, to recommend to the President, changes in such policy, plan or plans; and
- c. To advise the President on any other matter relating to education which may be referred to it by the President, for its advice.

The National Education Policy includes the following matters:

Aims and goals of education; the structure of the educational system - pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, higher, informal, non-formal, adult, special, professional and religious; the establishment, location and distribution of educational institutions, including methods and criteria for admission of students and recruitment of teachers; the content of education, including medium of instruction, diversification of curricula, textbooks and learning materials, the place of religious knowledge, observance and practice, assessment and evaluation, the examination system, certificates, diplomas and academic awards and recognition of qualifications; recruitment, placement, disciplinary control and professional growth of education service personnel, including teachers, para-education personnel, supervisors and administrators; resources for education, including the mobilization of community participation; and ancillary services for education including mid-day meals, health and dental services, physical education and sports.

Section 8 (2)

Without prejudice to the generality of the matters in respect of which recommendations may be made by the Commission under subsection 8(1), the Commission may make recommendations to the President on the following matters:

- a. The changes in curricula and teaching methods in educational institutions that are necessary to match education to employment, industry and social needs;

- b. The adequacy of guidance and counselling got students in educational institutions, to enable them to develop their potential to the full;
- c. The measures necessary to strengthen the links between educational institutions and the community;
- d. The development of educational institutions as resource centres for all resound human development in the community;
- e. The measures necessary to reduce area-wise disparities among schools;
- f. The measures necessary to enhance the professional standing of teachers and other education service personnel;
- g. The alternate programmes that could be provided for the benefit of the children leaving primary and secondary schools prematurely, to enable them to develop their potential to the full;
- h. The changes in curricula necessary to foster the cultural and religious aspirations of students of all communities and religions; and
- i. The legislative changes necessary to give effect to any such recommendations.

Powers of the NEC

Section 10 (1)

The Commission shall have the power:

- a. For the purpose of discharging its functions under Section 8 of the Act:
 - i. To carry out such surveys, investigations, studies and research as may be necessary;
 - ii. To conduct public or private hearings with a view to ascertaining the views of expert, professionals or the general public;
 - iii. To prepare educational plans when required to do so by the President;
 - iv. To assist in co-ordinating long-range planning of education;
- b. To establish and maintain liaison with organizations outside Sri Lanka discharging functions similar to those of the Commission;
- c. To open and maintain, current, savings or deposit accounts, in any bank or banks;
- d. To enter into and perform all such contract and agreement as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions under this Act;
- e. To arrange for the conduct of educational research by institutions or individuals either in Sri Lanka or abroad;
- f. To establish and maintain an Information Data Bank on education and related fields in Sri Lanka and in other countries;
- g. To accept and receive grants, donations, with movable and immovable;
- h. To take such steps as may be necessary to advance the skills of its officers and servants, with a view to developing a pool of expertise in different fields of education;

- i. To appoint such committees, expert groups and advisory bodies as may be necessary for the proper discharge of its functions; and
- j. To do all such acts or other things as are incidental to, or consequential upon, the exercise and discharge of its powers and functions.

Commission Members

Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena	Chairman, National Education Commission (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Mrs. Padmini Ranaweera	Vice Chairperson (Policy), National Education Commission (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Mr. M. Kingsly Fernando	Vice Chairman (Planning), National Education Commission (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Mr. D. M. A. R. B. Dissanayake	Chief of Staff to His Excellency the President (<i>Appointed Member</i>)
Prof. K. Kapila C. K. Perera	Secretary, Ministry of Education (<i>Ex-officio; until May 2022</i>)
Mr. M. N. Ranasingha	Secretary, Ministry of Education (<i>Ex-officio; since May 2022</i>)
Prof. Sampath Amaratunga	Chairman, University Grants Commission (<i>Ex-officio</i>)
Eng. B.K.U.A. Wickramasinghe	Chairman, Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission (<i>Ex-officio</i>)
Mr. T.M.J. Bandara	Director, Ministry of Finance (<i>Ex-officio</i>)
Mr. M.M. Nayeemudeen	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Public Services, Provincial Councils & Local Government (<i>Ex-officio</i>)
Dr. T.A. Piyasiri	Former Vice Chancellor, University of Vocational Technology (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Dr. Kapila Bandara	Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Mr. Swaminathan Wimal	Senior Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and English, University of Jaffna (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Dr. Anuruddha Padeniya	Paediatric Neurologist, Lady Ridgeway Hospital (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Dr. Indrani Talagala	Former Head of Department, Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Open University of Sri Lanka (<i>Appointed member</i>)
Dr. Harsha Alles	Chairman, Gateway International School (<i>Appointed member</i>)

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACIS	Advisory Committee for International School
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHEAD	Accelerating Higher Education Expansion and Development
AHSS	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
ARWU	Academic Ranking of World Universities
ATI	Advanced Technical Institute
ATP	Action Team for Partnership
B.Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BE	Bilingual Education
BOI	Board of Investment
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CBR	Community-Base Rehabilitation
CBT	Competency-Based Training
CDIC	Child Development Intervention Centre
CFS	Child-Friendly School
CGCS	Career Guidance and Counselling Centre
CGCU	Career Guidance and Counselling Unit
CGTTI	Ceylon German Technical Training Institute
CIS	Colombo International School
CLC	Community Learning Centre
CLO	Course/Module Learning Outcome
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CS	Children's Secretariat
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAI	Degree-Awarding Institute
DCS	Department of Census and Statistics
DCSS	Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka
DEP	Department of Educational Publications
DMRB	Data Management and Research Branch
DoE	Department of Examinations
DP	Directive Principle
DQS	District Quota System
DTET	Department of Technical Education and Training
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education and Development
ED	Entrepreneurship Development
EDP	External Degree Programme
EFA	Framework for Action

EIP	Early Intervention Programme
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPD	Educational Publication Department
EPF	Employee Provident Fund
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ERC	Ethical Review Committee
ETF	Employees Trust Fund
ETI	External Training Institution
FHB	Family Health Bureau
FLM	Flexible Learning Mode
G.C.E. (A/L)	General Certificate of Examination (Advanced Level)
G.C.E. (O/L)	General Certificate of Education (Ordinary Level)
GCI	Global Competitiveness Index
GCI/E	Global Competitiveness Index-Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	General Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GERD	Gross Expenditure on Research and Development
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
GP	Guiding Principle
GPA	Grade Point Average
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution/Institute
HETC	Higher Education for Twenty-First Century
HR	Human Resource
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IE	Inclusive Education
IEP	Individualized Educational Plans
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
ILO	International Labour Organization
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IRQUE	Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education
IS	International School
ISA	In-service Advisor
ISSC	Industry Sector Skills Council
IT	Information Technology
LEARN	Lanka Education and Research Network
LLL	Life-Long Learning
LLO	Lesson Learning Outcome
LMI	Labour Market Information
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
LMS	Learning Management System
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MIS	Management Information System
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOH	Medical Officer of Health
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
NAITA	National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority
NBUCRAM	Norm-Based Unit Cost Resource Allocation Mechanism
NCERI	National Centre in Educational Restructuring and Inclusion
NCoE	National College of Education
NCPD	National Council for Persons with Disabilities
NCS	National Competency Standard
NDES	National Diploma in Engineering Science
NDT	National Diploma in Teaching
NEC	National Education Commission
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NEG	National Education Goal
NEPF	National Education Policy Framework
NEREC	National Education Research and Evaluation Centre
NES	National Education System
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIE	National Institute of Education
NITAC	National Industrial Training Advisory Committee
NLCD	National Learning Competency Domain
NLCF	National Learning Competency Framework
NMRC	National Monitoring and Regulation Committee
NQAA	National Quality Assurance Agency
NSECD	National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development
NSHEI	Non-State Higher Education Institution
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework
NVTI	National Vocational Training Institute
NYSC	National Youth Services Centre
OBE-SCL	Outcome-Based Education and Student-Centered Learning
OCUSL	Ocean University of Sri Lanka
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OS	Open School
OUSL	Open University of Sri Lanka
PAE	Provincial Administrative Entity
PEA	Provincial Education Authority
PG	Postgraduate
PGDE	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
PGIM	Postgraduate Institute of Medicine
PHEI	Private Higher Education Institute
PHS	Public Health Service

PICTEC	Provincial Information Communication Technology Education Centre
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
PQAA	Provincial Quality Assurance Agency
PRCC	Performance Review and Coordinating Committee
PSI	Programme for School Improvement
PTS	Practical and Technical Skills
PwD	Person with Disabilities
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
QACGE	Quality Assurance Council for General Education
QIS	Quality Improvement System
QMS	Quality Management System
RoI	Return on Investment
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
S&T	Science and Technology
SAIS	Specified Authority for Regulation of International School
SBA	School-Based Assessment
SBS	Subject Benchmark Statement
SDC	Staff Development Centre
SDC	School Development Committee
SDS	School Development Society
SE	Special Education
SEAC	Special Education Assessment Committee
SEN	Special Educational Need
SEPI	Self-Employment Promotional Initiative
SGCSs	School Guidance and Counselling Services
SLAS	Sri Lanka Administrative Service
SLEAS	Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service
SLIATE	Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education
SLPS	Sri Lanka Principals' Service
SLQF	Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework
SLTAS	Sri Lanka Teacher Advisor Service
SLTC	Sri Lanka Teacher Council
SLTES	Sri Lanka Teacher Educators' Service
SLTS	Sri Lanka Teachers' Service
SMDB	School Management and Development Board
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SOR	Scheme of Recruitment
SSDP	Skills Sector Development Programme
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts and Mathematics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STR	Student-Teacher Ratio
TC	Teacher Centre

TEI	Teacher Education Institute
TG	Teachers' Guide
TIM	Teacher Instruction Manual
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TITP	Training Institute of Technology Professionals
TVEC	Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
UGC	University Grants Commission
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UoVT	University of Vocational Technology
VC	Vice Chancellor
VETP	Vocational Education and Training Plan
VT	Vocational Training
VTA	Vocational Training Authority
WB	World Bank
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
ZICTEC	Zonal Information Communication Technology Education Centre

Prelude

The widely held view of the purpose of education is to enable the students from all backgrounds with learning experiences to accomplish their full potential as empowered individuals, constructive members of their communities, productive participants in the economy, and caring citizens of a given country and the world. However, the task of the national education system of any country has become more challenging than ever before as it has to change the focus, contents, and modes of delivery of education so frequently with changing scenarios, so as to produce outputs at different exist points of education which are more attuned to 21st-century skills demanded by the workplace.

Recognizing the above context and challenges, the National Education Commission (NEC) has formulated the National Education Policy Framework 2020-2030 {NEPF (2020-2030)} on the premise that this policy framework must nurture the National Education System (NES) to realize the Vision of Education and the National Education Goals (NEGs) while strengthening and expanding the existing system, in terms of regulatory frameworks, resources, and systems and procedures.

Thus, the Vision of Education and the accompanying National Education Goals run as the ‘silver thread’ continuing through the entire policy development process. Further, in order to avoid exclusions and inward-looking policy planning that focuses only on current issues and gaps, the NEPF (2020-2030) is designed by adopting the following four sequential steps: **Step I:** Conducting a review of National Economy and National Education System (NES) and analysing the role of education in the economic development of the country, and performing a critical review of the performance of NES in the national, regional and global context; **Step II:** Defining Vision of Education and National Education Goals, National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) and level-specific National Learning Competencies/Outcomes (NLCs), and National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF); **Step III:** Defining the Aims and Guiding Principles of National Education Policy, and Core Areas and Elements and Core-area-specific Directive Principles of the National Education Policy Framework; and **Step IV:** Formulating Sub-Sector-Specific Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activity Frameworks.



STEP 01

Conducting a review of the National Economy and National Education System (NES) and analysing the role of NES in the economic development of the country, and performing a critical review of the performance of NES in national, regional and global context.

In this step, the Policy Drafting Committee had critically looked at the country’s current socio-economic development status and comparative aspects of Sri Lankan’s performance in the economic, social, and human resource development context, and also critically assessed the overall architecture of the national education system, salient features and status and performance in national, regional and global context and the connectivity and link between successive stages of education, from early childhood development and education through primary, secondary and tertiary education, and the gross deficiencies, and losses occurring at each stage of education. This was done to ensure that the policy and strategy formulation process gives adequate consideration for addressing the structural deformities, misalignments, and leakages occurring at successive stages of education. A comprehensive review cum analysis of Sri Lankan economy of NES is given in **Part I** of the document.



STEP 02

Defining Vision of Education and National Education Goals, National Learning Competency Domains and Level-specific National Learning Competencies/ Outcomes (NLCs), and National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF).

The NEC has defined the Vision of Education which exemplifies what the national education system (NES) aspires to achieve, and the National Education Goals (NEGs) which typifies the desired endpoints of national education, and has assumed that the vision has to be realized by fulfilling the defined NEGs. Having defined the Vision of Education and NEGs, the NEC has proceeded to construct a framework /pathway to realize the vision of education through the NEGs by defining a set of cognitive and non-cognitive skills (hard and soft skills) that the learners should achieve through education.

In defining a set of cognitive and non-cognitive skills, the NEC has constructed 12 competency domains that are essential for an individual to succeed in his/her personal life. These National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) were constructed by adopting international benchmarks. Having defined 12 NLCDs, the NEC has proceeded to develop level-specific National Learning Competencies or Outcomes (NLCs) for 6 levels of education - from early childhood education and development, and primary, junior secondary and senior secondary, upper senior secondary or collegiate and tertiary level of education. The matrix of level-specific national learning competencies/outcomes is labelled as the National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF). These level-specific learning competencies/outcomes or level descriptors define what should be the minimal competency profile of a student at the respective exit points. Thus, all curricula and lesson contents and pedagogy and assessments of respective levels of education must be constructively aligned with level-specific learning outcomes, and therefore, the NLCF shall function as the spine or backbone for education provisions at all levels of education. This is given in **Part II** of the document.



STEP 03

Defining Aims and Guiding Principles National Education Policy, Core Areas and Elements of National Education System and Core-area-specific Directive Principles of National Education Policy Framework.

While the Vision of Education and NEGs running as the primary dictates, the policy formulation process has to embrace and comply with all the relevant constitutional directives prescribed in the Constitution and universal principles that are laid down in international accords and charters. Hence the NEC policy formulation process has developed a set of **Aims of NEPF** and corresponding **Guiding Principles** that encompasses all the constitutional directives and universal principles as well as the ethical and moral standards and principles that the country is aspiring to uphold. Having defined the aims and guiding principles of NEPF, the NEC has proceeded to define **Core Areas** and corresponding **Key Elements** of the National Education System (NES). **Core Areas of NES** are the key aspects of the national education system. These aspects must operate at an optimal level for the national education system to function. Key Elements are the fundamental constituents of a given core area. They must be satisfied or fulfilled or addressed to achieve success in a given core area and in education in general. **Directive Principles** are the principal policies of the Government that influence and determine the decisions, actions, and other matters relating

to education. The **Core Areas** and **Elements** are considered as **Criteria** and **Directive Principles** are considered as Standards of the NEPF. This is given in **Part III** of the document.



STEP 04

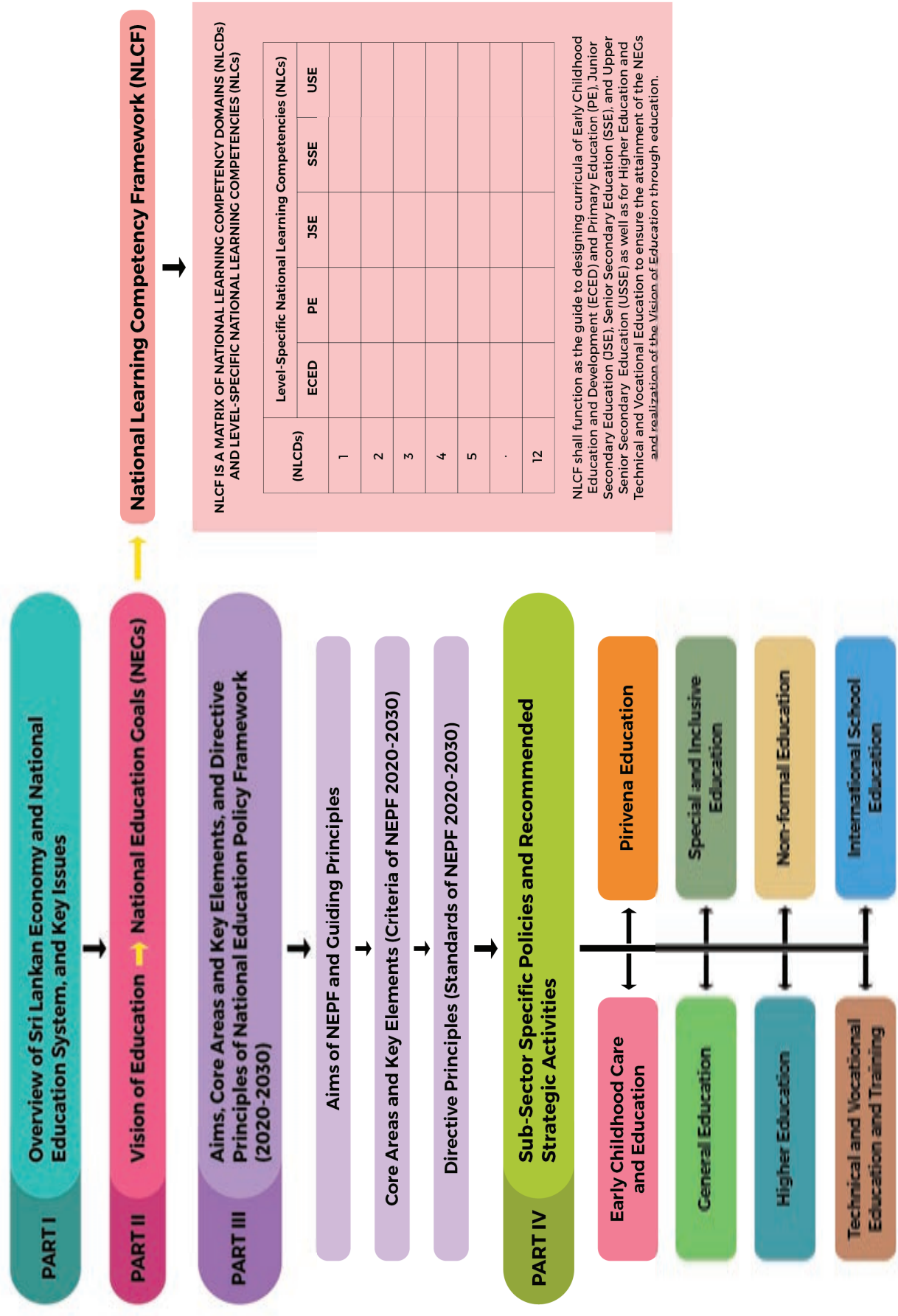
Formulating Sub-Sector-Specific Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activity Frameworks.

Having completed Steps I, II, and III, the Expert Committees appointed for 8 sub-sectors have proceeded to review the prevailing status of respective sub-sectors assigned for respective committees, and then proceeded to prescribe policies and recommended strategies to realize the prescribed policies. The sub-sector-specific policy proposals and corresponding strategic activity frameworks are formulated for the sub-sector-specific core areas and key elements identified in accordance with the guidelines prescribed in Part III of the NEPF. In framing policy proposals, the NEC has defined core area-specific directive principles in line with the corresponding core area-specific directive principles defined in Part III of NEPF as the principal dictates. In constructing corresponding strategic activity frameworks, the NEC has also taken into consideration of the existing institutional structure, regulatory frameworks and systems and procedures, and the identified deficiencies, issues, and gaps. These sub-sector-specific policy proposals and corresponding strategic activity frameworks are given in **Part IV** of the document.

NEC assumes that this NEPF shall function as the principal referral document in formulating policies and strategies by the Ministry of Education, State Ministries, Councils, Commissions, Agencies and Institutes connected with education to ensure continuity and consistency national policy development process and strategic implementation of sector-specific policies and strategies.

The outcomes of Steps I, II, III, and IV are detailed respectively in Part I, II, III, and IV of the NEPF (2020-2030). This process is diagrammatically depicted in Figure 1 given below.

Figure 1: Sequential Steps Adopted in Developing the NEPF (2020-2030) and Scope and Purpose of Each Step and their Elements



Source: Author's Illustration

PART I

OVERVIEW OF SRI LANKAN ECONOMY AND NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM, AND KEY ISSUES

1. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is often acclaimed for its achievements in education. These are the results of policy changes that took place since the early 20th century. The Education Ordinance of 1939, marks a watershed in education policymaking¹. It paved the way for a more equitable education system that opened up education opportunities for children from all backgrounds. Further, the system ensured equitable access to education through widespread financial and other welfare Programmes. Education reforms thus started have gained traction over the years. Some notable reforms include the introduction of free education from primary to university level in 1947, the establishment of the first University in Sri Lanka in 1942, and aiding students to pursue higher education in vernacular languages from the 1960s¹. Such reforms have enabled large numbers of children to access education at the undergraduate level and improve their social and economic standing in society.

Over time, development, globalization, and technological changes have changed the socio-economic context of the country. With that, the education needs of the country have also changed. However, issues such as mismatch between demand and supply for higher education increased unemployment amongst the more educated, particularly among graduates, and mismatches between skills demanded by the market and those that are provided by education and training highlight the need for education reforms.

Part I of the NEPF (2020-2030) presents a brief overview of the national economy and role of education in national development, an overview of the Sri Lankan education system, the challenges faced by the current education system, the performance of the Sri Lankan education system in the national, global and regional context, and the conclusion. This brief overview is presented as a prelude to the rest of the National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) which details the Vision of Education and National Education Competency Framework (Part II), Aims and Directive Principles of National Education Policy Framework (Part III) and sub-sector specific issues and limitations and recommended sub-sector specific policy proposals and strategic activities relevant to those issues and limitations (Part IV).

2. OVERVIEW OF SRI LANKAN ECONOMY

Sri Lanka's economy has diversified from an agrarian economy to a more service-oriented economy since liberalization in 1977. Besides, subsequent economic policies have emphasized foreign direct investment and export-led growth². The liberalization process continued from 1990 onwards, which saw more export-oriented policies. From early 2006 the government made a concerted effort to end the separatist conflict that has been ongoing since 1983. The ending of the armed conflict in 2009 paved the way for sustained economic growth. However, the global economic downturn starting in 2008 was a setback to the economy, which slowed export performance and subdued the positive developments on the domestic front³. Despite these unfavourable developments, the country managed to maintain a high growth rate in the immediate post-conflict period, helped by accelerated growth in the construction sector due to a marked emphasis on infrastructure development by the government. In recent years, however, Sri Lanka's growth has slowed down again due to macro instability as well as due to different types of disasters (e.g., the Easter Sunday bomb attacks of 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic that started in 2020).

-
1. Kalugalagedera, T., & Kaushalya, T. (2017). *History of University Education in Sri Lanka - A Literature Review*. Centre for Poverty Analysis.
 2. Government of Sri Lanka. (1995). *Trade Policy Review*. World Trade Organization.
 3. Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. (2012). *State of the Economy*.

Along with the above transformations, the structure of the Sri Lankan economy has changed. The agriculture share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has declined substantially since 1977. The decline in agriculture has slowed down in recent times⁴ while the corresponding services share of GDP has increased⁵. These changes have also impacted the labour force distribution and job creation across sectors/industries. The share of workers in agriculture has decreased from nearly 30% in 2006 to 24.1% in 2019, while the share of workers in services has increased (*from 38.6% to 44.8%*)⁶.

Economic growth has resulted in per capita income growth. The per capita GDP of Sri Lankans has increased from USD 294 in 1977 to USD 3852 in 2019⁷, and Sri Lanka has graduated from a low-income country to a middle-income country. It is now at the brink of graduating into an upper-middle-income country. With increases in per capita income, the share of income spent on food and other essential goods go down and, consumers have more money to spend on leisure, and invest in education and health. A recent study shows that higher-income consumers spend more on school fees, tuition fees, higher education, and vocational training⁸. Such consumption changes are accompanied by the demand for better quality and more diversified education.

Table 1: A Comparison of Human Development Index (HDI) across countries - 2019

Income Category	Country	HDI (Value)	Life Expectancy at Birth (Years)	Expected Years of Schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita (PPP \$)	Rank
High Income	Australia	0.944	83.4	22.0	12.7	48,085	8
	Republic of Korea	0.916	83.0	16.5	12.2	43,044	23
	Singapore	0.938	83.6	16.4	11.6	88,155	11
Upper Middle Income	Malaysia	0.810	76.2	13.7	10.4	27,534	62
	Thailand	0.777	77.2	15.0	7.9	17,781	79
Lower Middle Income	Sri Lanka	0.782	77.0	14.1	10.6	12,707	72
	Vietnam	0.704	75.4	12.7	8.3	7,433	117
	Bangladesh	0.632	72.6	11.6	6.2	4,976	133
	India	0.645	69.7	12.2	6.5	6,681	131
	Nepal	0.602	70.8	12.8	5.0	3,457	142
	Pakistan	0.557	67.3	8.3	5.2	5,005	154

Source: UNDP. (2020). *Human Development Report 2020: The next frontier human development and the Anthropocene*. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>

Growth has also contributed to human development over time. As seen in Table 1, Sri Lanka's overall human development as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) is much higher than those in other South Asian countries, and in other lower-middle-income countries in Asia. It also performs better than some upper-middle-income countries, such as Thailand. This is due to better performance in all three dimensions of human development: health, education, and income. However, in comparison with higher-income countries such as Australia, Singapore, and the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka needs to take decisive efforts to perform better in all aspects.

4. From 11.3% in 2006 to 7.4% in 2019. It was 30.7% in 1977. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2019). Annual Report 2019.

5. From 58.0% in 2006 to 58.2% in 2019. It was 40.6% in 1977. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2019). Annual Report 2019.

6. From 58.0% in 2006 to 58.2% in 2019. It was 40.6% in 1977. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2019). Annual Report 2019.

7. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2019). Annual Report 2019.

8. Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka. (2012). *State of the Economy 2013*.

Since the turn of the millennium, with marked advances in technological development, countries have increasingly looked to innovation to stay competitive and drive growth⁹. Although having superior performance in terms of education (see Table 1), in terms of competitiveness, as measured by Global Competitiveness Index in Relation to Education (GCI/E), some of the other low-middle-income countries such as India and Vietnam have outperformed Sri Lanka (See Table 2). This is partly due to better performance in ICT adoption and innovation capability in those countries.

Table 2: Sri Lanka's Performance in the Global Competitiveness Index in Relation to Education- 2019

Income Category	Country	The Global Competitiveness Index (GCI)		Selected Main Pillars of GCI			Innovation Capability Pillar
		Overall Index	Rank	ICT adoption-pillar	Skills	Innovation Capability	Research and Development
High Income	Australia	76.6	16.0	73.6	80.6	69.5	77.3
	Republic of Korea	79.6	13.0	92.8	74.0	79.1	92.5
	Singapore	84.8	1.0	87.1	78.8	75.2	70.5
Upper Middle Income	Malaysia	74.6	27.0	71.6	72.5	55.0	44.0
	Thailand	68.1	40.0	60.1	62.3	43.9	33.6
Lower Middle Income	Sri Lanka	57.0	84.0	40.3	63.8	34.9	21.0
	Vietnam	61.5	67.0	69.0	57.0	36.8	24.9
	Bangladesh	52.1	105.0	39.1	46.1	30.7	23.3
	India	61.4	68.0	32.1	50.5	50.9	57.1
	Nepal	51.6	108.0	38.6	49.3	29.4	20.6
	Pakistan	51.4	110.0	25.2	40.8	35.8	26.0

Source: World Economic Forum. (2019). *The Global Competitiveness Report 2019*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2019.pdf

Technological changes are influencing structural changes and with it the labour requirements across the globe. Such changes are also taking place in Sri Lanka. Many tasks done by low-skilled manual and cognitive workers are now done by machines, and the demand for low-skilled workers is decreasing. At the same time, the demand for high skilled managers and technical professionals who can adopt new technologies is also increasing. Further, technological change has enabled companies to hire off-site/ off-shore service sector workers. Such business process outsourcing (BPOs) has contributed to increasing service sector jobs. This too has contributed to increasing the demand for skilled human resources in developing countries, as more developed countries outsource their work to seek the benefit from cheaper labour in developing countries.

With the start of the innovation-driven economic growth strategies, more developed countries have looked to invest in training skilled workers as well as attract talent from across the world to ensure an adequate supply of skilled workers in their economies. Sri Lanka too has reiterated the need to move to a knowledge-based economy to be competitive in the global market through innovations and investment in high-tech, export-oriented industries. Research and development are an essential part of innovation. However, Sri Lanka's performance is particularly low in terms of research and development – a sub pillar within the innovation capability pillar of the GCI/E. Not only high-income and upper-middle-income countries, but even some lower-middle-income countries have outperformed Sri

9. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2015). *OECD Innovation Strategy for 2015 - An Agenda for Policy Action*.

Lanka in research and development.

Science and technology workers are crucial to propelling a knowledge-based economy. Training science and technology workers to meet the demands of the market is becoming more and more difficult; this is especially the case for developing countries. First, to supply a steady stream of science and technology workers, countries need to plan well in advance. This is because human resources in science and technology take a long time to create. Second, globally there is a competition for talent. With the dawn of the new millennium, many countries changed their immigration laws to attract highly skilled workers. Many such skilled workers are sourced from developing countries, which are unable to provide lucrative employment opportunities to trained individuals. This makes education planning of skilled workers harder for developing countries, as now they need to take into account not only the changes to demand locally, but also the changes to demand internationally. They also need to take into account the global trends in migration, to ensure that they train adequate numbers of skilled workers. Third, it is difficult to cater to the fast-changing demands of the market given the fiscal and other resource limitations.

3. OVERVIEW OF SRI LANKAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

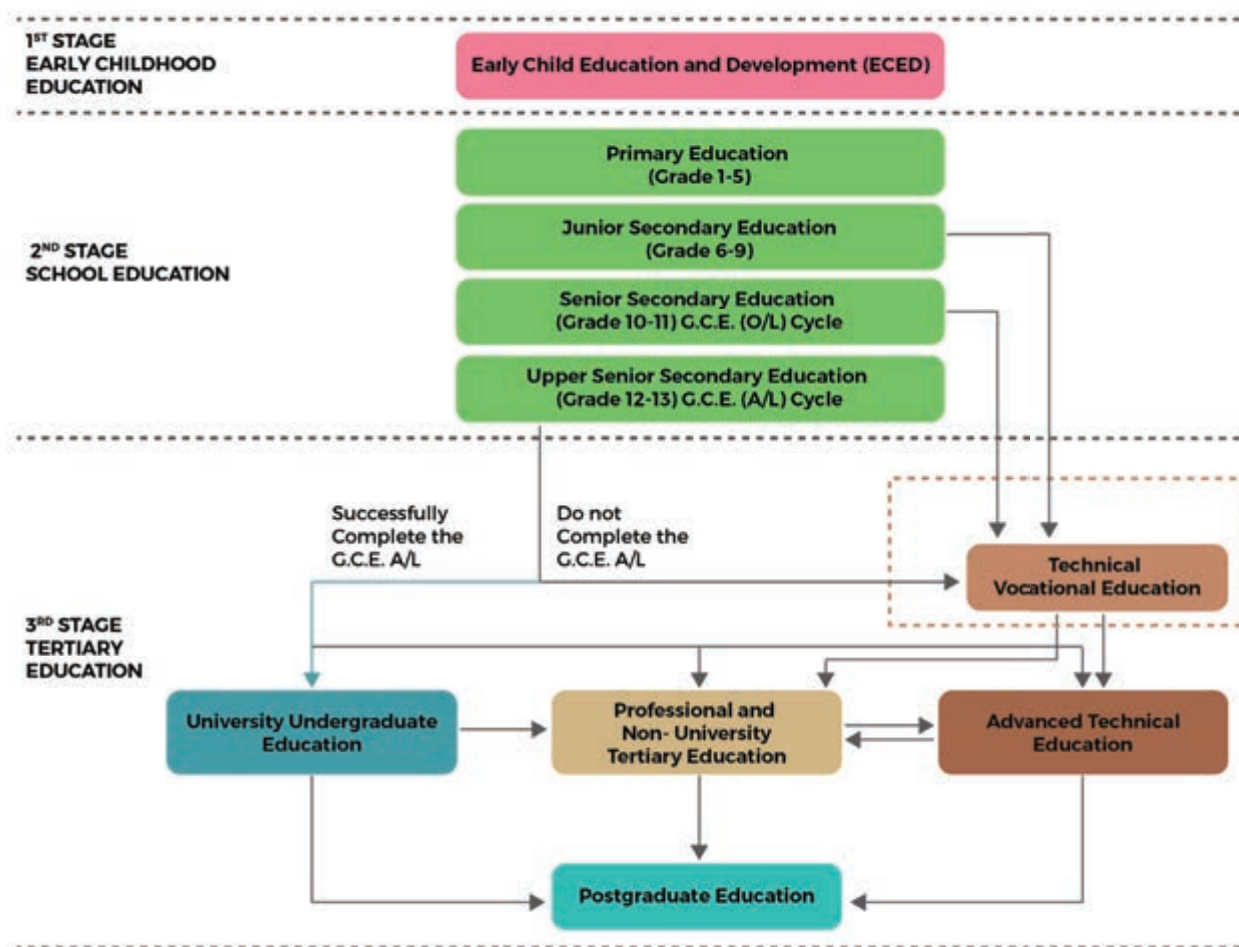
Sri Lanka has a fairly developed and extensive education system. As depicted in Figure 2, it consists of several levels including early childhood education, general education, and tertiary education (*consisting of university education and vocational training and technical education*). In this broader system of education, there are special need education groups such as special education, non-formal/adult education, and religious education (*i.e. Pirivena education*).

3.1 Salient Features of the Education System

Early childhood education sector: Early childhood education (ECE), a subset of early childhood care and development programmes, primarily targets children aged 3–5 years and it is concerned mainly with school readiness besides providing support for child care and development. As of 2018 data, there are approximately 19,668 early childhood development (ECD) centres in the country that enrol a total of 578,160 children aged 2–5 years. Approximately 71% of ECD centres are stand-alone centres, privately managed as preschools. The remaining are managed by public institutions and local government authorities, such as municipal and urban councils (19.8%), religious organizations (6.8%), and non-governmental organizations (3%). The enrolment rate of three to five-year-olds in preschool education is 55.6% with disparities in enrolments among urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, and among high- and low-income groups. The enrolments are largely equitable across boys (50.3% of total) and girls (49.7% of total)¹⁰.

10. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2016). *National Census of Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka*.

Figure 2: Overall Structure of Education System of Sri Lanka



Source: Adopted from Suraweera, N. (2015). *E-learning in information management education in Sri Lanka*.

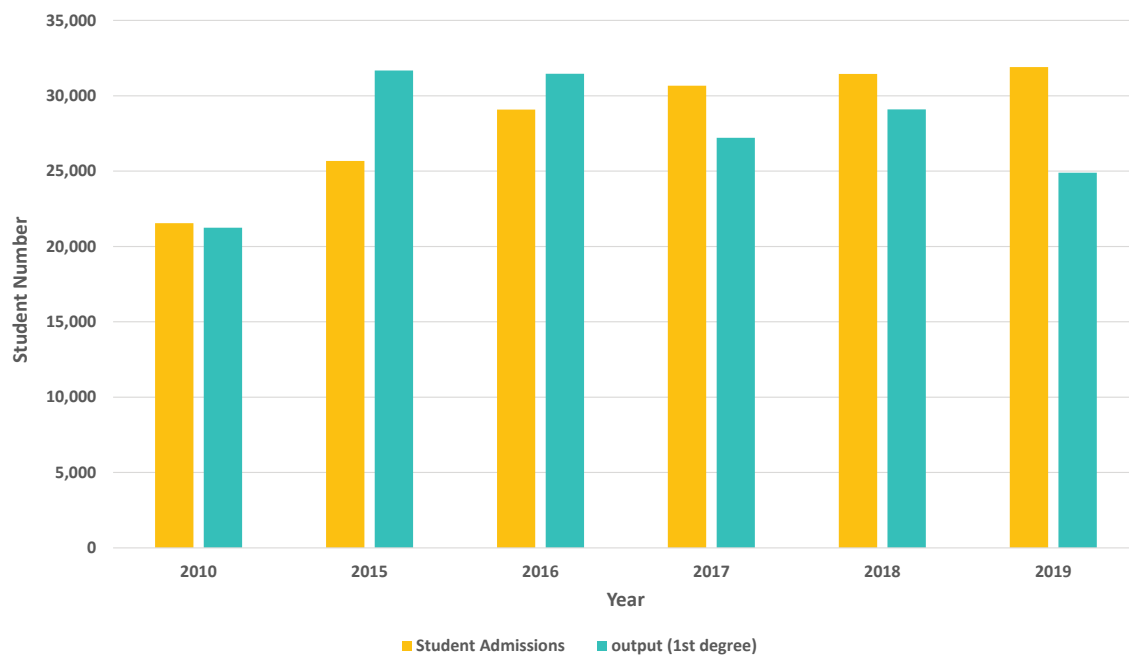
General education sector: Sri Lanka adopts a 13-year general education span, starting at age five. School education is divided into four levels: primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary or collegiate levels. There are 10155 schools in the country. Of these 373 (*generally called 'National Schools' amounting to 3.7% of schools*) come directly under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MoE) while the remaining 9,782 (*generally called 'Provincial Schools' amounting to 96.3% of schools*) come under the provincial Departments of Education. In addition, according to the 2020 school census, there are 90 government-approved aided and non-aided private schools operating along with state schools. In 2020, there were 4,063,685 students in the school system. These included 2,018,151 boys and 2,045,534 girls; and, 1,640,647 Primary, 1,357,437 Junior Secondary, 636,985 Senior Secondary, 421,117 Upper Senior Secondary or Collegiate Level students and 7,502 students in Special Education Units.

Higher education sector: At present, there are 17 Universities (*with 2 additions in 2021/02*), 2 campuses, and 20 post-graduate and other higher education institutions operating under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the country. In addition, there are 6 universities/Institutes established by Acts of Parliament and about 23 non-state higher education institutions recognized by the UGC/MoHE. Moreover, higher education is also provided by non-public institutions affiliated with foreign universities in the country. The undergraduate intake and graduate output trend of as of 2010 to 2019 data is given in Figure 3.

In 2019, 15 state universities produced 24,890 undergraduates and 9,991 postgraduates. Private higher education institutes serving in Sri Lanka have produced 6,074 undergraduates and 15,067 postgraduates during the same period¹¹.

11. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Sri Lanka University Statistics*.

Figure 3: The Undergraduate Intake and Graduate Output Trend from 2010-2019



Source: University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka University Statistics.

Technical and vocational education: According to the dashboard of the TVEC Website, www.tvec.gov.lk (as of 02.04.2021), Sri Lanka had 2946 training centres registered with TVEC. Of these, 1,146 centres were with valid registrations while the remaining 1800 had expired registrations. There are 1,097 public sector TVET institutions operated by different agencies. Including the National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA), Vocational Training Authority (VTA), Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET) and the National Youth Council (NYC). According to the TVEC Labour Market Bulletin (2019)¹², 250,690 trainees have been enrolled in TVET courses of which 142,906 are males and 107,784 are females.

Special and inclusive education: As of 2018 data, there were 48,784 children with Special Education Needs (SENs) attending regular schools; out of this, 24,518 children with SENs (50.3%) were among the 1,672,350 total population of students in Grade 1-5 (1.5%) and 24,266 children with SENs (49.7%) were among the total population of 2,535,634 students in Grade 6-13 (0.96%)¹³. As of 2019 data, within the government school system, there are 704 Special Education Units functioning in national and provincial schools across the country serving 7,513 students with SENs. Moreover, there are 26 assisted special schools operated by the non-governmental organization and 03 special schools under the Ministry of Education, where 2,467 students with special educational needs are currently studying¹⁴. In addition, many students with special needs are learning in private schools and educational institutions run by non-governmental organizations including religious and charitable organizations.

Non-formal education: In 2017, there were 89 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) operated by the Non-formal and Special Education (NF and SE) Branch of the Ministry of Education, located across the country¹⁵. More women (85.5%) than men (14.5 %) were taking part in these programmes. In addition to CLCs, there are numerous State and non-State organizations providing non-formal educational opportunities for school leavers, school dropouts, women, and adults.

12. Technical and Vocational Education Commission. (2019). Labour Market Information Bulletin.

13. Ministry of Education. (2018). Annual School Census of Sri Lanka.

14. Statistical Branch of Ministry of Education. (2019). Annual School Census of Sri Lanka.

15. Statistical Branch of Ministry of Education (2017). Non-formal Education Programmes, Census Report.

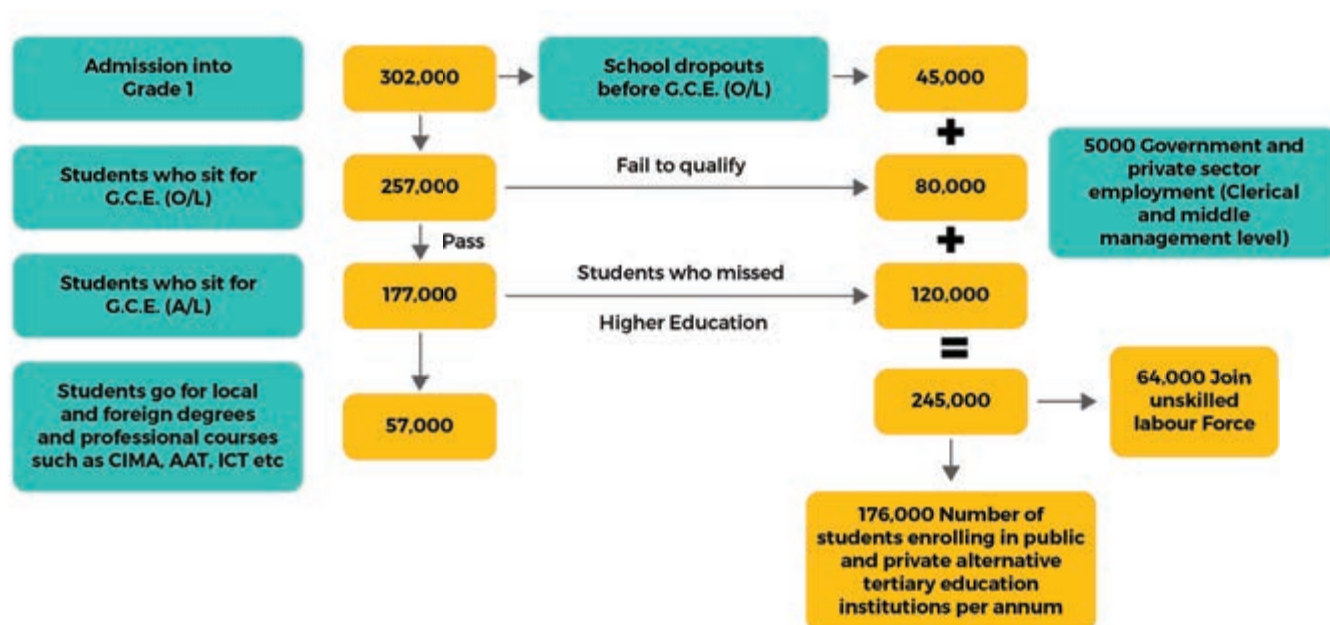
Private and International schools: There are two main types of private schools in the country. One group was formed in 1960 when the government took over all schools of the country other than a limited number that opted to function as unaided, private schools. Although these private schools also had to follow the general education policies of the government and regulations made by the Ministry of Education (MOE)¹⁶. Since the early 1980s, a new form of private schools came into existence. These schools generally catered to students preparing for examinations administered by international agencies, using English as the primary medium of instruction. These are popularly denoted as ‘International Schools’. These, do not come under the purview of the MoE, but are registered under various other bodies. As of Annual School Census Report (2020), there were 90 private schools registered with the Ministry of Education with a total teacher population of 7490 catering to 135,168 students. In addition, there were 395 international schools operating outside the purview of the MoE in Sri Lanka with a total teacher population of 13,731 catering to 143,123 students in 2019¹⁷.

Pirivena establishments: Pirivena is a monastic education establishment for providing education, primarily for monks. It is structured as Mulika Pirivena (*Primary Level*), Maha Pirivena (*Secondary Level*) and Piriven Vidyayathana (*Tertiary Level*). As of 2020, there were 816 Pirivena establishments registered and supported by the Ministry of Education. There were 7,336 teachers catering to 69,878 students both bikku and lay students¹⁸.

3.2 The Structure and the Size of the Education System in Sri Lanka

Based on the 2004 data on the Grade 1 age cohort, a flowchart is constructed to demonstrate the upward mobility of students from their admission into Grade 1 through different stages of the secondary and tertiary education systems (Figure 4). This flowchart provides an overview of the structure, population of students at different education levels of education and dropouts at different stages of education.

Figure 4: Student Enrolment, Distribution and School Dropout at Different Stages of Schooling (based on 2004 entry age cohort)



Source: Adapted from NEC. (2018). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*.

16. Ministry of Education. (2017). *National Committee for Formulating a New Education Act for General Education*.

17. (unpublished data)

18. Statistical Branch of Ministry of Education. (2020). *Annual School Census of Sri Lanka*

As shown in Figure 4, there are several categories of school leavers and/or dropouts; those who leave before G.C.E. (O/L), those who leave after failing G.C.E. (O/L), those who leave after failing G.C.E. (A/L), and those who leave after passing G.C.E. (A/L), but failed to get selected for a placement at the conventional university system or opt for any other higher education programmes.

As indicated in the flowchart, the total number of admissions to Grade 1 in 2004 was 302,000, and from this cohort, only 57,000 or a 18.9% entered university or professional level study programmes following the completion of G.C.E. (A/L) examination. This means that from a cohort of about 302,000 students, 245,000 (81.1%) leave the academic education stream without entering higher education. They either join the TVET sector to acquire skills to enter into the middle-level skilled labour force or join the labour force as unskilled labour. From this group, many appear to remain as youth in Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET group).

4. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

Despite early achievements in education, there is increasing evidence that education reforms introduced over the past 7-8 decades in the country have not kept up with economic, social, and technological changes described in Section 1. This section will briefly discuss the issues facing the education sector at different levels of education - pre-primary, general (which include primary, secondary, senior, and upper senior secondary/collegiate levels), higher, technical, and vocational training and education.

4.1 Pre-primary Education

It is now well recognized that early childhood education (ECE) is important – among other benefits - for improving life-long learning, laying the foundation to preparing children for further education, and maximizing the returns from higher levels of education. However, the public spending on early childhood education has been historically low¹⁹. According to the National Survey of ECD Centres carried out in 2016²⁰, only 55.6% of 3 to 5-year-olds have been enrolled in preschool education in the country, with a roughly equal share of girls (49.7%) and boys (50.3%). Further, there are large inequities in access to pre-school education in the country. Among children aged 3-4 years, the pre-school attendance is 39% and 56%, respectively in the poorest and the richest income quantiles – a 13 percentage point difference. On the positive side, there are several policy documents on developing the pre-primary sector²¹. However, implementations of these have been delayed, primarily due to bureaucratic reasons. Although there are prescribed standards and guidelines for ECCE centres, the implementation of these has been weak. Further, the lack of a curriculum framework and standards for outcomes is also hampering the effectiveness of pre-school education in the country. Poor facilities, lack of trained teachers, poor remuneration rates of pre-school teachers, limited involvement of parents, etc., are some of the identified issues facing the pre-school sector in the country.

4.2 General Education

General education in the country is provided through nearly 11,000 schools that are dispersed throughout the country. Close to 97% of the schools in the country are public schools²². This is mainly due to the takeover of schools by the government in 1960 under the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (*Special Provisions*) Act No. 5 of 1960.

19. The World Bank Group (2014) *Laying the Foundation for Early Childhood Education in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/publication/laying-foundation-early-childhood-education-sri-lanka>

20. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (2016). *National Census of Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka Colombo, Sri Lanka*.

21. <http://www.childwomenmin.gov.lk/>

22. Calculated based on information in Statistics Branch, Ministry of Education (2020). *Summary statistics of government school, Annual School Census Report*, and Little, Angela. & Hettige, S. T. (2013). *Globalisation, employment and education in Sri Lanka: opportunity and division*.

Since then, only a handful of schools remained as private schools, unaided by the government, but regulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Besides there exist 395 private schools established as international which are yet to get registered and regulated by the MoE.

Public schools are also divided into 'national schools' and 'provincial schools' based on whether they are administered by the Ministry of Education at the Central Government or by the Provincial Ministries of Education of Provincial Councils. Public schools are again classified into 4 types, based on the number of grades offered by the school and the types of subjects offered for G.C.E. (A/L): Type 1AB School, Schools with Grades 1-13 or 6-13 offering all 4 academic streams at G.C.E. (A/L) (*Science and Mathematics, Arts, Commerce, and Technology*; 9.8%); Type 1C Schools with Grades 1-13 or 6-13 with G.E.C. (A/L) but offering only Arts and Commerce streams (19.0%); Type 2 Schools with only Grades 1-11 (31.7%); Type 3 Schools with only Grades 1-5 or 1-8 (39.4%)²³. As highlighted by many educationists, the present method of school classification which was done primarily for administrative convenience appears to be actually detrimental to the qualitative development of the school system as it has led to many undesirable consequences²⁴.

In addition to the State-controlled school system, since the early 1980s, a new form of private schools, the international schools offering overseas curricula and/or offering only the local curricula, has emerged and they are yet to come under the purview of the MoE. These are registered under various bodies including as companies (*under the Companies Act No. 17 of 1982*), and as business ventures (*under the Board of Investment (BOI)*). They are generally referred to as 'International schools' as they usually prepare students for examinations administered by international agencies (*such as the Cambridge Overseas Syndicate or Edexcel*). The popularity of international schools has increased over time, as parents who cannot admit their children to popular public schools opt to send their children to international schools, rather than to less popular public schools. It is estimated that there exist 395 private schools established as international schools which are yet to be brought under the preview of the MoE.

The general education system, as prescribed below, is faced with several issues that require urgent attention. These include low access to general education, particularly for upper secondary education, poor quality and relevance of education provided, skewed distribution of types of streams of education offerings at the senior and upper-senior secondary or collegiate level, and unregulated international schools.

Access and participation: Though the participation in education at the primary (*Grades 1-5*) and lower secondary (*Grades 6-9*) are near universal level, and similar for boys and girls, the participation decreases towards the upper secondary level of education. Along with lower levels of participation, the disparities in education also increase, with lower access to education for those coming from poorer households²⁵.

Poor quality and relevance: Poor quality and relevance of education is also a pressing issue in the country²⁶. There are a plethora of underlying issues²⁷ affecting the general education sector these include: issues with curriculum development, curriculum content, and curriculum delivery and assessments; issues with textbooks and teacher guides; long school span; delays in school to work/life transitions; inadequate access to higher education; poor teacher quality emanating from inadequacies in pre-service and in-service teacher training; issues relating to quality assurance in general education; issues with education planning and management, and learning environments; and, inadequate emphasis given for career guidance and counselling of students.

23. Ministry of Education. (2020). *Annual School Census Report*.

24. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-Imaging Education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core Group Reports*.

25. Dunder, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

26. Dunder, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

27. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education*.

Skewed distribution of types of subject streams offered: The type of subject streams offered in schools is one of the major issues that need to be resolved urgently. According to the basic statistics given in the Annual School Census Report in 2020, of the 2932 schools offering G.C.E. (A/L) education (28.87% of the total schools), only 1000 schools (34.1% of schools with GECE (A/L) stream) which are categorized as Type 1AB schools offer all streams of education for G.C.E. (A/L) (*arts, science and mathematics, commerce, and technology*) while the rest (Type 1C schools; 65.89%) offer only arts and commerce streams at G.C.E. (A/L). This low accessibility to 1AB schools is one reason for high enrolment rates for arts and commerce streams at G.C.E. (A/L).

In addition to this structural deformity in distribution schools and unavailability of science and mathematics streams at senior secondary education level in most schools, the shortage of teachers for science and mathematics is another reason for limiting the access to science and mathematics education at G.C.E.(A/L). As a result, many students do not get a good foundation in science and mathematics in lower grades, and as such, they appeared to have developed a fear in following science and mathematics at advanced level education, and these students invariably opt for arts and commerce streams. Still some others opt for arts and commerce streams despite having opportunities to follow science and mathematics, technology streams to boost their chances of entering university. As a result of all these reasons, the arts and commerce stream students account for the highest percentage of students (60.5%) becoming eligible for higher education²⁸.

International schools: International schools have mushroomed over the last 4 decades without having any regulatory control by the Ministry of Education. The low public perception about the quality of education offered by some public schools and the poor access to better quality public schools have contributed to this increasing number of students being admitted into private education institutions. As they are not coming under the purview of a regulatory authority or quality assurance agency, the quality of education provided by these schools is uncertain. Further, as they are registered with different agencies, the up-to-date information related to students, teachers, facilities, and performance of these schools are not available. Moreover, there is no information with regard to the curricula followed by these schools, and as such, it is uncertain whether the education offered by such schools is aligned with the National Education Goals of the country.

4.3 Higher Education

As of UGC data in the year 2019, 24,890 graduates obtained their qualifications from public universities. These numbers account for only 7.8% of the 19 – 23-year-old population in the country²⁹. Out of this 24,890, 9,380 (37.8%) are arts stream graduates and 5,445 (21.9%) commerce and management stream graduates. Both these groups have consistently experienced low to medium employability in the employment market. On the other hand, only 3,242 (13.0%) of graduates were from the streams of biological sciences (*that include medicine, dental science, veterinary science, agriculture, allied health sciences, and indigenous medicine*), and 5,871 (23.6%) of graduates from physical science stream (*that includes engineering, computer science, science, architecture*) who face moderate to high employment prospects³⁰.

As regard to 2018/2019 intake, data have shown that the enrolment into arts, management, and commerce study programmes which reflect relatively low employability accounted for 48.2% of the intake, while the rest of the disciplines, mostly science-based study programmes — science, engineering, medicine, dental science, veterinary science, agriculture, allied health sciences, computer science, technology and architecture and allied fields which have high to medium employability accounted only for 51.8% of the total undergraduate enrolment. This pattern is not different in private higher education institutions (PHEIs) either as the fields such as management, business and ICT are the most offered, affordable, and widely enrolled study programmes.

28. Research & Development Branch and Computer Division, Department of Examination. (2018). *Performance of Candidates, G.C.E. A/L*.

29. *The percentage excludes those obtaining external degrees.*

30. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Sri Lanka University Statistics*.

Thus, the legacy of problems of skewed enrolment and distribution in favour of arts and commerce streams in secondary education is also reflected in the programme of choices of those entering higher education. This skewed distribution in favour of arts graduates has put Sri Lanka in an unenviable place in global context. As of the World Bank Sector Review Report (2017)³¹, Sri Lanka in global comparison produces the highest proportion of graduates in humanities and social sciences (*ranking 1st*) while producing one of the lowest percentages of graduates in science, engineering and allied fields (*ranking 92nd*). It has been statically shown, graduates from the humanities and social sciences fields have difficulties in finding gainful employment, and when they do, often end up in sectors that are only tangentially related to their fields of study, whereas the science, engineering and IT graduates, who are relatively few, have little difficulty in finding a job, and it usually corresponds to their discipline.

Therefore, there are compelling reasons to improve science and mathematics education in the country and this requires a multipronged approach - improving the quality and quantity of teachers in mathematics and science subjects, improving opportunities for science and mathematics education at senior secondary and upper senior secondary level, and increasing opportunities for science and mathematics, engineering and technology streams of education at the university level, etc., are the few interventions among many to give high priority.

In addition, to the above-mentioned issues, the higher education sector is also grappling with the issues of limited access to higher education (*particularly for popular fields of education*), outdated curricula and poor quality and relevance of educational offerings, conventional teaching-learning, and assessments methods, and tools, rigidities prevailing among faculties/discipline preventing resource sharing and cross-discipline course offerings (*particularly for the students enrolled in arts, science, and commerce streams to take supplementary courses through cross-faculty course combinations*), and poor outlook of graduates who lack essential psychosocial or non-technical skills. Addressing these issues is even more challenging given the limited funds and resources available for the higher education sector. In addition to these, university admission policy and practices, the age of students when starting university, and student discipline are persistent problems facing the university sector³².

4.4 Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The TVET sector mainly caters to school leavers after G.C.E.(O/L) or G.C.E.(A/L) qualifications³³. The TVET institutions offer education programmes targeting certificate, diploma, higher diploma, and degree-level qualifications. About 250,690 trainees are enrolled annually in TVET courses. Most of them are enrolled for certificate-level qualifications³⁴. Courses are offered by a variety of formal and informal institutions operated by private, public, and NGO sectors. Some TVET institutions are very successful in producing certificate/diploma holders who are highly in demand in the labour market. But, the employability of the majority of TVET certificate/diploma holders is low primarily due to inadequate practical skills resulting from the inadequate quality of training provided. Further, soft skills such as problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership skills, which are demanded by the employers are also lacking amongst the TVET graduates³⁴.

31. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

32. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education in Sri Lanka*.

33. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

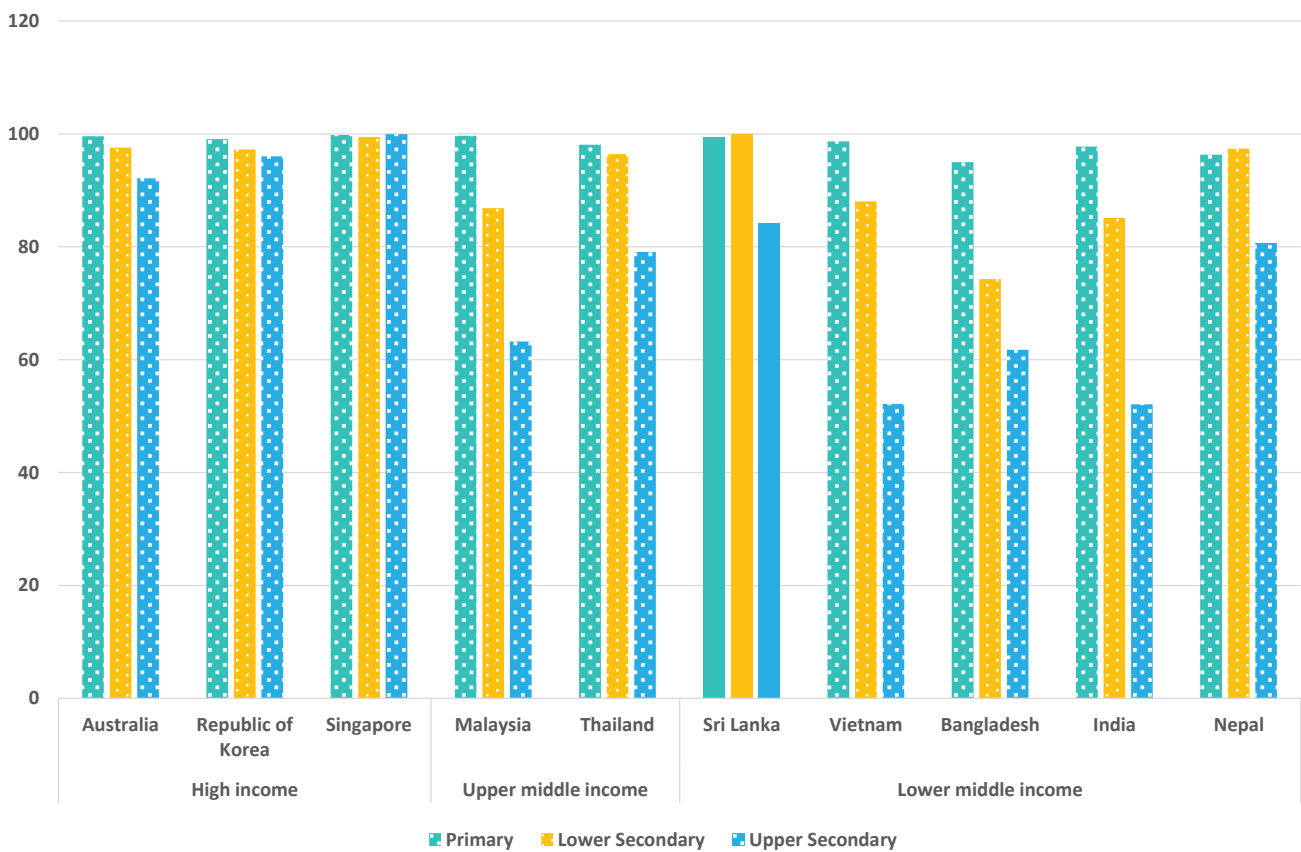
34. National Education Commission. (2018). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education in Sri Lanka*.

5. PERFORMANCE OF SRI LANKAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT

5.1 Access to and Participation in Education

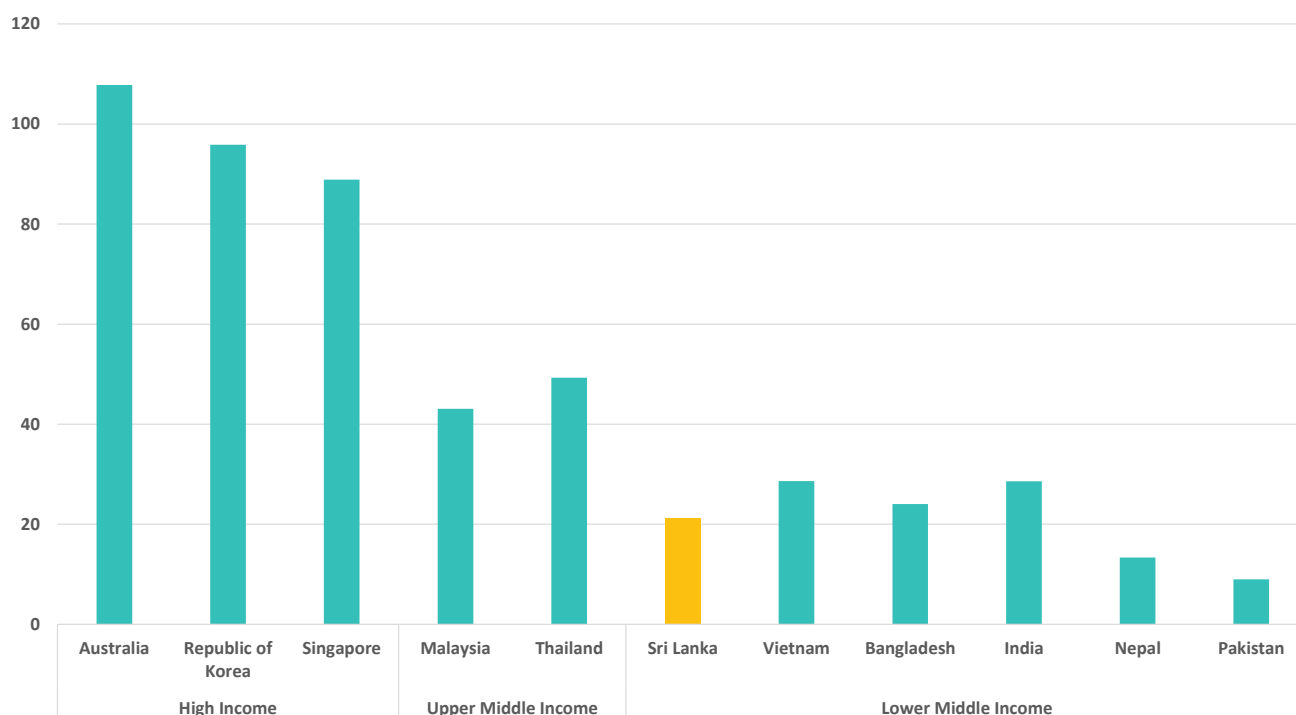
In the earlier phases of education development in the country, emphasis was placed mainly on improving access to education. As seen in Figure 5, the net enrolment rates in education at the primary and lower secondary levels are on par with those of advanced countries in the region, but the net enrolment rates at the upper secondary level are less than optimal. In most advanced countries, the net enrolment rates at the upper secondary level are more than 90%, while it is only 84% in Sri Lanka. The gross enrolment rate at the tertiary level which is estimated as of 2019 is 21.13% in Sri Lanka. These statistics are below not only those of advanced countries but also those of low-income countries such as India and Bangladesh (See Figures 5 & 6).

Figure 5: Net Enrolment Rate (%), by Level of Education



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2020). September 2020 data update. Retrieved August 3, 2021 from UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

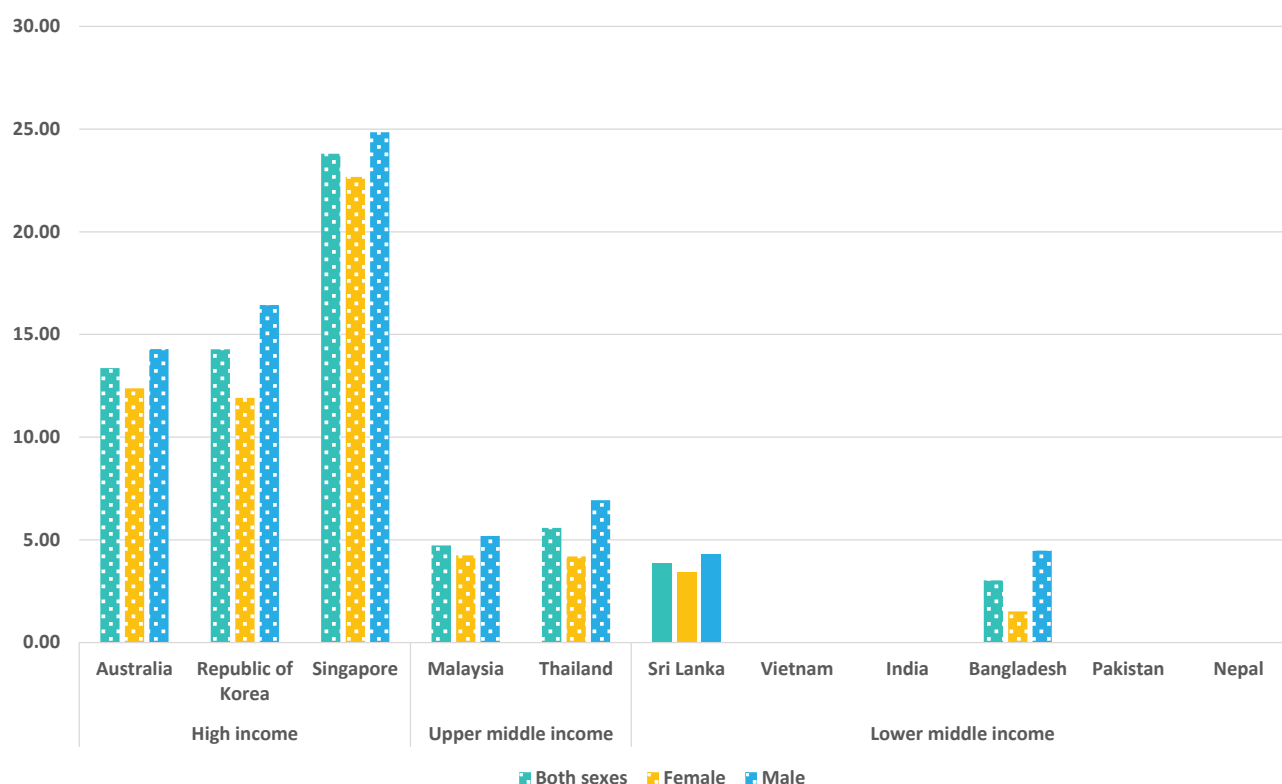
Figure 6: Gross Enrolment Rates (%), Tertiary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020). September 2020 data update. Retrieved August 3, 2021 from UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

The participation in technical and vocational programmes for 15-to-24-year-olds is less than 5% in the country (See Figure 7). However, this rate is somewhat higher compared to those of other lower-middle-income countries, it is much lower than that in high-income countries.

Figure 7: Participation Rate in Technical and Vocational Programmes (15-24-year-olds)

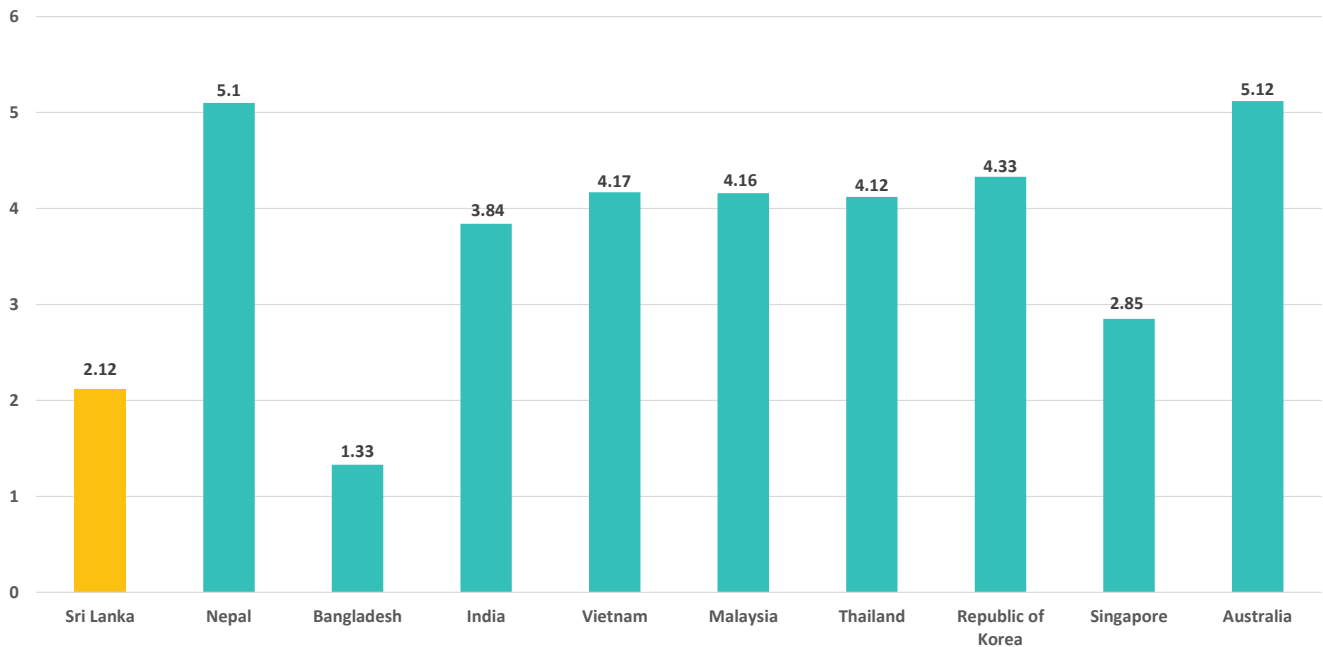


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020). September 2020 data update. Retrieved August 3, 2021 from UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

5.2 Public Investments in Education

Today's achievement in education in Sri Lanka has been due to public investments by successive governments to build education infrastructure, train teachers, as well as provide support to students. However, Sri Lanka's investments as a share of GDP at present are quite small (2.12% as of 2020 data) compared to not only advanced countries such as Australia and Singapore but also low-income countries such as India and Nepal (See Figure 8)

Figure 8: Government Expenditure on Education, as a % of GDP

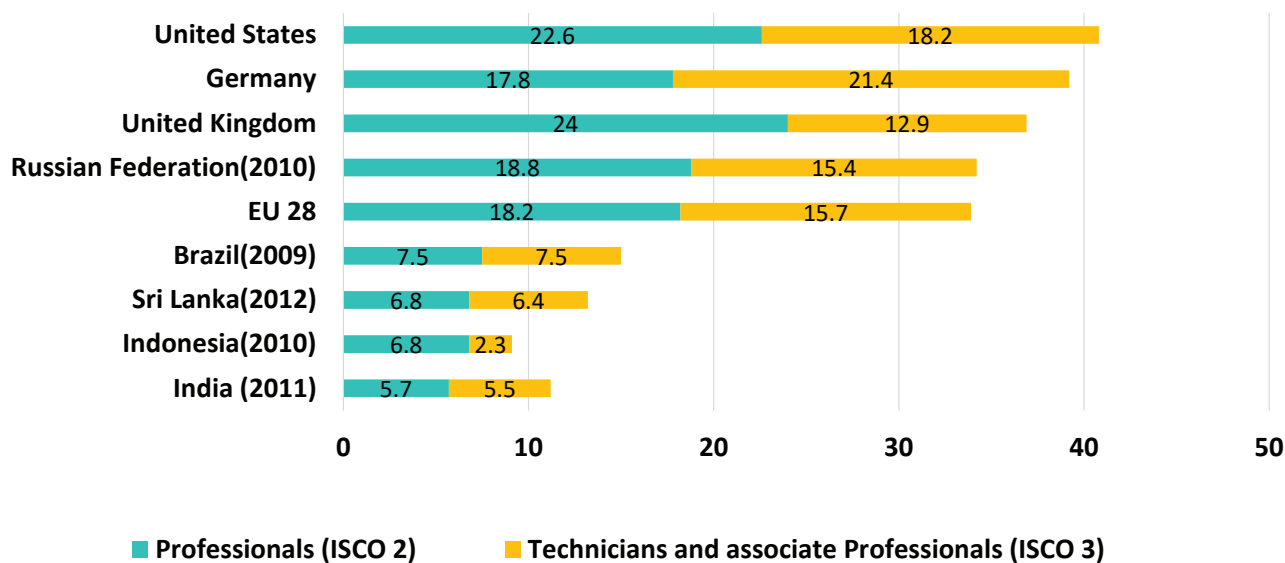


Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020). September 2020 data update. Retrieved August 3, 2021 from UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

5.3 Proportion of Labour Force in Science and Technology Sector

The proportion of science and technology (S&T) workers in Sri Lanka as a per cent of total employment is 13.2. This is far below the average of the European Union of 33.9% (see Figure 9). However, it is better than the proportion of S&T workers in Indonesia and India. However, as both Indonesia and India are countries with very large populations, the number of S&T workers in these countries is larger, although their proportion as a per cent of total employment is smaller. Further, relatively a larger proportion of employed in Sri Lanka in S&T occupations, are in teaching (*mostly at the general education level*) and health care services (*medical doctors and allied categories*). Only a small proportion was science and engineering professionals (7.7%) or ICT professionals (1.9%) and these are the occupation groups that could contribute to innovation. This data suggests that the proportion of S&T jobs conducting R&D activities is relatively small, and this needs to be increased for supporting research and innovation. Therefore, if the country wants to move towards a knowledge-based economy, initiatives will need to be taken to improve the tertiary level education in S&T fields, both at the university level and the technical level.

Figure 9: Professionals and Technicians as a percentage of Total Employment



Source: Arunathilake, N. (2012). *Labour Market Characteristics: Thematic Report based on Census of Population and Housing 2012*. UNFPA.

5.4 Alignment between Education Outputs with Labour Market Demands

The limited demand side information available indicates that there are serious skills gaps in almost all industrial sectors of the country. This skills gap is more acute for highly skilled workers. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, only 5.3% of employed has a degree or higher level of education qualification in 2016³⁵. Further, as the number of skilled workers going abroad for work is increasing, the training institutions in the country need to take into account the needs of the market for migrant workers as well as the domestic market. Skills gap is manifested not only as a shortage of skilled persons. Data also revealed that many are employed in occupations for which they do not have sufficient qualifications. For example, according to the 2008 International Standard Classification of Occupations, professionals are required to have skills at Level 4 as the professionals are required to perform tasks “that require complex problem solving, decision making, creativity based on both theoretical and factual knowledge in a specific field”³⁶. As Level 4 skills require higher level literacy and numeracy skills, and excellent interpersonal skills, mostly those with a degree or higher level education, or lower level qualification with extensive experience is needed to do such jobs. According to the 2012 Census, about 35.8% of professionals, in Sri Lanka were without a tertiary level education³⁷. On the flip side, of those with at least a university degree, only 48.5% were in occupations, which required a degree level qualification. Out of the degree holders, 23.3% were doing other types of jobs which are either not relevant to their training or not required a degree level training, and 6.4% were unemployed³⁷. What is of more concern is that about 21.7% of degree holders were outside the labour force³⁷. The above statistics illustrate that on one hand, Sri Lanka needs more graduates to do jobs that require higher-level skills. At the same time, the graduates should have the necessary higher-order skills to be gainfully employed in high-skilled employment. Further, the available talent in Sri Lanka lacks a full range of skills needed for promoting innovation³⁸.

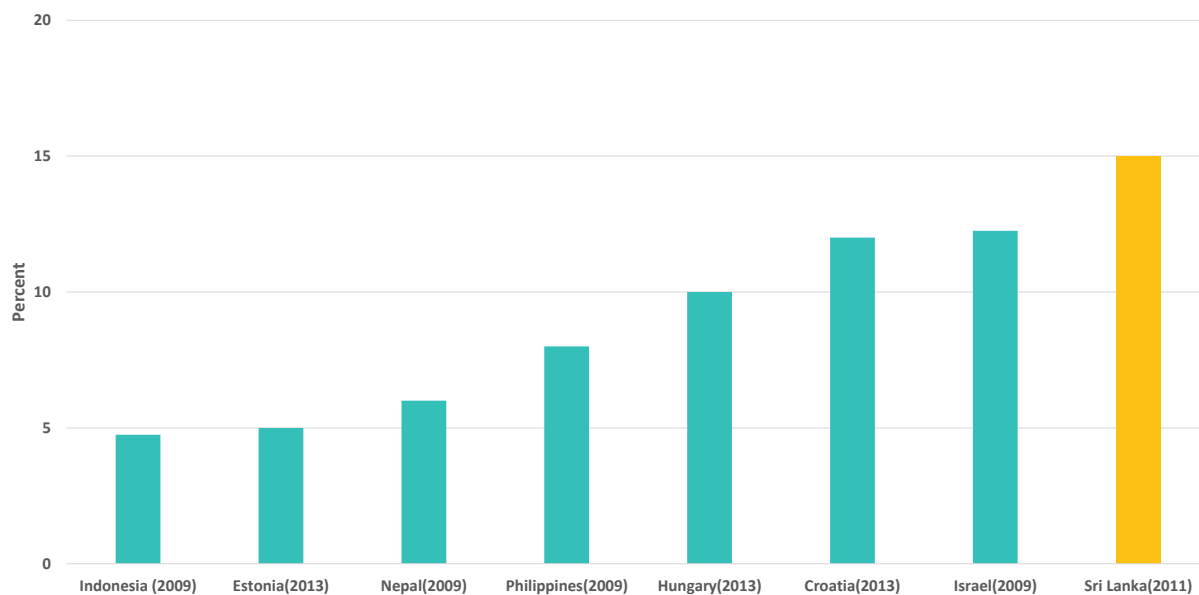
35. Own calculations based on LFS Data 2016 of the DCS.

36. International Labour Organization. (2012). *International Standard Classification of Occupations: ISCO-08*.

37. Arunathilake, N. (2016). *Labour Market Characteristics – Thematic Report based on Census of Population and Housing 2012*. United Nations Population Fund.

38. Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies. (2016). *Vision 2022: Sri Lanka IT/BPM sector*. <https://slasscom.lk/>

Figure 10: Firms Identifying Lack of Skill Workers



Source: Adapted from Dundar et al. (2017).

It is well recognized that tertiary level qualifications together with other soft skills are needed to be successful in emerging technology-enabled occupations. Unfortunately, Sri Lanka appears to be having a problem in this regard. As shown in Figure 10, the proportion of firms that identify a shortage of adequate skills as a major or severe constraint is higher in Sri Lanka than in other middle-income and developing countries. Thus, both the skill shortages and skill mismatches undermine productivity growth and the prospects for Sri Lanka to join the group of upper-middle-income countries.

The view that inadequate skills depress national productivity and competitiveness is reflected in Sri Lanka's current rankings on international indexes. The Creative Productivity Index, which measures the proficiency of economies at turning innovation "inputs" such as skills or infrastructure into innovation "outputs" such as patents or scientific publications, ranks Sri Lanka at 19th place out of 24 regional economies in Asia (Creative Productivity Index, ADB 2014). On the World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index, between 2014 and 2015 Sri Lanka's ranking among more than 170 countries dropped from 65th to 72nd place³⁹. Underlying these low and relatively stagnant rankings are, among other factors, problems in higher education and training and in labour market efficiency⁴⁰.

5.5. Student Learning Outcomes in General Education

Sri Lanka has never participated in any international assessments as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) to assess the learning outcomes of general education. However, an attempt in this regard was made in 2016 and 2019 by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of the University of Colombo. The NEREC had conducted two pilot studies to assess the readiness of Sri Lankan students of Grade 8 for Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and for mathematics and Test for English as a Foreign Language – Junior (TOEFL junior) for English. Results of the study, though at a limited scale, have deduced that the learning outcomes in Sri Lanka do not meet international standards⁴¹.

39. World Economic Forum Global Competitive Index (WEF), 2014

40. Chandrasiri, S. and Gunatilake, R. (2015). *The skill gap in four Industrial Sectors in Sri Lanka*. International Labour Organization.

41. National Education and Research Evaluation Centre. (2020). *University of Colombo*.

5.6. Standards of Higher Education as Measured by University Ranking

Sri Lankan universities do not show up yet in any of the three most popular international rankings namely—Times Higher Education (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). As shown in Table 3, other Asian countries show up relatively well compared to Sri Lanka. The top 400 universities are concentrated in 47 countries in the QS ranking and 40 countries in the ARWU ranking and THE rankings. Reasons for the lower performances of Sri Lankan universities in international rankings are low international visibilities and low output in research and innovations, the fewer number of articles published in high-ranking international journals — such as Nature and Science, Science Citation Index-expanded, Social Science Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index, and low international visibility because of the relative absence of internal collaborations, staff, and student exchanges.

Table 3: Number of Universities Appeared in Three International Ranking, Selected Countries (2014-15)

Country	THE				QS					ARWU				
	Top 100	101-200	201-300	301-400	Top 100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-500	Top 100	101-200	201-300	301-400	401-500
Korea, Rep	3	1	3	6	6	6	2	3	6	0	1	10	6	3
Singapore	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
India	0	0	3	3	0	0	6	3	3	0	0	0	1	0
Thailand	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malaysia	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	1
Indonesia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Philippines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Africa	0	1	3	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	0	3	1	3
Colombia	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Egypt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Adapted from Dundar et al., (2014).

However, several Sri Lankan Universities are listed in Webometric Ranking System in Table 4 which looks at HEI Internet visibility. The Webometrics Ranking of World Universities, also known as Ranking Web of Universities, is a ranking system for the world's universities based on a composite indicator that takes into account both the volume of the Web content and the visibility and impact of these web publications according to the number of external views they received. It covers more than 30,000 HEIs, and Sri Lanka has 10 universities in the “top” 5,000, and within the “top” 500 of the South Asian Region, again trailing comparators in South and South-East Asia. Outcomes of these rankings, nonetheless, reveal that Sri Lankan Universities have to go a long way to reach the ‘world class’ university or ‘acclaimed’ university status.

Table 4: Webometrics Ranking, Selected Countries (2020)

Web hits	Sri Lanka	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Singapore	Thailand	Vietnam
1- 999	0	2	6	0	4	5	0
1,000 - 4,999	10	45	36	8	8	32	26
5,000- 9,999	6	68	15	18	10	45	32

Source: Webometrics (2020). Webometrics ranking data.

6. CONCLUSION

The above analysis shows that although past reforms in the education sector have helped to improve the performance of the education sector in terms of improving access to lower levels of education. The enrolment in education at the pre-primary level as well as at higher levels needs significant improvements. Especially the education participation at the tertiary level is particularly low in Sri Lanka compared to upper-middle-income countries in the region. In addition, very little is known about the access to special education, adult education, and non-formal education and the performance of those sectors.

Limited information is available on the learning outcomes in Sri Lanka, compared to international standards. Nonetheless, the available studies suggest that learning outcomes in Sri Lanka do not meet international standards. In addition, the above analysis also shows that Sri Lanka needs to diversify education opportunities and expand access to science and mathematics, and technology education at the upper senior secondary level and tertiary level for its citizens. Lastly, all sectors of education need significant modernization and quality improvements to meet the changing demands due to technological changes. As a large part of education from the primary to the tertiary level is provided by public institutions, to carry out the above-mentioned reforms, the country needs to improve investments in education substantially.

PART II

VISION OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS AND NATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

The responsibility of the national education system is to produce a good citizen who can actively and meaningfully contribute to the country's development. Such a citizen should not only be intellectually and technically competent but should also be law-abiding, ethical, considerate, and patriotic. This principle is also captured by the Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka⁴² and its chapter on 'Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties'. This chapter, which pledges to establish a democratic society, states *"complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels"* as one of its objectives.

Going along with the above guiding principle stated in the Constitution and to facilitate the National Education System (NES) to realize its ultimate aim, the NEC has defined the Vision of Education that exemplifies what the NES aspires to achieve, and the National Education Goals (NEGs) which typify the desired endpoints of national education.

As such, the NEC assumes that the Vision of Education has to be realized by fulfilling the defined NEGs. Therefore, having defined the Vision of Education and NEGs, the NEC has proceeded to design an education framework / pathway to realize the vision through the goals by defining a set of cognitive and non-cognitive skills and attributes (*hard and soft skills*) that the learners should develop through education - *from Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED), Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior secondary, Upper Senior Secondary/Collegiate and Tertiary level of education* - and these are termed as 'competencies' in this document.

The framework that defines learning competencies for 5 levels of general education, higher education, and vocational and technical education is called the National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) provides the foundation structure around which the national education system can fulfil its role.

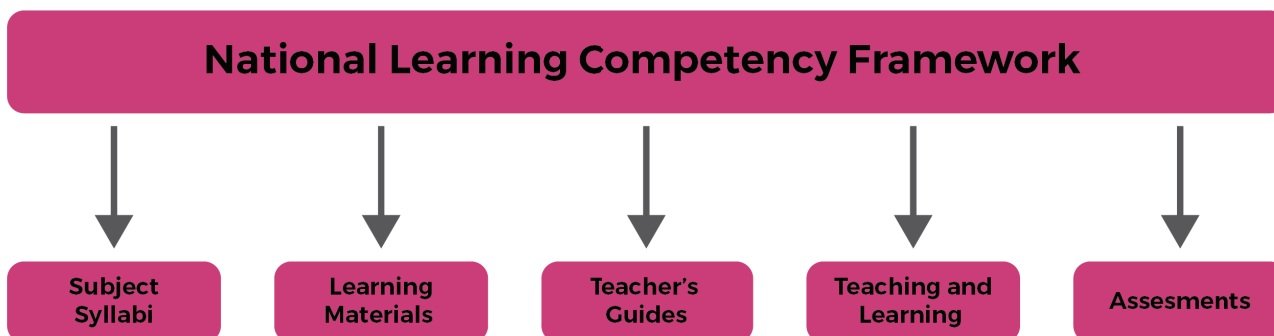
In constructing the NLCF, the NEC has adopted 12 National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) that were already developed and adopted as level descriptors in the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework⁴³ (*which was first introduced in 2011 and updated in 2015*) to frame qualification level-specific learning competencies/outcomes. In this process, learning outcome statements under 12 NLCD categories of the SLQF are systemically customized to suit each level of school education, from ECED, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and collegiate. They describe what learners should know, understand, and can demonstrate upon at the completion of each level of school. To realize the NEGs, these level-specific learning outcome statements, in turn, should be translated into level-specific curricula to assist the learner to achieve the level-specific National Learning Competencies/Outcome (NLCs) at different levels of learning. The matrix of NLCDs and NLCs for different levels of education is called the National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF).

Thus, the NLCF shall function as the spine or backbone to guide the formulation of school curricula at each level of education, and also to design and develop curricula for undergraduate and postgraduate education so that the learners could progressively achieve the expected NLCs, by the time they exit from the school system and higher education / technical and vocational education institutions. As depicted in Figure 1, the NLCF besides guiding national curriculum framework for primary, secondary, tertiary level education, it shall guide the design and development of subject syllabi, learning materials and teachers' guide, teaching and the selection of teaching and learning as well as assessment methods.

42. Constitution of 1978 of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. (1978). Citizen (Chapter V). Colombo: Government Press.

43. University Grants Commission. (2015). Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework, Updated Version. The World Bank Funded Higher Education for Twenty First Century (HETC) Project of the Ministry of Higher Education.

Figure 1: Illustration of the Application of National Learning Competency Framework



Source: Author's illustration.

2. VISION OF EDUCATION

The Vision of Education exemplifies what the national education system aspires to achieve, and it is phrased as;

"A holistic, progressive and life-long learner for a cohesive, peaceful, patriotic Sri Lankan society attuned to face the local and global challenges"

with the Tagline

"A productive, caring, and patriotic citizen"

It is assumed that the Vision of Education is to be realized by achieving the defined National Education Goals (NEGs) which exemplify what is expected from education.

3. NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS

Any effective education system needs to be guided by a set of national education goals.

NEGs first appeared in the 1992 Report of NEC⁴⁴. These NEGs were based on the education reforms proposed by the Youth Commission in 1990 (*Sessional Paper 1 of 1990*)⁴⁵. The report identified nine NEGs which were considered 'relevant to the individual and significant to the national community'.

In its 2003 report, the NEC⁴⁶ had reviewed the situation and reinforced the existing NEGs with minor modifications, and the numbers of NEGs were reduced to eight by amalgamating two goals.

The 2016 report of the NEC, without making any reference to the NEGs of the 2003 report, identifies a different set of NEGs amounting to nine in number and states that general education must necessarily lead to the attainment of these nine NEGs. Nonetheless, all the current school curriculum documents prepared by the National Institute of Education (NIE) still use the NEGs recommended by the 2003 report of NEC. Hence, the present NEC in formulating National Learning Competency Framework (2020-2030) has framed 8 NEGs by adapting the 8 NEGs of the NEC

44. National Education Commission. (2003). *Envisioning Education for Human Development 2003*.

45. Youth Commission. (1990). *Sessional Paper 1. 1990. Report of the presidential commission on youth*. Government press.

46. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education*.

(2003) report as the guiding principles and statements that should effectively guide the future education system of the country. These newly formulated NEG's explain the expectation of the country to be realized through the Sri Lankan education system. The eight NEG's along with the respective condensed forms are given in Table 1.

Table 1: NEG's and Respective Condensed Forms

NEG Number	National Education Goals	Condensed Form
NEG 1	Promote the physical, mental, spiritual, socioemotional, and environmental well-being of individuals necessary for a healthy and happy way of life, based on respect for human values	Happy and healthy human being
NEG 2	Develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and human qualities for technological, socio-economic, and cultural advancement, in keeping with national needs and global trends	Productive individual
NEG 3	Develop productive individuals with curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and innovativeness	Progressive learner
NEG 4	Promote respect for human rights and laws of the country, while fulfilling duties and obligations in keeping with the norms of social justice and democratic way of life	Respectful and trustworthy person
NEG 5	Develop individuals to manage change and cope with complex and unforeseen situations	Resilient individual
NEG 6	Uphold the nation's cultural and ecological heritage while responding to local and global challenges	Culturally fortified Citizen
NEG 7	Promote a mindful and self-conscious learner to enhance the capacity for learning to learn	Reflective learner
NEG 8	Develop a patriotic Sri Lankan citizen fostering national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity while respecting cultural diversity	Patriotic citizen

Source: Author's illustration.

Figure 2: Vision of Education (Tagline) and National Education Goals (condensed forms).



Source: Author's illustration.

4. KEY WORDS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS (NEGs) ARE EXPLAINED

The following Table 2 explains the meaning of keywords associated with each NEG for the benefit of general reader.

Table 2: NEGs and Key Words Associated with NEGs are Explained

NEG	NEG Explained
<p>NEG 1: Promote the spiritual, socioemotional, physical, mental, and environmental well-being of individuals necessary for a healthy and happy way of life, based on respect for human values</p>	<p>Physical well-being: Optimally maintain the body and well-being through healthy habits, dietary practices, and physical exercise.</p> <p>Mental well-being: A state of mind that helps one to cope with daily stresses of life productively and with contentment.</p> <p>Spiritual well-being: Ability to find purpose and meaning in life using a variety of religious and non-religious methods.</p> <p>Socioemotional well-being: Ability to initiate, cultivate, and maintain healthy and meaningful relationships with others (parents, relatives, friends, etc.) while adjusting and monitoring one's own emotions and feelings such as empathy, joy, excitement, surprise, anger, contempt, fear, etc.</p> <p>Environmental well-being: Ability to interact with nature and one's own surroundings necessary for harmonious coexistence.</p>

<p>NEG 2: Develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and human qualities for technological, socio-economic, and cultural advancement, in keeping with national needs and global trends</p>	<p>Knowledge: Developmentally appropriate understanding on inter-related concepts and principles.</p> <p>Skills: Performing a task using manual dexterity, technological applications, and related soft-skills.</p> <p>Attitude: An opinion or viewpoint regarding a person, object, situation, or concept, usually manifested as a result of the values one holds.</p> <p>Human qualities: Qualities that define who we are as human beings including honesty, integrity, courage, self-awareness, and wholeheartedness.</p> <p>Technological advancement: Application of scientific findings and innovations to facilitate human activities.</p> <p>Socio-economic advancement: Application of knowledge on society and societal factors and resources to promote human progress and the economic standards of living of a country's population.</p> <p>Cultural advancement: Promotion of intellectual, cultural, and material development in human society through Religion, Aesthetics, and Arts, and Sciences.</p>
<p>NEG 3: Develop productive individuals with curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and innovativeness</p>	<p>Curiosity: Desire to learn or know about anything and everything.</p> <p>Critical thinking: Sharpness of mental functions that lead to a clear and rational understanding of the logical connection between ideas, and the ability to weigh the pros and cons of a given situation with an open, unbiased, argumentative mind.</p> <p>Problem-solving skills: Ability to break down an issue into its component parts and propose ways of understanding it or identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives to address it.</p> <p>Creativity: Ability to perceive the world in different ways to produce novel ideas or products of their own and disseminate them appropriately.</p> <p>Innovativeness: A state of mind that is attributable to the recognition and active pursuit of opportunities for inventing or adapting unique innovative and creative ideas or products.</p>

<p>NEG 4: Promote respect for human rights and laws of the country, while fulfilling duties and obligations in keeping with the norms of social justice and democratic way of life</p>	<p>Human rights: Moral principles or norms and ethical code that describe prime standards of human behaviour and conduct that ensures the individual’s right of life with dignity.</p> <p>Laws of the country: System of rules put in place to regulate the behaviour and conduct of citizens, and penalties that will be inflicted or imposed upon any breach of such rules.</p> <p>Duty: What a person owes to fellow human beings as a fact of nature in order to act with responsibility and accountability.</p> <p>Obligation: Conditions and responsibilities that are being imposed by contract or custom.</p> <p>Norms of social justice: Accepted and shared values (<i>though mostly unwritten</i>) those that are upheld within a community that ensure fair and just relations between the individual and society, such as acknowledgment of fundamental and human rights of all people.</p> <p>Democratic way of life: A system of living that places a high value on individual freedom while respecting the majority view for the greater good of the society.</p>
<p>NEG 5: Develop individuals to manage change and cope with complex and unforeseen situations</p>	<p>Managing change: Ability to handle the stresses associated with a situation that is unpredictable, novel, or liable to alter constantly.</p> <p>Complex situation: A situation in which, for any number of reasons, the level of understanding that an observer has of the situation is vastly incomplete with many competing solutions that lead to different (<i>and even contradictory</i>) results.</p> <p>Unforeseen situation: A situation that one did not expect to happen.</p>
<p>NEG 6: Uphold the nation’s cultural and ecological heritage while responding to local and global challenges</p>	<p>Cultural heritage: An expression of the ways of living developed by a community mostly under the influence of religious beliefs and practices and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions, and values.</p> <p>Ecological heritage: The processes that govern the biosphere, and that must be preserved and passed on to future generations.</p> <p>Local and global challenges: The demands placed on an individual or society to provide solutions to grave problems that affect either a given country/region or the entire world.</p>

<p>NEG 7: Promote a mindful and self-conscious learner to enhance the capacity for learning to learn</p>	<p><i>A mindful learner:</i> One who is able to relate openly and flexibly to the diversities and inconsistencies of experiences by promoting deeper awareness of one’s surroundings and actions.</p> <p><i>A self-conscious learner:</i> A person with a heightened sense of awareness of the process that leads to an expansion of his/her own knowledge and abilities.</p> <p><i>Learning to learn:</i> Ability to pursue and persist in activities leading to the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and to organise one’s own learning both individually and in groups, by critically reflecting on one’s own deficiencies.</p>
<p>NEG 8: Develop a patriotic Sri Lankan citizen fostering national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity while respecting cultural diversity</p>	<p><i>A patriotic citizen:</i> A citizen respects his/her country of birth and is committed to his/her motherland in the first instance or for its own sake, but not as a consequence of his/her commitment to something else.</p> <p><i>National cohesion:</i> Living and working together within diverse societies and individuals to achieve their potential.</p> <p><i>National integrity:</i> The extent to which a country projects itself as a united and undivided force to safeguard steadfastly its interests.</p> <p><i>National unity:</i> Living together of people of all ethnicities, religions, castes, and languages in a country, harmoniously.</p> <p><i>Cultural diversity:</i> Existence of a variety of diverse cultural groups within a society and the acknowledgment of the richness that such existence brings into the society.</p>

Source: Author’s illustration.

5. NATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCY DOMAINS (NLCDs)

In most countries, national education goals are articulated through the curriculum. This is accomplished by developing curricula based on a suitable framework of learning outcomes that describes the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that the students must master to succeed in work and life while achieving the national education goals.

In 2015, when developing the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF), the following twelve categories of learning outcomes of national importance that address the 21st-century skills required by qualification holders from senior secondary level education to the doctoral level were identified: (1) Subject / Theoretical Knowledge, (2) Practical Knowledge and Application, (3) Communication, (4) Teamwork and Leadership, (5) Creativity and Problem-Solving, (6) Managerial and Entrepreneurship, (7) Information Usage and Management, (8) Networking and Social Skills, (9) Adaptability and Flexibility, (10) Attitudes, Values and Professionalism, (11) Vision of Life, (12) Updating Self / Lifelong Learning. This framework was constructed in keeping with other qualification frameworks introduced by many countries worldwide.

A popular model used as a guiding document by many countries of the world for constructing learning or qualification framework is the P21 Framework developed by the United States of America-based organization, Partnership for 21st Century Learning. According to this model, the cornerstone of becoming a successful learner at any age comes down to the following four skills, known as “4Cs”: (1) Creativity, (2) Critical thinking, (3) Communication, and (4) Collaboration. In order to ensure the international recognition for Sri Lankan qualifications, the above mentioned 12 categories of learning outcomes have been mapped with the three components or domains of P21 Framework namely, i) Learning and Innovation Skills, ii) Information, Media and Technology Skills, and iii) Life and Career Skills. The 12 categories of learning outcomes stated in the SLQF have also been group into 4 categorizes and outcomes domains: i) knowledge; ii) skills; iii) attitudes; and, iv) mindset and paradigm, and it is characterised as the **K-SAM model**^{47,48}.

Knowledge: what the learners know

Skills: what the learners can do

Attitudes, Values, Professionalism, and Vision of Life: how the learners think and behave

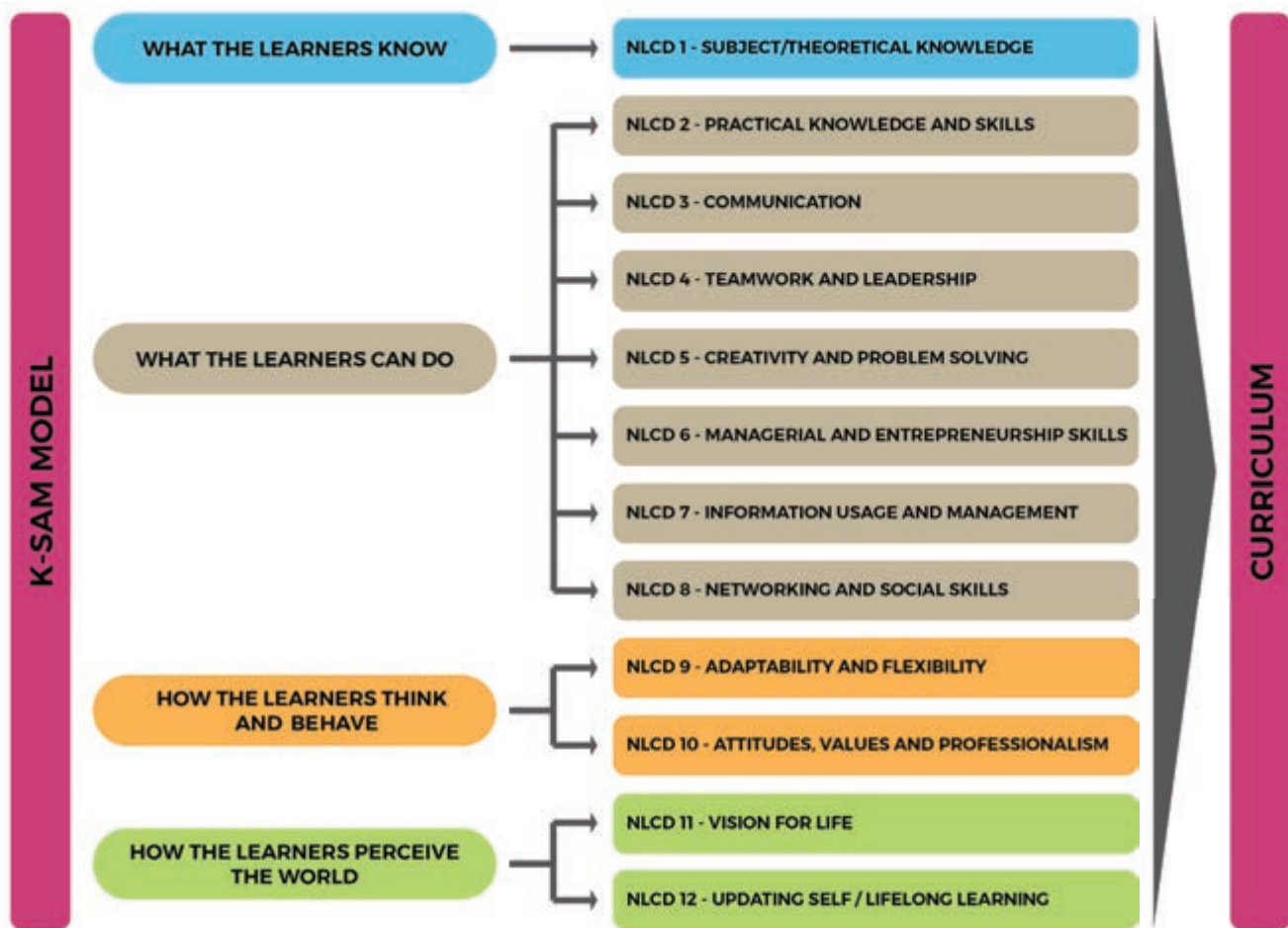
Mind-set and Paradigm: how the learners perceive the world

The categorization of the NLCDs according to the principal K-SAM components is depicted in Figure 3.

47. *Framework for 21st Century Learning*. (2019). Retrieved 5th May 2021 from <https://www.battelleforkids.org/networks/p21>

48. Nawaratne, S., Ponnampereuma, G., & Nanayakkara, V. (2018). *K-SAM graduates for the 21st century*. Honjo Foundation Conference Book, 34-44

Figure 3: Categorization of NLCDs According to the Principles of K-SAM Model



Source: Author's illustration.

Considering the reasons stated above, the NEC has adopted the 12 categories of learning outcomes of the SLQF as the National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) of education. As stated elsewhere, the NLCDs should be incorporated into curriculum development at all levels in the country's education system to serve them as the foundation to achieving the NEGs. This would make sure the learners could progressively achieve the expected NEGs, by the time they exit from the school system and tertiary education institutions. Also, this would ensure a smooth transition from one phase of learning to the next phase of learning. With this approach, the consistency across learning in achieving the expected abilities and attributes from the ECED level to doctoral level is guaranteed.

The terms, competence, competency, and learning outcome are terms that have been defined variously in the literature⁴⁹. Sometimes they have also been used synonymously. For the purposes of this publication, 'competence' (plural: competences) is operationally defined as "an ability that represents a unique and sophisticated blend of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and mindset to complete a particular task or a set of related tasks". This definition and variants of it fall in line with the most popular definitions for competence in the literature. Similarly, competency (plural: competencies) is defined for the purposes of this publication as "an ability that addresses a part of a competence". A collection of competencies thus makes up a competence⁵⁰. Learning outcomes, on the other hand, are abilities that the learner is supposed to master (or achieve) at the end of an organized set of educational events or activities. Such an organized set of educational events/activities is generally referred to as a curriculum.

49. Kennedy, D., Hyland, A., & Ryan, N. (2009). Learning outcomes and competencies. *Using Learning Outcomes: Best of the Bologna Handbook*. 33:59-76.

50. Burgoyne J. (1988). *Competency Based Approaches to Management Development*, Lancaster: Centre for the Study of Management Learning.

Since the curriculum organizes its components at different layers of granularity, ranging from the layer of the 'study programme' through the layers of 'modules/course units' to 'lessons', the learning outcomes can also be written to represent the said layers of granularity. For example, the learning outcomes of a study programme (*representing the entire curriculum*) could be written as competences or competencies. These competences/competencies should be broken down (or narrowed down) to more specific learning outcomes at the layers of courses or modules. Finally, the course/module learning outcomes should be further narrowed down within lessons. A more detailed guide as to how the NLCDs can be used in curriculum development to help learners achieve the NEGs is given in Section 9: How to Use NLCDs in Curriculum Development.

6. TWELVE NATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCY DOMAINS (NLCDs) FOR GENERAL EDUCATION EXPLAINED

Explanations for each of the 12 categories of learning competency domains for the benefit of the users in general education are given in the following Table 3.

Table 3: Explanation for 12 NLCDs in Relation to General Education

NLCD	Explanation
1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge	Subject knowledge: Information, understanding and skill specific to the content of a subject area. Theoretical knowledge: Developmentally appropriate sets of inter-related concepts and principles that propose a rational and testable explanation about a phenomenon (<i>i.e., an observable fact or event</i>) pertaining to a content area.
2. Practical Knowledge and Skills	Ability to utilize and/or experience developmentally appropriate skills through modalities such as field studies, practical or laboratory classes, projects, etc.
3. Communication	Developmentally appropriate ability to express facts, opinions, or/and ideas clearly using verbal, non-verbal, written, or any other modalities of expression, to share information and ideas in a manner understandable to a recipient.
4. Teamwork and Leadership	Teamwork: Ability to work in a group of persons to share responsibilities through supporting and complementing each other, in order to achieve an agreed common task/goal. Leadership: Ability to provide direction, cohesion, and inspiration to others.
5. Creativity and Problem-solving Skills	Creativity: Ability to perceive the world in different ways, develop creations of their own and disseminate it appropriately Problem-solving Skills: Ability to break down an issue into its component parts and propose ways of understanding or identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives.
6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship Skills	Managerial ability: Ability to control, handle or balance a group of persons/items or a situation in an acceptable manner. Entrepreneurship skills: Creativity and capacity to identify and pursue opportunities beyond resources that may lead to initiatives and innovations.

7. Information Usage and Management	<p>Information usage: Ability to utilize information from different sources such as teachers, peers, textbooks, websites, etc.</p> <p>Information management: Developmentally appropriate ability to record, store, maintain, retrieve, and share data methodically, both electronically and/or in any other applicable way.</p>
8. Networking and Social Skills	<p>Networking: Ability to connect and remain connected with people.</p> <p>Social skills: Developmentally appropriate abilities that are helpful to function smoothly and effectively in society, without unnecessary conflicts.</p>
9. Adaptability and Flexibility	<p>Adaptability: Ability to adjust to fit into various circumstances and situations.</p> <p>Flexibility: Ability to be bent without being broken or without breaking laws, rules, norms, etc.</p> <p>In general, these two terms refer to an ability that helps accommodate others' situations, views, opinions, or ideas to complement one's own, with or without changing/modifying one's own. It is related to being able to respect diversity.</p>
10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism	<p>Attitude: An opinion or viewpoint regarding a person, object, situation or concept. Learning should promote positive attitudes which should not lead to any kind of disruption to the society or uneasiness to others. A high level of emotional intelligence is a core requirement for the latter.</p> <p>Value: An internal system of thinking that attaches worth to certain ideas/phenomena but not to certain others. Values make one steadfastly hold such ideas/phenomena dear to one's heart. Usually, it is values that manifest as attitudes.</p> <p>Professionalism: Developmentally appropriate formal behaviour abiding by the rules applicable to a given situation. Such behaviour is possible only if a person reflects on one's own action and integrates many of the above competencies in a useful way into a composite act, which should be delivered in a skilful and consummate manner.</p>
11. Vision of Life	<p>A frame of mind, i.e., mindset, that results in a broad plan/aspiration based on what you want to be in the future to direct oneself in all/most present and future activities. Simply put, one's own ambition or desire in life that will guide one's decisions and actions, based on the paradigms that one sets for oneself.</p>
12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	<p>Developmentally appropriate ability to learn on one's own initiative with or without the help of formal teachers or a formal curriculum, using self-selected learning material/methods and/or day-to-day activities, after reflecting on one's own learning needs.</p>

Source: Author's illustration.

7. NATIONAL EDUCATION GOALS (NEGs) ARE MAPPED TO NATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCY DOMAINS (NLCDs)

The link between the NEGs and NLCDs and how the different NLCDs can contribute to achieving the respective NEGs are explained below (Table 4).

Table 4: Mapping of NEGs with NLCDs

NEG	NEG Achieved through NLCDs	Mapping Explained
NEG 1: Promote the physical, mental, spiritual, socioemotional, and environmental well-being of individuals necessary for a healthy and happy way of life, based on respect for human values	NLCD3. Communication NLCD8. Networking and Social Skills NLCD9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism NLCD11. Vision of Life	All these NLCDs are needed for physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being, and also for learning for a contended life
NEG 2: Develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and human qualities for technological, socio-economic, and cultural advancement, in keeping with national needs and global trends	NLCD1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge NLCD2. Practical Knowledge and Skills NLCD5. Creativity and Problem-solving NLCD7. Information Usage and Management NLCD10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism NLCD12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	All these NLCDs are directly related to NEG 2
NEG 3: Develop productive individuals with curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and innovativeness	NLCD1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge NLCD2. Practical Knowledge and Skills NLCD5. Creativity and Problem-solving NLCD6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship Skills NLCD7. Information Usage and Management NLCD12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	All these NLCDs are needed to promote creativity, innovativeness, and critical thinking

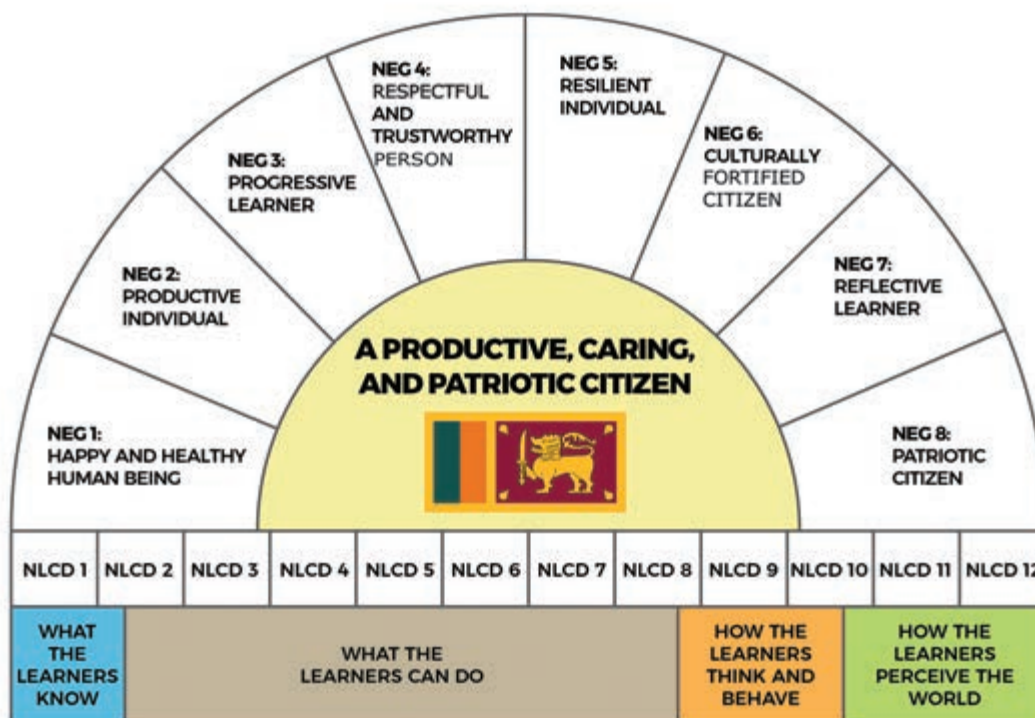
<p>NEG 4: Promote respect for human rights and laws of the country, while fulfilling duties and obligations in keeping with the norms of social justice and democratic way of life</p>	<p>NLCD1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge NLCD3. Communication NLCD4. Teamwork and Leadership NLCD8. Networking and Social Skills NLCD9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD10. Attitudes, Values and Professionalism</p>	<p>NEG 4 refers to a set of values that the students should first conceptually understand (NLCD1). This set of values cannot be developed without appropriate communication (NLCD3), teamwork and leadership (NLCD4), networking and social skills (NLCD8), and attitudes, values, and professionalism (NLCD10)</p>
<p>NEG 5: Develop individuals to manage change and cope with complex and unforeseen situations</p>	<p>NLCD5. Creativity and Problem Solving NLCD6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship skills NLCD7. Information Usage and Management NLCD9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Managing change needs both adaptability and flexibility (NLCD9) and creativity and problem-solving (NLCD5). Capacity for learning to learn (NLCD12) in order to cope with complex and unforeseen situations needs constant updating of self and lifelong learning (NLCD9)</p>
<p>NEG 6: Uphold the nation’s cultural and ecological heritage while responding to local and global challenges</p>	<p>NLCD5. Creativity and Problem Solving NLCD9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism NLCD11. Vision of Life</p>	<p>Conserving the nation’s cultural and ecological heritage is an attitude/ value that should be instilled early in life. Responding to local and global challenges requires NLCD5, NLCD9, NLCD10 and NLCD11</p>
<p>NEG 7: Promote a mindful and self-conscious learner to enhance the capacity for learning to learn</p>	<p>NLCD2. Practical Knowledge and Skills NLCD5. Creativity and Problem Solving NLCD9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD11. Vision of Life NLCD12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Capacity for learning to learn is an essential prerequisite for lifelong learning (NLCD12). A mindful, self-conscious learner should have a strong purposeful desire for achievement (<i>i.e. a vision of life - NLCD11</i>) and should be flexible and adaptable (NLCD9) in selecting the learning situations and methods. Such self-directed learning requires creativity and problem-solving skills (NLCD5)</p>

<p>NEG 8: Develop a patriotic Sri Lankan citizen fostering national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity while respecting cultural diversity</p>	<p>NLCD3. Communication NLCD4. Teamwork and Leadership NLCD8. Networking and Social Skills NLC9. Adaptability and Flexibility NLCD10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism NLCD11. Vision of Life</p>	<p>Love, respect, and dedication to the motherland are attitudes and values that students need to imbibe.</p> <p>National cohesion, national integrity and national unity, recognizing cultural diversity calls for abilities related to all the NLCDs listed here (NLCD3, NLCD4, NLCD8, NICD9, NLCD 10 and NLCD 11).</p>
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Source: Author's illustration.

The following graphical representation (Figure 4) shows how the twelve National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) are expected to facilitate achieving Vision of Education through eight National Educational Goals (NEGs).

Figure 4: Composite Diagram of NLCDs and K-SAM Model, and NEGs and Vision of Education (depicting how NLCDs facilitate achieving Vision of Education through eight NEGs).



Source: Author's illustration.

8. NATIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK (NLCF) - LEVEL-SPECIFIC LEARNING COMPETENCIES OR OUTCOMES (NLCs) FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION

The framework that explains the level-specific learning competency/outcome statements aligned with 12 NLCDs, arranged in rows and columns is called National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF), and it is given in Table 5.

In constructing the NLCF, the National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs) explained in Section 6 are used as the stem for framing the learning competencies or outcomes expected from the students at each of the five levels of education: early childhood education and development (ECED), primary, junior-secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary or collegiate. In describing each level, the degree of intellectual abilities, cognitive skills, and soft skills and attributes are considered. They include the broad abilities that the students should be capable of, by the time they complete that particular level of education.

In order to provide a complete picture of the use of NLCDs and NLCD-derived learning competencies/outcomes at the national level, from ECED to postgraduate level education, this section also includes the NLCDs developed in the SLQF for the ten levels of undergraduate and postgraduate education (Table 6 and 7). Furthermore, Section 8.1 and Table 8 relate the NLCDs to vocational education by mapping the seven levels of the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Framework to the appropriate comparable SLQF levels.

When writing level descriptors (*learning outcome/competency statements*) for each NLCD at different levels (*from ECED to doctoral level*), the complexity and the depth of the NLCD at each level should be systematically and hierarchically increased. For this purpose, verbs in established learning taxonomies such as the revised Bloom's Taxonomy⁵¹ have been used for guidance. However, when any taxonomy has to be extended to accommodate the 15 levels of learning (*5 levels from ECED to Collegiate level and 10 levels from Post-Collegiate Education up to Doctoral level*) across the 12 NLCDs, it is inevitable that there may be some overlap in the level descriptors between two adjacent levels. Though the actions verbs sometimes may be the same, care has been taken to represent each level in each NLCD with a uniquely appropriate level of achievement, in most instances.

The National Learning Competency Framework that prescribes the level-specific learning outcome/competency statements is expected to be used as a guideline to develop curricula of study programmes, in order to make sure that the learners could progressively meet the expected competencies of the relevant levels at the end of the particular level of education.

The outcome/competency statements stated for each level are based on the learning achievements of an average learner. They represent the minimum standards that must be achieved to successfully complete the particular level of education. Hence, a more able learner within each level is free to achieve more than what is stated within each level. It is essential that the learning and teaching, and assessments should provide all students with the opportunity to achieve, and to demonstrate the achievement of the intended competencies stated under respective NLCDs.

It is pertinent to state here, that the detailed statements on the expected specific learning outcomes in particular subject areas are not addressed in this document. Such statements along with appropriate student-centered learning and teaching methods, and how to assess them should be determined by the curriculum developers at each level of learning. It is hoped that this could be achieved by suitably unpacking the NLCDs at the appropriate level.

In the case of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED), these NLCDs are expected to be addressed through appropriate activities. Even though UNESCO defines early childhood as the period from birth to eight years of age, for the purpose of early childhood education or pre-primary education, in the context of this document,

51. Anderson, L.W. (Ed.), Krathwohl, D.R. (Ed.), Airasian, P.W., Cruikshank, K.A., Mayer, R.E., Pintrich, P.R., Raths, J., Wittrock, M.C., (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Complete edition)*. New York: Longman.

this age group is defined as 3 to 5 years old. The learning outcome statements for ECED are derived from the report of the Early Childhood Development Standards Project titled “Starting Right: Early Childhood Development Standards for Sri Lankan Children between 3 to 5 years” published by the Children’s Secretariat of the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Affairs in 2019⁵². Further, the learning outcome statements for Senior Secondary and Upper Senior Secondary/Collegiate levels are also benchmarked with the descriptors of the two equivalent levels of the United Kingdom leading to respective qualifications G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) as described in levels 2 and 3 of the UK’s Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)⁵³.

52. Children’s Secretariat of the Ministry of Child Development and Women’s Affairs, (2019). *Starting Right: Early Childhood Development Standards for Sri Lankan Children between 3 to 5 years*.

53. Institute of Education. (2015, September). *Qualification and Component Levels 2015*. Retrieved 3 August, 2021 from <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/24327/1/qualification-and-component-levels.pdf>

Table 5: National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) for Early Childhood Education and Development and General Education (5 Levels)

K-SAM Element	National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs)	Learning Outcomes / National Learning Competency / Outcome Statements (NLCs)				
		Early Childhood Education & Development (3-5 years old)	Primary Grades 1-5 (5-9 years old)	Junior Secondary Grades 6-9 (10-13 years old)	Senior Secondary Grades 10 and 11 (14-16 years old) (SLQF Level 1)	Upper Senior Secondary/Collegiate Grade 12 and 13 (16-19 years old) (SLQF Level 2)
What the learners know	1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge	Describe an object/process in their own words when engaged in a particular activity. Collect relevant information that could be applied within a theme.	Describe basic, straightforward phenomena/problems in their own words under guidance. Collect information that could be applied within a theme, under guidance.	Explain basic, straightforward phenomena/problems accurately in their own words independently. Collect and apply relevant information within a subject area.	Explain how basic knowledge can be applied to straightforward phenomena/problems under guidance. Interpret relevant information within the subject area.	Explain simple phenomena/problems using fundamental theories within the subject area. Interpret non-routine information within the subject area.
	2. Practical Knowledge and Skills	Demonstrate age-appropriate skills in activities within a theme.	Demonstrate age-appropriate skills under the guidance within a theme.	Identify and use appropriate skills under the guidance within the subject area.	Select and use appropriate skills and methods under the guidance within the subject area.	Select and use appropriate skills, methods, and procedures within the subject area.

<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>3. Communication</p>	<p>Listen attentively and respond appropriately verbally and non-verbally. Express ideas, within a theme verbally, non-verbally or through drawing.</p>	<p>Listen attentively and present ideas verbally, non-verbally, or in writing logically, within a theme.</p>	<p>Listen attentively and present concepts verbally, non-verbally, or in writing logically, within a subject area.</p>	<p>Listen attentively and respond to simple arguments verbally, non-verbally or in writing with reasons, within the subject area and applications in living environment.</p>	<p>Listen attentively and respond to arguments verbally, non-verbally or in writing with reasons, within the subject area, and in a given social context.</p>
<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>4. Teamwork and Leadership</p>	<p>Fulfil responsibilities under the guidance within a team.</p>	<p>Fulfil responsibilities under the guidance within a team.</p>	<p>Fulfil responsibilities under guidance and accept others' points of view.</p>	<p>Fulfil responsibilities under guidance and tolerate others' points of view while taking initiative when needed.</p>	<p>Fulfil responsibilities and respect others' points of view while converting an initiative into action.</p>
<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>5. Creativity and Problem-solving</p>	<p>Draw and act creatively and imaginatively to find solutions to simple, everyday problems through free activities.</p>	<p>Read, write and act creatively, and imaginatively to find solutions to simple, everyday problems through free activities.</p>	<p>Read, analyse and write coherent descriptions and narratives, and find solutions to simple problems integrating subject knowledge.</p>	<p>Read, analyse and write coherent descriptions and narratives, and find solutions to problems within the subject area and within the family and school environment.</p>	<p>Develop initial arguments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of humanities or scientific areas of study. Demonstrate creativity and problem-solving at the community level.</p>

<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship Skills</p>	<p>Initiate/ participate in simple imaginative social activities within the classroom.</p>	<p>Plan and implement simple imaginative social activities within the classroom.</p>	<p>Plan and implement learning and social activities confidently, beyond the classroom.</p>	<p>Plan day-to-day activities and prioritize the project activities managing the relevant resources efficiently and effectively to ensure better returns.</p>	<p>Plan small projects and prioritize the project activities and implement the event managing the relevant resources in participatory manner, efficiently and effectively to ensure better returns.</p>
<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>7. Information Usage and Management</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to receive formal and informal age-appropriate information through different sources and comprehend the same.</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to receive formal and informal age-appropriate information through different sources and comprehend, and manage such information.</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to receive formal and informal age-appropriate information through different sources and comprehend, manage and utilize such information.</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to receive formal and informal age-appropriate information through different sources and comprehend, manage, and utilize such information.</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to receive formal and informal age-appropriate information through different sources and comprehend, manage, utilize and convey such information.</p>
<p>What the learners can do</p>	<p>8. Networking and Social Skills</p>	<p>Connect with peers collectively and amicably for a given purpose within one's own social environment.</p>	<p>Connect with peers collectively and amicably for a given purpose within one's own social environment.</p>	<p>Initiate relationships and contribute as a useful member within one's own social environment.</p>	<p>Initiate relationships and actively contribute as a useful member within one's own social environment.</p>	<p>Value and initiate relationships, select and proactively contribute to activities of interest in appropriate social environments, within one's own and beyond.</p>

<p>How the learners think and behave</p>	<p>9. Adaptability and Flexibility</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to adapt to changing situations.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to change one's own way of doing things in relation to changing environment.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to change one's own way of doing things with reasons, in relation to changing environment and circumstances.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to change one's own views and ways of doing things rationally in response to a given situation considering the environment changes with time and circumstances.</p>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to change one's own views and decide on how best to change in a given situation considering the environment changes with time and circumstances.</p>
<p>How the learners think and behave</p>	<p>10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism</p>	<p>Demonstrate increasing ability to perform small tasks of sharing and caring. Express a sense of right and wrong by expressing what is right/wrong in a given situation.</p>	<p>Perform small tasks of sharing and caring. Identify what is right and what is wrong in a given situation. Maintain punctuality and dress appropriately.</p>	<p>Recognize the importance of caring for others' needs and act accordingly. Identify with reasons what is right and what is wrong in a given situation. Maintain punctuality, dress appropriately, and behave orderly.</p>	<p>Recognize the importance of caring for others' needs and act accordingly. Select the appropriate response for a given situation based on a system of values. Maintain punctuality, dress appropriately, behave orderly and abide by the rules.</p>	<p>Demstrate empathy towards others. Exercise personal responsibility in selecting tasks performed, based on a system of values. Maintain punctuality, dress appropriately, behave orderly and abide by the rules.</p>

How the learners perceive the world	11. Vision of Life	Express who one wants to be through different modes (imitating, drawing, etc.).	Imagine and express who one wants to be while recognizing the many options one can select.	Identify one's own passions and dream of who one wants to be in future.	Recognize one's own strengths and weaknesses and his / her contributory role in the society and identify where one wants to be in future and plans towards it.	Broadly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals and start implementing them under the guidance.
How the learners perceive the world	12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	Initiate an age-appropriate task and continue it to completion.	Initiate a short-term activity plan to achieve a specific task.	Initiate and implement a medium-term activity plan to achieve specific tasks.	Extract learning from academic and life activities according to a plan.	Select learning needs and engage in necessary continuous learning and training with self-directedness.

Source: Author's illustration

Table 6: National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) for Undergraduate Education (4 Levels)

National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs)	Undergraduate Education			
	SLQF Level 3	SLQF Level 4	SLQF Level 5	SLQF Level 6
1. Subject /Theoretical Knowledge	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles of the areas of study. Present and interpret qualitative and quantitative data.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles of the areas of study. Analyse and interpret qualitative and quantitative information.	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles of the areas of study. Collect, Analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data.	Demonstrate advanced knowledge and understanding of the core aspects of the area of study. Critically Analyse data, make judgments and propose solutions to problems.
2. Practical Knowledge and Application	Develop initial arguments and make some judgments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of the areas of study.	Develop appropriate arguments and make judgments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of the areas of study. Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles of the areas of study.	Develop arguments and make sound judgments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of the areas of study. Apply knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles of the areas of study.	Construct and sustain arguments and use these arguments, ideas and techniques in problem-solving. Use practical skills and enquiry efficiently and effectively within the area of study.
3. Communication	Communicate results of studies reliably.	Present information and ideas efficiently and effectively.	Present information, ideas, and concepts efficiently and effectively.	Communicate/present information, ideas, issues, and solutions efficiently and effectively. Demonstrate awareness of the current developments in the area of study.
4. Teamwork and Leadership	Exercise personal responsibility and leadership in some tasks in the workplace.	Exercise personal responsibility and leadership in some tasks in the workplace.	Exercise personal/team responsibility, and leadership in the professional environment/workplace.	Exercise personal/team responsibility, and leadership in the professional environment/workplace.

5. Creativity and Problem Solving	Develop initial arguments and make judgments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of the areas of study.	Develop appropriate arguments and make relevant judgments in accordance with basic theories and concepts of the areas of study.	Develop arguments and make appropriate judgments in accordance with theories and concepts of the areas of study.	Construct and sustain arguments and use these arguments, ideas and techniques in problem-solving for a given situation.
6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship	Exercise responsibility in the implementation of routine work and manage limited resources within the workplace.	Exercise personal and managerial responsibilities in some tasks in the workplace.	Take initiative, assume personal responsibility and demonstrate accountability.	Take initiative, assume personal responsibility and demonstrate accountability and ability to instil entrepreneurship.
7. Information Usage and Management	Demonstrate transferable skills related to ICT.	Demonstrate application of transferable skills related to ICT.	Demonstrate specialized transferable skills related to ICT skills.	Thorough in transferable skills related to ICT and information literacy.
8. Networking and Social Skills	Develop awareness of positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Ability to work in teams and provide leadership.	Ability to work in teams, give leadership and promote social engagement.
9. Adaptability and Flexibility	Recognise the need for adapting to changing environments.	Identify the strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Develop appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Analyse and devise appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.
10. Attitudes, Values, and Professionalism	Exercise personal responsibility in tasks performed. Develop positive attitudes.	Exercise personal responsibility in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and recognize the need for social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.
11. Vision of Life	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals accordingly. Recognise competencies that help to assume predetermined responsibilities.	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals accordingly. Acquire competencies that help to assume predetermined responsibilities.	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals accordingly. Acquire new competencies that will enable them to assume major responsibilities.	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long term goals accordingly. Exercise and further develop the new competencies and assume major responsibilities with confidence.

<p>12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning</p>	<p>Undertake further training and develop new skills within a managed environment.</p> <p>Identify the need to be aware of new developments in the area of study.</p>	<p>Undertake further training and develop new skills within a controlled environment.</p> <p>Identify the new developments in the area of study.</p> <p>Identify the need for independent learning and lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions.</p> <p>Identify ways of independent learning and lifelong learning.</p>	<p>Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions.</p> <p>Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information.</p>
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Source: University Grants Commission (2015), Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework, Updated Version.

Table 7: National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) for Postgraduate Education (6 Levels)

National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs)	Postgraduate Education					
	SLQF Level 7	SLQF Level 8	SLQF Level 9	SLQF Level 10	SLQF Level 11	SLQF Level 12
1. Subject / Theoretical Knowledge	<p>Demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding in the specified area of study.</p> <p>Critically Analyse data, make judgments and propose solutions to problems.</p>	<p>Demonstrate an advanced level of knowledge and understanding in the area of study.</p> <p>Critically Analyse data, make judgments and propose solutions to problems.</p>	<p>Demonstrate a comprehensive & substantive level of knowledge and understanding in the area of study.</p> <p>Critically Analyse data, make judgments and propose solutions to problems.</p>	<p>Analyse and evaluate current research in the area of specialization.</p> <p>Demonstrate a critical awareness of current issues and recent developments in the area of specialization and/or area of professional practice.</p>	<p>Enhance knowledge through research of a quality that will satisfy peer review and merit publication.</p> <p>Evaluate and constructively criticize and improve methodologies in the area of specialization.</p> <p>Analyse and critically evaluate past and current research in the area of specialization.</p>	<p>Create new knowledge through original research of a quality that makes a significant contribution to the development of the discipline and satisfies peer review and merit publication.</p> <p>Demonstrate critical reading and analytical skills by critically analysing synthesizing and evaluating data, making judgments, and identifying solutions to problems.</p>

						<p>Demonstrate a systematic acquisition and understanding of substantial amount of knowledge in the area of specialization and/or professional practice.</p> <p>Respond efficiently and effectively to the changing developmental needs of the discipline.</p>
<p>2. Practical Knowledge and Application</p>	<p>Use efficiently and effectively, practical skills and enquiry within the specified area of study.</p>	<p>Use efficiently and effectively, practical skills and enquiry within the area of study.</p> <p>Construct and sustain these arguments, ideas and techniques in problem-solving.</p>	<p>Use efficiently and effectively, practical skills and enquiry within the area of study.</p> <p>Construct and sustain arguments and use appropriately these arguments, ideas and techniques in problem-solving.</p>	<p>Use practical skills and enquiry efficiently and effectively within the area of study.</p> <p>Construct and sustain arguments and use these arguments, ideas and techniques comprehensively in problem-solving.</p>		<p>Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge and understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry/professional practice.</p>

3. Communication	Demonstrate awareness of the current developments in the specified area of study through written and oral communication.	Demonstrate awareness of the current developments in the area of study through written and oral communication.	Communicate in oral and written format the findings/conclusions clearly to a specialist as well as non-specialist groups.	Disseminate findings of scientific/intellectual enquiry through publication and/or presentation at an internationally accepted level. Communicate in oral and written format the findings, ideas, and conclusions effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.	Disseminate findings of scientific/intellectual enquiry through publications and/or presentation at an internationally accepted level. Communicate in oral and written format the findings, ideas, and conclusions effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences. Communicate in oral and written format the findings/conclusions clearly to specialist as well as non-specialist groups.
4. Teamwork and Leadership	Demonstrate leadership in the professional environment/workplace	Exercise leadership in the professional environment/workplace	Exercise leadership in planning and implementing tasks efficiently and effectively in professional, technical, and academic settings.	Exercise leadership and originality in tackling and solving problems in professional, technical, and academic settings.	Exercise leadership and originality in tackling and solving problems in professional, technical, and academic settings.

<p>5. Creativity and Problem Solving</p>	<p>Deal with complex issues in a systematic manner</p> <p>Demonstrate self-direction and confidence in solving problems</p>	<p>Deal with complex issues in a systematic manner and make sound judgments</p> <p>Construct new hypotheses in the area of specialization and test them in a scientific manner.</p> <p>Demonstrate self-direction and confidence in solving problems.</p>	<p>Deal with complex issues in a systematic manner and make sound judgments.</p> <p>Construct new hypotheses in the area of specialization and test them in a scientific manner.</p> <p>Demonstrate self-direction and confidence in solving problems.</p>	<p>Deal with complex issues systematically and make sound judgments even without complete data.</p> <p>Construct new hypotheses in the area of specializations and test them in a scientific manner.</p> <p>Demonstrate self-direction and originality in solving problems</p> <p>Make decisions in complex and unpredictable contexts.</p>	<p>Construct new hypotheses and test them in a scientific manner.</p> <p>Demonstrate self-direction and originality in solving problems in the professional environment.</p>	<p>Conceptualize, design and implement new projects to generate new knowledge and applications.</p> <p>Make judgments on complex issues in the field of specialization even in the absence of complete data.</p> <p>Identify, conceptualize and provide creative insights into complex issues and problems, and demonstrate self-direction and confidence in solving problems.</p>
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6. Managerial and Entrepreneurship	Plan and implement tasks at professional and managerial levels.	Plan and implement tasks at professional and managerial levels. Take initiative, assume personal responsibility and demonstrate accountability and ability to instil entrepreneurship.	Plan and implement tasks at professional and managerial levels. Take initiative, assume personal responsibility and demonstrate accountability and ability to instil entrepreneurship.	Plan and implement tasks efficiently and effectively in professional, technical, or academic settings. Take initiative, assume personal responsibility and demonstrate accountability and ability to instil entrepreneurship.	Supervise and guide research to generate new knowledge in the discipline. Plan and implement tasks efficiently and effectively in professional, technical, or academic settings. Exercise initiative and personal responsibility and make decisions in complex and unpredictable contexts.	Supervise and guide original research to generate substantial insight into the discipline. Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional, administrative, and managerial activities. Exercise personal judgment and responsibility in complex and unpredictable situations in professional and/or managerial environments.
7. Information Usage and Management	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy.	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy.	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy with the capability of organizing and processing data.	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy with the capability of organizing and processing data.	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy with a higher capability for organizing and processing data.	Thorough in transferable skills including ICT skills and information literacy with a higher capability for organizing and processing data.

8. Networking and Social Skills	Ability to work in teams, give leadership and promote social engagement.	Ability to work in teams, give leadership and promote social engagement.	Ability to work in teams, give leadership, and promote social and professional engagement.	Ability to work in teams, give leadership, promote social and professional engagement, and encourage collaborative research.	Ability to work in teams, give leadership, promote social and professional engagement and establish collaborative research.
9. Adaptability and Flexibility	Analyse and devise appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Analyse and devise appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Plan and execute appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Plan and execute appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.	Plan, execute and forecast appropriate strategies for adapting to changing environments.
					Exercise personal judgment and responsibility in complex and unpredictable situations in professional and/or managerial environments.

10. Attitudes, Values and Professionalism	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility. Exercise autonomy and initiative in professional, administrative, and managerial activities.	Exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and accountability in tasks performed. Demonstrate positive attitudes and social responsibility. Exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in professional, administrative, and managerial activities.
11. Vision of Life	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals accordingly.	Clearly identify where one wants to be and develop long-term goals accordingly.	Clearly identify where one wants to be, where the society should be and develop long-term goals accordingly.	Clearly identify where one wants to be, where the society should be, and develop long-term goals accordingly.	Clearly identify where one wants to be, where the society should be, and develop long-term goals accordingly.	Clearly identify where one wants to be, where the society should be, and develop long-term goals accordingly.

12. Updating Self / Lifelong Learning	Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions. Advance knowledge and develop additional skills. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Carry out independent studies for professional development.	Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions. Advance knowledge and develop additional skills. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Carry out independent studies for professional development.	Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions. Advance knowledge and develop additional skills. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Demonstrate skills in independent learning for continuous professional development.	Undertake further training and develop additional skills that will enable them to make sound decisions. Advance knowledge and understanding, and develop additional skills. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Demonstrate skills in independent learning for continuous professional development.	Undertake further training and develop additional skills using reflective practice that will enable them to make sound decisions. Advance knowledge and understanding, and develop additional skills. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Continuously demonstrate skills in collective learning with originality for solving problems.	Undertake further training and develop additional skills using reflective practice that will enable them to make sound decisions. Engage in independent learning using scholarly reviews and secondary sources of information. Continuously demonstrate skills in collective learning with originality for solving problems.
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Source: University Grants Commission (2015), Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework, Updated Version.

8.1 LEARNING COMPETENCIES FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (THROUGH A MAPPING OF DIFFERENT SLQF LEVELS WITH COMPARABLE LEVELS OF NVQF)

The comparable NVQ and SLQF levels have been recognised on the basis of significant similarities in the learning outcomes stated under respective level descriptors in the two frameworks by a panel of experts. Degree level qualification (NVQ 7) is benchmarked to an internationally accepted standard for a Bachelor's degree (SLQF Level 5). Nonetheless, the proportion of cognitive outcomes and psychomotor outcomes may differ in the two qualifications, especially in qualifications below SLQF 2 (NVQ 4). Further, the attributes of two qualification holders, below the degree level, at comparable SLQF and NVQ levels may differ.

The criteria for assigning NVQ levels are based on the following three parameters⁵⁴: (1) Complexity of the process that a qualification holder will carry out, (2) Learning demand (*difficulty in learning of those processes*), and (3) Responsibility of the job holder when relevant processes are carried out.

Table 8: Mapping of SLQF and NVQF

SLQF Level	Qualification awarded	Comparable NVQ Levels
5	Bachelors	7
4	Higher Diploma	6
3	Diploma	5
2	Advanced Certificate (G.C.E.(A/L) or equivalent)	4
1	Certificate (G.C.E. (O/L) or equivalent)	3
		2

Source: Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2005). NCS, Curricula and NVQ Division. Retrieved August 02, 2021 from Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission https://www.tvec.gov.lk/?page_id=140

9. HOW TO USE NLCF IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) {NEPF (2020-2030)} is the official communique that delineates the education policy of the State. A major component of the NEPF (2020-2030) is the National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF). It is an exposition of the Vision of Education of the country, the National Education Goals (NEGs), National Learning Competency Domains (NLCDs), and the level-specific learning competency/ outcome statements or level descriptors for the NLCDs at different levels of education. It also explains how these components are interconnected. If the Vision of Education is to be realized, these components should be translated to core educational practice. The key document that guides the on-ground educational practice is the curriculum adopted by educational institutes. The following provides guidance to practitioners on how the key components and stipulations of the NLCF can be used in curriculum development.

The key areas that the education system should focus on to attain the Vision of Education of the country (*i.e. developing a holistic, progressive, and lifelong learner for a cohesive, peaceful, patriotic Sri Lankan society attuned to face the local and global challenges*) is outlined by the NEGs. To achieve the Vision of Education through NEGs, the NEGs should be converted to more learnable, teachable, and assessable abilities and attributes. These abilities and attributes are given as 12 NLCDs. To facilitate understanding the NLCDs, they have been grouped into four categories: what

54. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2005). NCS, Curricula and NVQ Division. Retrieved August 02, 2021 from Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

learners should know (*i.e., knowledge*), what the learners should be able to do (*i.e., skills*), how the learners should behave (*i.e., attitudes*), and how the learners perceive the world (*i.e., mind-set*). As can be gathered from the above account, the 12 NLCDs should form the main pillars on which a curriculum should be built.

A curriculum can be broadly termed as an organised set of learning events or activities. A curriculum may span over a few hours to several years. If a curriculum spans over several months or years, then it is best that the learning process in such a curriculum is broken down into more manageable components or layers. These components are variously termed as courses, course units, modules, units, chapters, subjects, sections, etc. Sometimes these components can be designed hierarchically, in a nested format. For example, sections within modules within courses. Whichever the terminology and the format used to organise these curriculum components, the most basic building block of a curriculum is a lesson. It is the lessons that are delivered to the learners. Typically, a lesson lasts for either a few minutes or a few hours and consists of learning and teaching activities. A collection of lessons thus forms a more aggregate component of a curriculum, namely, a course unit/module. All these aggregate components will collectively form a composite curriculum, which is usually called a study programme. This goes to show that a curriculum may have several hierarchical layers. The three most common such layers are termed as the study programme, the course/module and the lesson.

A curriculum, at whichever layer - whether it is at the layer of study programme, course/module or lesson should consist of two basic arms: learning outcomes and content. The learning outcomes should dictate the capabilities that the learner should gain by learning the content within a lesson, course/module or study programme, depending on the layer of the curriculum that one is concerned with. This means that the learning outcomes should be specified at each of the above layers of a curriculum, *i.e.*, programme learning outcomes (PLOs), course/module learning outcomes (CLOs) and lesson learning outcomes (LLOs).

Since NLCDs are the nationally recognised learning outcomes that all curricula within the country should focus on, how can a curriculum developer ensure that the NLCDs are addressed by a given curriculum? This can be ensured by following the steps below.

1. Identify the learning level that the learner should achieve at the end of following the curriculum that is to be developed. These learning levels are given in Section 8 of the National Learning Competency Framework produced by the NEC. In this section, each NLCD has been customised to a given level of learning. These are termed 'level descriptors'. Table 5 of this section provides guidance on how the NLCDs apply to the five levels of school education: early childhood education and development, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary or collegiate. Table 6 provides guidance on how the NLCDs apply to the four undergraduate levels of learning, while Table 7 provides guidance on how NLCDs apply to the six postgraduate levels of learning. Within each of these 15 levels, the curriculum developers may have to identify appropriate sub-levels. For example, the junior secondary level addresses four sub-levels of education: Grade 6, Grade 7, Grade 8 and Grade 9. This means that the junior secondary level descriptors should be comprehensively achieved at the end of Grade 9. The achievements during the Grades of 6 to 8 should provide stepwise support for the final achievement in Grade 9. Hence, if the curriculum to be developed is for Grade 7, then the curriculum developer will have to identify the sub-levels necessary for Grade 7 for each NLCD, so that the learner could be supported through Grade 8 and Grade 9 levels of learning as stated in Table 5, by the time the learner reaches the end of Grade 9.
2. Using the guidance provided by the appropriate learning level in the tables in Section 8, write PLOs for the curriculum. PLOs must address all the NLCDs. The educational institutes either can use the NLCDs as their PLOs or they are free to formulate their own PLOs. In the case of the latter, the PLOs should be mapped to the NLCDs, to ensure that all NLCDs are addressed by the PLOs.
3. Using the guidance provided by the appropriate learning level in the tables in Section 8, write course/module

learning outcomes (CLOs), by breaking down the PLOs to more specific learning outcomes, while taking into consideration the content of each course/module within the curriculum. Any given course/module may not be able to achieve all the PLOs or NLCDs. However, every course/ module should strive to address as many PLOs and NLCDs as possible, through its CLOs.

4. Using the guidance provided by the appropriate learning level in the tables in Section 8, write lesson learning outcomes (LLOs) by breaking down the CLOs further, while paying due attention to the content of a given lesson. This way, the LLOs will be aligned to the NLCDs, as the LLOs are a product of a progressive narrowing down process of NLCDs. In other words, this is a process of hierarchically mapping the LLOs, CLOs, and PLOs to the NLCDs.
5. Identify learning activities to address the LLOs. These learning activities in turn should address the relevant CLOs, PLOs, and NLCDs. It is good practice to include several learning activities within a lesson. Each learning activity should promote active and deep learning to address a combination of NLCDs relevant to the lesson.
6. Identify appropriate learning and teaching methods for the learning activities to facilitate the learners to achieve the LLOs. Given the mapping process described above, the learning and teaching methods should ensure that achieving the LLOs will meaningfully contribute to the achievement of the relevant NLCDs by the learners. Due to the nature of the NLCDs, the identified teaching and learning methods should naturally promote student-centered learning. If not, most of the NLCDs cannot be achieved. Also, it is a sound educational practice to promote the learners to use a multitude of teaching and learning methods, beyond those used in traditional curriculum activities, to extend and deepen their learning within the said LLOs. Ideally, the learners should be promoted to document such learning within a learning portfolio. This will additionally promote self-directed and lifelong learning — the twelfth NLCD. Such a learning portfolio can also be used for assessment purposes, if necessary.
7. Identify appropriate assessment methods to verify whether the learners have adequately achieved the LLOs. This will in turn ensure that the learners have adequately mastered the part of the relevant NLCDs that these LLOs have addressed.

When developing each course/module, a curriculum matrix/grid/blueprint or a table of specifications can be used to support the curriculum developer in following above seven steps. A template for such a curriculum matrix is provided below (Table 9).

Table 9: Template for Developing a Curriculum Blueprint

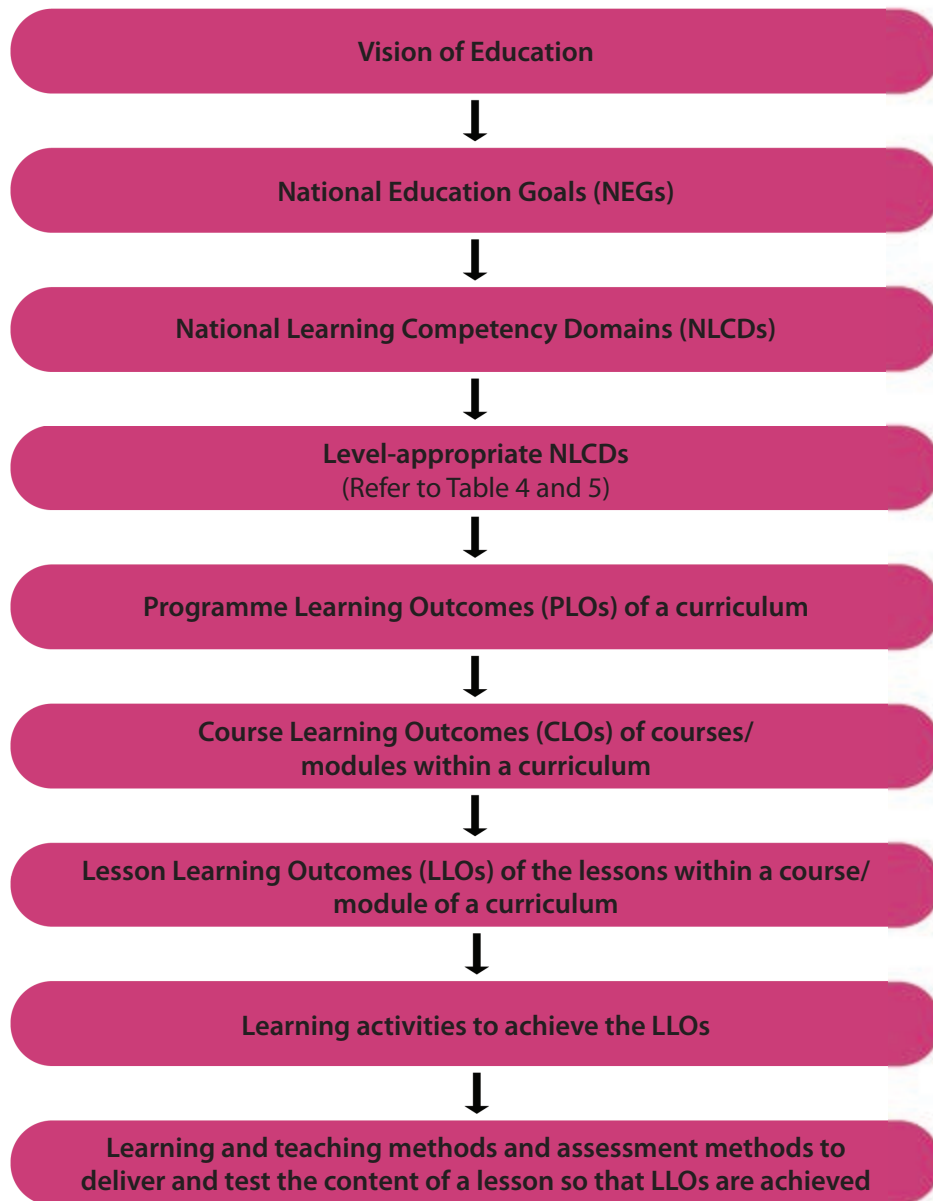
NLCDs	NLCD1	NLCD2	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	NLCD12
PLOs	PLO1	PLO2			PLO3			PLO4				PLO12
CLOs	CLO1	CLOn			CLO2			CLOn				CLO2
Lesson 1	LLO 1.1 (TL1, A1)	LLO 1.3 (TL1/2, A2) LLO 1.4 (TL2,A2)			LLO 1.3 (TL1/2, A2)			LLO 1.2 (TL2,A3)				LLO 1.2 (TL2,A3)
Lesson 2												
.....												
.....												
Lesson n												

Source: Author's illustration.

NLCD – National Learning Competency Domain; PLO – Programme Learning Outcome; CLO – Course/module Learning Outcome; LLO – Lesson Learning Outcome; TL – Teaching and Learning method; A – Assessment method

The above process of curriculum development conforms to the principles of outcome-based education, student-centered learning, and constructive alignment. The summary of this process is diagrammatically illustrated in the figure below (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Steps of a Curriculum Development Process Using NLCF



Source: Author's illustration.

PART III

AIMS AND DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

As already stated in Part II, the silver thread running through the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) is the National Education Goals (NEGs). In Part II, the link between the National Education Goals (NEGs) and National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) was delineated, while Part III illustrates the link between the NEGs and the Aims of the National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030). Based on the Aims, Part III also identifies Core Areas and Elements and core-area specific Directive Principles (DPs) which shall guide the policy and strategy development process for the National Education System (NES).

It is very conceivable that the NES in general, and the educational institutions in particular, need to be fostered by an appropriate national policy and associated sectoral policies and strategies if the Vision of Education and the NEGs are to be achieved. Besides the NEGs, the NES has to embrace and comply with all the relevant constitutional dictates⁵⁵ and the universal principles and norms that are prescribed by the international accords and charters. Hence, in the policy formulation process, the NEC has defined a set of six Aims of the NEPF and proceeded to define the corresponding Guiding Principles that encompass all constitutional dictates, universal principles, and norms prescribed by the international accords and charters as well as the ethical and the moral standards and principles that the country aspires to uphold.

The **Guiding Principles** in turn would guide the identification of the **Core Areas and Elements**, and the formulation of **Directive Principles (DPs)** of the NEPF. The DPs of the NEPF are considered as the principal policies of the Government with respect to the Core Areas of the National Education System (NES), and they would influence and determine the decisions, actions, and other matters relating to education. Hence, the DPs should guide the development of sector-specific policies and associated strategic activities. In a policy development and implementation process, it is assumed no decision should contravene any of these DPs.

2. AIMS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

The NEC has formulated six Aims to guide the formulation of the NEPF (2020-2030) envisions to achieve, and these Aims are:

- Aim 1: Education System that Assures Universal Access to Education
- Aim 2: Education System that Ensures Equity and Inclusiveness
- Aim 3: Education System that Delivers Quality Education Matching with International Benchmarks
- Aim 4: Education System that Aims at All-Round Personality Development
- Aim 5: Education System that Nurtures National Identity and Unity in Diversity
- Aim 6: Education System with Adequate Funding, Quality Physical and Human Resources and Greater Accountability and Efficiency

Having defined the Aims of NEPF, the NEC has proceeded to construct the corresponding Guiding Principles (GPs).

55. *Constitution of 1978 of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. (1978). Citizen (chapter VI): Government Press*

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES CORRESPONDING TO THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

As stated elsewhere, guiding principles encompass all national values and norms, relevant constitutional dictates, and the universal principles and norms prescribed by the International Accords and Charters⁵⁶ as well as the ethical and moral standards and principles that the country aspires to uphold. The GPs defined for each of the Aims of NEPF are given below.

Aim 1 - Education System that Assures Universal Access to Education

Guiding Principles: Every Sri Lankan child, regardless of wealth, ethnicity, geographical location, or social background, deserves equal access to education that will enable him/her to achieve his or her true potential. Building upon the principle of 'Primary Education for All', a constituent of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sri Lankan education system aspires to ensure universal access and full enrolment of all children from pre-school through to the senior secondary and collegiate levels, whether through the academic pathway or equivalent vocational and technical pathways. This commitment includes ensuring all students have a place in school and proactively reaching out to those children currently not attending school, as well as ensuring that these students complete schooling to the minimum acceptable standards. Achieving universal school enrolment would put Sri Lanka on a par with developed nations. It will also help increase the percentage of students entering some form of post-secondary education in academic institutions such as universities and colleges or in technical and vocational training for structured skills training programmes.

Aim 2 - Education System that Ensures Equity and Inclusiveness

Guiding Principles: Sri Lankan education system, as prescribed by the Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁷ (*Goal 4—Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning*), aspires to deliver the best possible education to every student. Equity and inclusiveness should ensure that the distribution of learning opportunities and funds across all provinces will be based on the student needs. The education system envisioned for Sri Lanka is one where all students, regardless of who their parents are or where they study, or their disabilities will be equipped with the tools they need to build their own future. The Sri Lankan school system aspires to eliminate the socio-economic, urban-rural, and gender achievement gaps in student outcomes by 2030. The reduction of the socio-economic and urban-rural gap is expected to impact corresponding achievement gaps among provinces, districts, and school types. The education system will actively support social mobility by providing additional support to those who are at a disadvantage or having a learning or physical disability, thereby ensuring that a student's socio-economic background or disability will no longer be the determinant of whether or not he or she succeeds in life. The system also aspires to provide access to alternative, attractive pathways to education such as non-formal education and vocational education with provisions for lateral mobility for further education. This will provide opportunities for students of diverse interests and abilities to develop their talents and reach their aspirations. Similarly, it is acknowledged that there are student segments within the school-going population in Sri Lanka with specific needs. They require even more support. To this end, the education system is committed to providing greater support and programs not only for "gifted" students but also for students with special needs and other minority groups, to allow them to achieve their fullest potential. Besides, the opportunities for lifelong learning must also be made available, particularly for adults, through flexible open and distance modes of education.

Aim 3 - Education System that Delivers Quality Education Matching with International Benchmarks

Guiding Principles: Every Sri Lankan student deserves the opportunity to receive quality education that is uniquely Sri Lankan, in conformity with the NEC prescribed National Education Goals and Basic Learning Competency

56. *International Accords and Charters*

57. *United Nations. (2012). THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.*

Domains, and comparable to the high-performing education systems in the world.

Quality education includes many dimensions⁵⁸: Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in the learning process by their families and communities; Learning Environments that are healthy, safe, protective, gender-sensitive and provide adequate resources and facilities; Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, and peace; Learning processes through which trained teachers use student-centered teaching and learning approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities; Learning outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

Sri Lankan education system, within the next 5 years, envisions embarking upon a path of improvement that will move it rapidly towards enhanced performance, as benchmarked against international standards. This includes standards for basic disciplines that form the backbone of Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education, and for higher-order thinking skills such as applying, reasoning, problem-solving, and creativity as measured by outcomes in international testing systems such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), or by a national assessment programme conducted by an authorized agency.

Aim 4 - Education System that Aims at All-Round Personality Development

Guiding Principles: As synopsised in National Education Goals formulated by the National Education Commission in Sri Lanka education system focuses on the holistic education that aims at the fullest possible development of the person, encouraging individuals to become the very best or finest that they can be and enabling them to experience all they can in life and reach their goals (NEG 1 to 8). This shall cover not only, cognitive development, but also the emotional development, physical development, and social development of children. Every student must be provided a solid combination of knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics and spirituality, and national identity which are critical in preparing students to succeed and thrive in an increasingly globalized world. The education system shall focus not only on the importance of knowledge, but also on developing critical, creative, and innovative thinking skills; leadership skills; proficiency in national languages, Sinhala and Tamil, and the English language; character and values; and a strong sense of national identity. These elements would guarantee all students in their adulthood would contribute meaningfully to their families, to society, and to the nation.

Aim 5 - Education System that nurtures National Identity and Unity in Diversity

Guiding Principles: The Sri Lankan education system, as summed up in NEG 8, must enlighten every child about Sri Lanka's rich history, culture, values, art, and music and about its ethnic and religious diversity. It must impart an unshakeable sense of national identity, tied to the principles of unity in diversity which is essential for Sri Lanka's future development in order to inculcate love and allegiance for their birthplace. Every student shall identify themselves proudly as Sri Lankans, irrespective of ethnicity, religious beliefs, socio-economic status, or geographical location. Achieving this patriotism and pluralism requires a strong sense of inclusiveness, acquired through learning to understand and tolerate differences, to accept and respect others, as well as to live together and embrace the diversity within the Sri Lankan community. A common national identity also requires all students to understand Sri Lankan history, culture, and values and develop shared experiences in and out of school, and build shared aspirations for Sri Lanka's future.

58. UNICEF. (2000). *Defining Quality in Education - Working Paper Series. United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF.*

Aim 6 - Education System with Adequate Funding, Quality Physical and Human Resources, and Greater Accountability and Efficiency

Guiding Principles: Sri Lanka's commitment to upholding free education, is indicative of the Government's commitment to support and sustain high quality education for all. Though Sri Lanka spends less on education in terms of its GDP or percentage of government expenditure on education, compared to upper-middle-income countries, the modest expenditure levels have resulted in almost universal access to primary and secondary education. Nonetheless, there remains room for further improvement on many dimensions such as funding, human resources, regulation, governance and management of educational institutions, relevance and quality of education provisions, and higher education enrolment. Accordingly, the government strives towards an incremental increase in investment in education, enhance the adequacy of physical resources and the quality of teachers and improve their service conditions, improve governance and management and improve accountability and efficiency that ensures prudent deployment of public resources to sustain an education system which is adequately resourced, responsible, accountable and efficient so as to maximize student outcomes within the given budget.

4. MAPPING OF NEG_s TO THE AIMS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK (NEPF)

The alignment of Aims and Guiding Principles with the NEG_s is demonstrated by mapping of the NEG_s to the Aims and accompanied GPs, and the mapping is given below in Table 1.

Table 1: Mapping of NEG_s to the Aims and Guiding Principles of NEPF

NEG Number	NEG	Condensed Form	Aims and Guiding Principles
NEG 1	Promote the physical, mental, spiritual, socioemotional, and environmental well-being of individuals necessary for a healthy and happy way of life, based on respect for human values	Happy and healthy human being	Aim 4 - All-round personality development
NEG 2	Develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and human qualities for technological, socio-economic, and cultural advancement, in keeping with national needs and global trends	Productive individual	Aim 1 - Access Aim 2 - Equity & inclusiveness Aim 3 - Quality of education
NEG 3	Develop productive individuals with curiosity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creativity, and innovativeness	Progressive learner	Aim 3 - Quality of education
NEG 4	Promote respect for human rights and laws of the country, while fulfilling duties and obligations in keeping with the norms of social justice and democratic way of life	A respectful and trustworthy person	Aim 4 - All-round personality development
NEG 5	Develop individuals to manage change and cope with complex and unforeseen situations	Resilient individual	Aim 4 - All-round personality development
NEG 6	Uphold the nation's cultural and ecological heritage while responding to local and global challenges	Culturally rooted ambassador	Aim 5 - National identity and unity in diversity

NEG 7	Promote a mindful and self-conscious learner to enhance the capacity for learning to learn	Reflective learner	Aim 4 - All-round personality development
NEG 8	Develop a patriotic Sri Lankan citizen fostering national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity while respecting cultural diversity	Patriotic citizen	Aim 5 - National identity and unity in diversity

Source: Author's illustration.

Note: Since the Aim 6 and accompanying Guiding Principles (i.e. Funding, Quality Physical, and Human Resources, Accountability & Efficiency) is necessary for all the NEGs it has not been specifically mapped to any of the NEGs. Instead, Aim 6 and accompanied Guiding Principles should be considered necessary for the achievement of all eight NEGs.

5. CORE AREAS AND ELEMENTS OF NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

Based on 6 Aims and corresponding Guiding Principles, the following 12 core areas and core-area specific policy elements (criteria) are identified as the basis for formulating the National Education Policy Framework which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Core Areas and Elements of National Education Policy Framework

No.	Core Areas	Policy Elements
AIM1 - UNIVERSAL ACCESS		
1	Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to ECE - Access to Primary and Secondary Education - Access to Higher Education - Access to TVET - Access to Non-formal Education
AIM 2 - EQUITY & INCLUSIVENESS		
2	Equity and Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to education regardless of gender, race, religion or social status, geographical location or disabilities - Education for differently-abled students - Vocational Education for school dropouts - Non-formal education for adults
AIM 3 - QUALITY EDUCATION		
3	Quality Education - Learners and Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner preparedness - healthy, well-nourished, and ready to participate and learn - Parents' commitment and community support - Learning environments that are healthy, safe, protective, and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities - Learning resources - Well-resourced and managed classrooms and schools

4	Quality Education – Duration, Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duration of pre-school and general education - State role in curriculum design and development - Alignment of the curricula of pre-school, primary, and secondary education with the nationally prescribed National Education Goals and National Learning Competencies - Alignment of the curricula of higher education and vocational and technical education with national qualification frameworks. - Synergy among curricula across all levels of education from early childhood education through general education to tertiary education - Outcome-based, multidisciplinary, integrated, and holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, humanities, aesthetics, and sports and health sciences in general education - Learning outcomes that match with nationally prescribed learning outcomes/competencies - Curriculum content and delivery that aims to promote the acquisition of basic life skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, creativity and critical thinking, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, and also that aim at promoting patriotism, ethnic cohesion, social harmony, and unity in diversity - Elimination of hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extracurricular activities, between academic and vocational streams, etc. in all levels of education - Flexibility of curriculum of higher education programmes, particularly in non-professional study programs so as to facilitate the learners to choose their learning pathways and programmes, and thereby customize their own career paths in life according to their talents and interests - Lateral mobility of students from technical and vocational streams into higher education streams/pathways - Multiple entry and exit provisions in higher education and technical and vocational study programmes
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5	Quality Education – Teaching-Learning Process and Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teaching-learning process guided by high quality / trained teachers and faculty - Teaching-learning process that embraces learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods to promote experiential /authentic learning leading to cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional (<i>i.e. affective</i>) development - Blended mode of delivery - multiple and diverse delivery modalities adopting ICT-based tools and applications - Teaching-learning as a tri-patriate alliance among students, teachers, and parents - Teaching-learning that emphasizes conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and exam-oriented learning - Learner assessments through formative and summative assessments
6	Quality Education - Benchmarking and Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nationally prescribed best practices and standards for all elements of education - Institutionalizing the concepts of quality and quality culture in all forms and in all aspects of education - Internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for all forms of education - National accreditation system for all forms of education - Benchmarking of learning outcomes against other countries by international standards
AIM 4 - ALL-ROUND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT		
7	Personality Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All-round personality development of learners by fostering psychosocial and physical development while promoting behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual maturity and by instilling values, morals and ethics - Imparting life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, and resilience
Aim 5 - NATIONAL IDENTITY AND UNITY IN DIVERSITY		
8	Civic Consciousness and Patriotism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision of religious education and teaching comparative religion - Instilling nationalism and promoting affection towards the motherland and its ancient, diverse, and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions - Imbuing human and constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice

Aim 6 - FUNDING, QUALITY PHYSICAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND ACCOUNTABILITY & EFFICIENCY

9	Financing of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State commitment for free education from kindergarten to university - Need-based funding, equity in distribution, & efficiency in utilization - Grants, scholarships, and concessionary loan schemes for those who are in need of financial support - Private sector participation in education to widen the access to education
10	Quality Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of teachers/faculty - Teacher/faculty recruitment, promotions, and deployment - In-service and continuous professional development opportunities for teachers/faculty - Positive working environments and service conditions for teachers/faculty - Professional standards of teachers/faculty and other education personnel - Student/learner support and guidance services - student counsellors and mentors, physical education instructors, career guidance personnel, etc.
11	Quality Physical Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School infrastructure — buildings, classrooms, teaching laboratories, and common amenities such as sanitary facilities, restrooms, playgrounds, etc. - Learning resources - Library and ICT facilities - Facilities for extracurricular activities – playgrounds, gymnasiums, sports equipment, facilities for aesthetic activities, etc.
12	Regulation, and Governance and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State responsibility of setting policy and regulatory framework for all State and non-State education institutions from Early Childhood Education to Primary to Tertiary Level education. - Accountability and efficiency of the education system at all levels monitored through appropriate internal and external auditing mechanisms. - Parent and community involvement in school management

Source: Author's illustration.

6. DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES CORRESPONDING TO THE CORE AREAS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

As stated elsewhere, the Directive Principles (DPs) of the NEPF are the principal policies of the Government that influence and determine the decisions, actions, and other matters relating to education and these are considered as Standards of NEPF(2020-2030). The DPs are framed by giving due consideration to the corresponding guiding principles that encompass all constitutional dictates, universal principles, and norms prescribed by the international accords and charters as well as the ethical and the moral standards and principles that the country aspires to uphold. Hence, the DPs should guide the development of sector-specific policies and associated strategic activities. In a policy development and implementation process, it is assumed that no decision should contravene any of these DPs.

Core Area 1: Access

- DP 1: State assumes the responsibility of ensuring “Education for All”.
- DP 2: State assures the provision of 13 years of guaranteed free education.
- DP 3: State assures the provision of universal access to early childhood education.
- DP 4: State assures the provision of access to higher education for those who are eligible.
- DP 5: State promotes technical and vocational education as an alternative tertiary education pathway.
- DP 6: State promotes the non-State education sector to operate in parallel with the State sector of education.

Core Area 2: Equity and Inclusiveness

- DP 7: Full equity and inclusion in education where need-based support is available to all students to thrive within the education system regardless of gender, race, religion or social status, geographical location, or disabilities.
- DP 8: All students, regardless of any challenges they may have would be placed in age-appropriate general education classes/study programmes to receive instructions, interventions, and supports that enable them to achieve success in the core curriculum.
- DP 9: The state assumes the responsibility of absorbing the young people who are ‘not in employment, education or training’ (NEET group) into the productive economy by guiding them to the vocational and technical education pathway.
- DP 10: State promotes adult and non-formal education programmes targeting school dropouts, adults, women, displaced or marginal communities, and those who wish to engage in lifelong learning.

Core Area 3: Quality Education - Learner and Learning Environment

- DP 11: Learners must be guided throughout the learning process.
- DP 12: Learners must be educated about the options available in learning pathways and career opportunities

so as to ensure every individual chooses the best learning pathway to reach the full potential to make him/her productively employable in the 'world of work'.

- DP 13: Education must be aimed at fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.
- DP 14: Education must be flexible, and offer multiple learning pathways with multiple entry and exit points so that learners have the ability with guidance to choose their learning pathways and programmes, and thereby choose their preferred career paths according to their talents and interests.
- DP 15: Education must equip the learners with the necessary abilities to learn on their own to suit the diverse personal and societal requirements, within a rapidly changing world, following the principles of reflective practice, adult learning, and lifelong learning.
- DP 16: Achievement of broader education goals at the primary and secondary levels through a tri-partite alliance among students, teachers, and parents.
- DP 17: Students must be educated to become partners of institutional quality culture and empower them as a responsible stakeholder group in the internal quality assurance system.

Core Area 4: Quality Education - Duration, Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes

- DP 18: All students must be guaranteed 13 years of school education (*i.e. 1-5 Primary; 6-9 Junior Secondary, 10-11 year Senior Secondary and 12-13 Upper Senior Secondary/ Collegiate years of education*).
- DP 19: State assumes the responsibility of design and development of the national curriculum and instructional material in primary and secondary education.
- DP 20: Pre-school, primary, and secondary education curricula should be designed in conformity with National Education Commission prescribed National Learning Competency Framework so as to develop learners' general and subject-specific competencies (*i.e. knowledge, skills, and abilities*) as well as the generic skills (*i.e. high-order, transferable skills such as numeracy, logical analysis, critical thinking, communication, curiosity, patience, teamwork, flexibility, perseverance, resilience, courage, etc.*), and to prepare participants for more advanced education programmes, lay the foundation for psychosocial well-being of individuals, and to prepare them to become healthy and productive citizens with a craving for lifelong learning.
- DP 21: Curricula of higher education and vocational and technical education study programmes should be designed in conformity with the National Education Commission prescribed National Learning Competency Framework, and in alignment with the appropriate National Qualification Frameworks-prescribed level descriptors and qualification descriptors (*i.e. Sri Lanka Qualification Framework and National Vocational Qualification Framework, respectively*).
- DP 22: Curriculum design should ensure synergy and additive effects of curricula seamlessly across all grades/levels of education from early childhood education to school education to higher education.
- DP 23: Curriculum in primary and junior secondary education should not make any hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extracurricular activities, between academic and vocational streams, etc., in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies among and formation of silos between different areas of learning.

- DP 24: Curriculum at all levels must offer outcome-based (*i.e. constructively aligned with expected outcomes*), interdisciplinary, integrated, and holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, humanities, aesthetics, and sports in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge and holistic development of children to prepare them for a multidisciplinary world.
- DP 25: Flexibility in the tertiary education level must be ensured by offering multiple entry and exit points and pathways so as to promote lifelong learning and continuing professional advancement.
- DP 26: All curricula at all levels (*from early childhood to secondary education to tertiary education*) should undergo periodic evaluation and continuous monitoring and revision at periodic intervals to suit the intended purposes and national requirements in the light of changing technologies and labour market dynamics.

Core Area 5: Quality Education – Medium of Instruction, Teaching-Learning and Assessment

- DP 27: Mother Tongue (*Sinhala/Tamil*) should continue to be the medium of instruction at primary and secondary levels.
- DP 28: Provision would be made available for Sinhala-speaking children to learn Tamil and Tamil-speaking children to learn Sinhala.
- DP 29: Teaching of activity-based functional English should be encouraged from Grade 1, and the formal teaching of English should be made compulsory from Grade 3 to 13.
- DP 30: Bilingual or Bimedial delivery (*Sinhala and English or Tamil and English*) shall be made available as an option at the Secondary Education level.
- DP 31: Teaching-learning process must emphasize conceptual understanding and higher-order cognitive skills rather than rote learning and learning-for-examinations.
- DP 32: Teaching-learning process shall embrace as much as possible learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods so as to promote experiential/authentic learning that promotes self-regulated learning and enables the learner to construct her/his knowledge and skills through active participation in the teaching-learning process.
- DP 33: Curricula delivery should adopt the blended mode of teaching-learning approach with the extensive use of technology, along with the provision of adequate opportunity for hands-on learning and open-ended exploration using ICT applications.
- DP 34: Children and youth should be educated to keep themselves safe from internet threats.
- DP 35: Teaching-learning and assessment process should conform to prescribed quality and standards.
- DP 36: Evaluation and certification of students' achievement should be based on both formative and summative assessments that are designed to achieve all intended learning outcomes and also to ensure validity and reliability.
- DP 37: Assessment at Grade 5, G.C.E. (O/L), and G.C.E. (A/L) shall be a State function.

Core Area 6: Quality Education – Standards, Monitoring and Benchmarking

- DP 38: Concepts of quality and quality culture shall be institutionalized in all forms of education through nationally prescribed criteria, standards, and best practices, and by having external and internal monitoring quality assessment systems.
- DP 39: Internal and external quality assurance mechanisms for all forms of education shall be in place to monitor the quality of inputs, systems and processes, and outcomes.
- DP 40: Criteria and standards adopted by Quality Assurance and Accreditation Systems in higher education and technical and vocational education institutes must be benchmarked against international criteria and standards to promote mobility of high school graduates {G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E (A/L) qualifiers}, diplomates and graduates.
- DP 41: Sri Lankan general education system must internalize STEAM (*Science, technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics*) education as an approach for teaching-learning that uses science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking, and prepare the students to embark on a path of improvement to move rapidly towards enhanced performance.
- DP 42: Sri Lankan general education system must take steps to benchmark its teaching-learning outcomes through periodic submission of its students to international testing systems/services such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) or equivalent testing system.

Core Area 7: Personality Development

- DP 43: Education should facilitate all-round personality development by fostering cognitive, physical, and psychosocial development of children from early childhood to the adult state while promoting behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual maturity and instilling values, morals, and ethics.
- DP 44: Education should impart life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, perseverance, and resilience.

Core Area 8: Civic Consciousness and Patriotism

- DP 45: Education should instil nationalism and patriotism in students so as to promote affection towards Sri Lanka as their motherland and to value its history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions.
- DP 46: Provision of religious education and teaching of comparative religion should be made compulsory in all primary and secondary schools, without forcing children or making it a compulsory subject in the school curriculum.
- DP 47: Education must imbue civic consciousness, patience, resilience, empathy, respect for others, courtesy, democratic spirit, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, equality, and justice.

Core Area 9: Quality Human Resources

- DP 48: Teacher/faculty recruitment, deployment, and promotions must be based on a fair and transparent system and procedures to ensure the decisions with respect to recruitment, deployment, and promotions are made without any undue influence.
- DP 49: All teachers/faculty and other staff (*i.e. library, technical, and student and career guidance counselling staff*) must be provided with adequate and appropriate opportunities for professional and career advancements (*i.e. in-service, and continuing professional development and promotions*).
- DP 50: All teachers/faculty and other staff (*i.e. library, technical, and student and career guidance counselling staff*) must be provided with conducive working environments and service conditions.

Core Area 10: Quality Physical Resources

- DP 51: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number, must be provided with minimum requirements of teaching facilities – adequately resourced classrooms, adequately equipped laboratories, activity rooms, libraries, etc., as required.
- DP 52: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with all required common amenities – restrooms, sick-rooms, running water, electricity, sports facilities, etc.
- DP 53: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with ICT facilities manned by competent personnel to facilitate the use of ICT-based teaching-learning tools.
- DP 54: All education institutions which accommodate students with special needs must be equipped with the required infrastructure, teaching facilities and learning aids, and assistive devices required to cater for such students.
- DP 55: Education institutions located in rural locations must be provided with accommodation facilities for teachers.

Core Area 11: Regulation, and Governance and Management

- DP 56: State assumes the responsibility for setting the policy and regulatory framework for all State and non-State education institutions from early childhood education through primary to secondary to tertiary level education.
- DP 57: Accountability and efficiency of governance and management of all educational institutions at all levels shall be monitored through appropriate internal and external auditing mechanisms.
- DP 58: Parent and community involvement in school management is encouraged to create a vital link between school authorities and students' families and communities, and to optimize the tri-partite alliance among students, teachers, and parents.

Core Area 12: Financing of Education

- DP 59: Free education is guaranteed from kindergarten to university education.
- DP 60: Incremental increase of public expenditure over the next 10 years on education from the current level of 2.1% to 4.5% of GDP while improving the need-based fund distribution and efficiency of fund utilization.
- DP 61: Provision of student aids for education as grants and concessionary loans for eligible students.
- DP 62: Encouragement of true philanthropic private and community participation in education by providing financial and tax incentives, as appropriate, within a conducive regulatory framework to establish and operate not-for-profit educational institutions.

PART IV

SUBSECTOR SPECIFIC POLICIES AND STRATEGIC ACTIVITY FRAMEWORKS

POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES ON:

VOLUME I	EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION
VOLUME II	GENERAL EDUCATION
VOLUME III	HIGHER EDUCATION
VOLUME IV	TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
වෙළුම V	පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය
VOLUME VI	SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
VOLUME VII	NON-FORMAL EDUCATION
VOLUME VIII	INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL EDUCATION

PART IV - VOLUME I

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD
CARE AND EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Early Childhood is internationally defined as the period of a child's life from conception to age eight. There are two reasons for assigning this age range for early childhood⁵⁹. The first reason is associated with the way children learn. Children below the age of eight learn best by constructing their knowledge when they have objects to manipulate and people to interact with. In short, they 'learn by doing'. The second reason is the importance of the continuity of experiences from prenatal to early primary years (age 8). Children need enriching opportunities for optimum nutrition, safety, health, responsive care, and education during this period. The upper age limit of early childhood, however, varies in different countries based on the admission age to the primary school system. As such, Sri Lanka has defined the term 'early childhood' as the period from conception to the age of school admission which is 5 years⁶⁰.

There are many terms used to describe early childhood development programmes. Broader terms used are Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), and Early Childhood Education (ECE). Both ECCD and ECCE refer to the holistic development of children including physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development from conception to age eight or five depending on the school admission age. ECCD/ECCE is more than preparation for primary, and it aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing, thus nurturing, caring, capable and responsible future citizens⁶¹. On the other hand, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a broad term used to describe any type of educational programme offered in preschool years and may consist of any number of activities and experiences designed to aid in the cognitive and social development of pre-schoolers before they enter elementary school. The term ECCD encompasses the development of the child that embraces an even wider scope in childcare that goes beyond traditional education. In terms of organized educational programmes, ECE generally encompasses kindergartens (enrolling mainly five-year-old children), and pre-kindergartens and preschools aimed at children starting at about age three⁶². However, it should be noted that all these terms ECCD, ECCE, ECE, and ECD refer to care and education services provided in an institutional environment for children in their early years. The term 'care' refers to enabling environment which supports a child's optimal development. As UNESCO (2007), points out "in practice, care and education cannot be separated, and good quality provision for young children necessarily addresses both dimensions"⁶³.

1.2 Significance of Early Childhood

Early childhood is a crucial phase of growth and development as the experiences incur during this phase can influence outcomes across the entire course of an individual's life. Researchers specify that 90% of the brain develops by age 5⁶⁴ and in the first few years of life, more than one million new neural connections are formed every second. After this period of rapid proliferation, connections are reduced through a process called pruning, so that brain circuits become more efficient. Sensory pathways like those for basic vision and hearing are the first to develop, followed by early language skills and higher cognitive functions (Figure 1). Connections proliferate and prune in a prescribed

59. Evans, J. L., Myres, R.G., and Ilfeld, E.M. (2000). *Early Childhood Counts: A programming Guide on Early Childhood Care and Development*. World Bank Publications.

60. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2018). *National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development*.

61. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2007). *Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. EFA Global Monitoring Report.

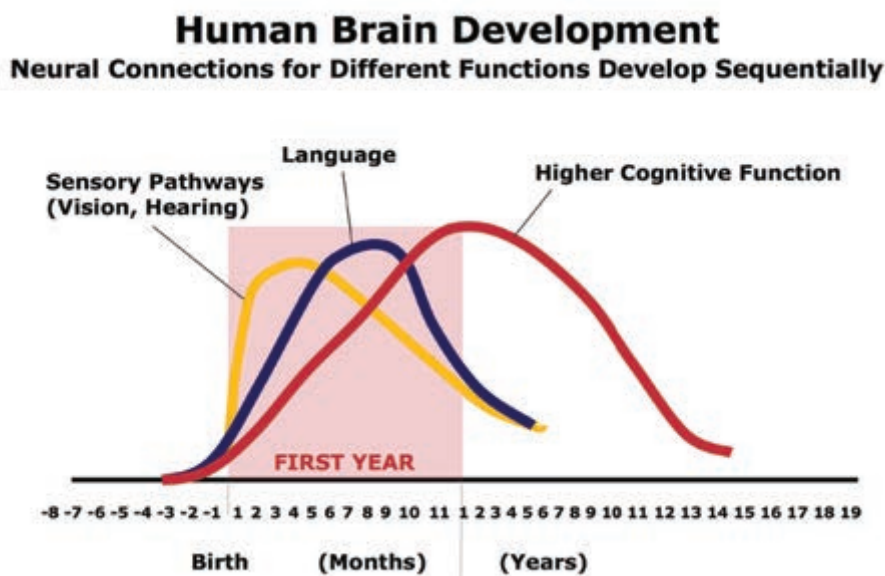
62. Hansen, J.S., Walsh, D.J., Liebovich, B.J., and Myers, R.G. (2018). *Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved November 25, 2021, from <https://www.encyclopedia.com>.

63. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2007). *Strong Foundations: Early Childhood Care and Education*. EFA Global Monitoring Report.

64. *Early childhood brain development has lifelong impact* | Arizona PBS. (2017, November 22). Retrieved July 7, 2021, from <https://azpbs.org/2017/11/early-childhood-brain-development-lifelong-impact/>

order, with later, more complex brain circuits built upon earlier, simpler circuits⁶⁵. Appropriate Interactions are crucial for children during this period. If responses of caregivers are unreliable and inappropriate the brain architecture does not form as expected, which can adversely affect the learning and behaviour of children. Further, for children with disabilities or developmental delays, early childhood is the most significant time for early detection to ensure access to interventions that can help them reach their maximum possible potential⁶⁶.

Figure 1: Critical Periods for Development of Basic Skills



Source: Nelson, C. A. (2007) Center on the developing child in *The Science of Early Childhood Development (In Brief)*. Retrieved July 5, 2021 from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.

In addition to brain research, the studies conducted on ECCE programmes reveal that children enrolled in at least one year of preschool education are more likely to develop critical skills they need to succeed in schools, less likely to repeat grades or drop out of school, and therefore will be more able to contribute to peaceful and prosperous societies and economies when they reach adulthood⁶⁷. These studies emphasize early childhood as the best period to invest in human capital development. A recent study conducted by Professor James J Heckman and others in the US found that high-quality birth-to-five programmes for disadvantaged children can deliver a 13% per year return on investment. In this study, the researchers looked at participants' improved health, IQ, education, and decreases in their involvement in crime, as well as the increased labour participation of the mothers whose children were a part of the program⁶⁸. This rate is much higher than the rate of return (7-10%) identified in previous research conducted by Professor Heckman and others (Figure 2).

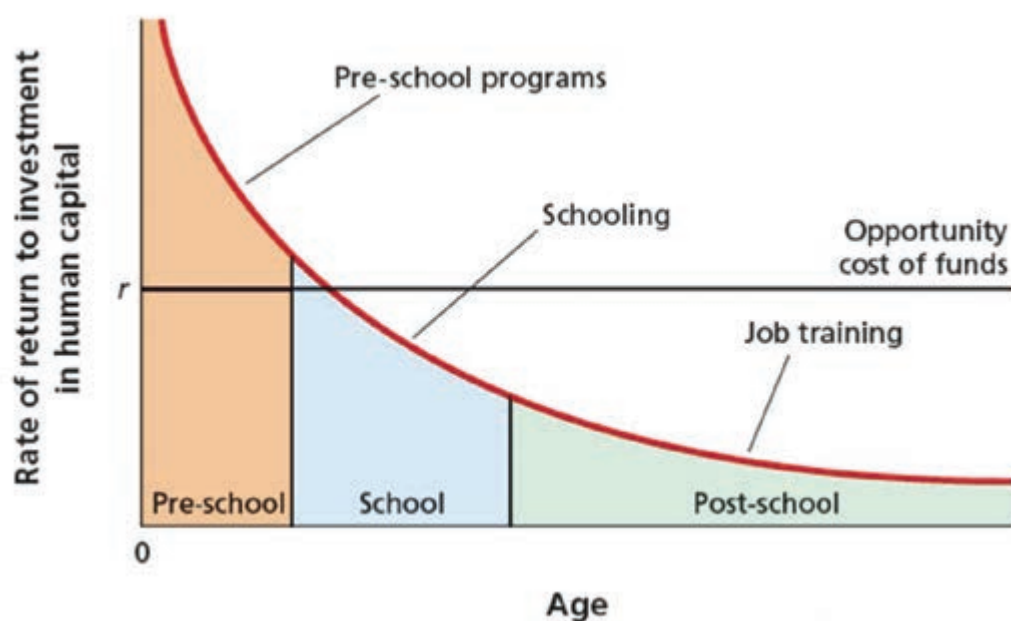
65. Harvard University. (2019). *In Brief: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Retrieved June 5, 2021, from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-ecd/>

66. United Nations Children's Fund. (2019). *A World Ready to Learn: Prioritizing Quality Early Childhood Education-in advocacy brief*. UNICEF.

67. Garcia, J.L., Heckman, J.J., Leaf, D.E., and Prados, M.J. (2017). "Quantifying the Life-cycle Benefits of a Prototypical Early Childhood Program". NBER Working Paper No. W23479. Retrieved August 3, 2021, from <https://www.nber.org/papers/w23479>.

68. Garcia, J.L., Heckman, J.J., Leaf, D.E., and Prados, M.J. (2016). *The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program*. Retrieved August 4, 2021, from https://cehd.uchicago.edu/?page_id=276#abccba

Figure 2: Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment



Source: Heckman, J.J. (2008) *School skill and Synapses*, "Economic Inquiry, 46(3) 289-324.

1.3 ECCE/ECCD in the Sri Lankan Context

1.3.1. Historical Overview

Introducing the first letters of the alphabet to children at an auspicious time when they reach the age of three years is a long-standing tradition in Sri Lanka that signifies the aspirations and value given for education by society. However, formal education for children prior to primary school admission was not in general practice until nursery classes were introduced during British rule. During this period nursery school system was popular in Britain and that has influenced instituting nursery schools in a number of missionary schools and churches in Sri Lanka. In 1944, Dr. Maria Montessori visited Sri Lanka, and subsequently, Montessori teacher training programmes were started. In the mid-20th century, the Montessori method of preschool education was firmly established in Sri Lanka.

A further expansion of preschools came about with Educational Reforms introduced in 1972 when the school admission age was raised to six years. The Government encouraged pre-primary education and as a result, ECCE centres mushroomed in every part of the country. When UNESCO proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child, the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) showed its commitment to children by establishing the Children's Secretariat (CS) during this year. Among the tasks assigned to the Children Secretariat was coordinating and directing activities for the development of children in early childhood. When the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment (*present Ministry of Women and Child Development*) was created in 2005 the CS became one of its major institutes carrying out programmes to ensure holistic development of children in early childhood⁶⁹. The CS has contributed to the field of ECCD in many ways including introducing policies on ECCD, minimum standards for ECD centres, and ECD standards for children between the ages of 3-5 years. Considering the significant role played by the CS to the field of ECCD the Cabinet approval was granted to change its institutional name from 'Children's secretariat' to National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD) on 7.12.2020.

69. UNESCO-IEB. (2010). *World Data on Education 2010/2011 (7th ed.)*. http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/Sri_Lanka.pdf

As discussed above ECCD/ECCE is one of the best investments a country can make to promote human resource development, gender equality, and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes. For disadvantaged children, ECCD/ECCE plays an important role in compensating for the disadvantages in the family and combating educational inequalities. The UNESCO's approach in ECCD/ECCE is reinforced in the Education 2030 agenda and in particular in target 4.2 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 which aims to 'By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (p35)⁷⁰.

1.3.2. Salient Features of ECCE in Sri Lanka

There are several types of preschools operating in Sri Lanka, applying different labels such as kindergarten, preschool, nursery school, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) preschool, Modern Montessori International (MMI) preschool, and early childhood development centre, etc. However, the most common name used for ECCE centres is 'Early Childhood Development Centre'. This term was proposed in the National Policy on ECCD, in the year 2004 to "transform scholastically focused preschools into community-based child development centres that focus on age-appropriate holistic development"⁷¹ and used by preschool since then. Children between 3-5 years are expected to be enrolled in these centres. Despite these progressive measures, it has been noted that there is an inclination of using a traditional method of teacher-centered teaching-learning strategies in ECD centres, emphasizing the development of academic knowledge and skills rather than facilitating the holistic development of children.

The National Census of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres in Sri Lanka conducted in 2016⁷² revealed the following:

- There are 19,668 ECD centres in Sri Lanka. Of these 71% are managed by the private sector, 19.8% are managed by the public institutions/local government authorities, 6.8% are managed by religious organizations, and 3% are managed by non-governmental organizations. Out of these, 88.2% of preschools charge fees.
- The enrolment rate of 3 to 5-year-old children in the ECD centre is 55.6%. Enrolment rate by sector illustrates that there is a noticeable disparity among urban (67.6%), rural (47.5%), and estate (43.9%) sectors.
- Although registration criteria stipulate that the adult-child ratio in ECD centres should be 1:20, it varies from 1-12 to 1-29 among ECD centres and across Districts in Sri Lanka.
- The minimum educational qualification required to be a preschool teacher is G.C.E. (O/L). Currently, 3% of preschool teachers possess degrees or post-graduate degrees and 59.9% of preschool teachers have passed the G.C.E. (A/L). However, there are 3.5% of preschool teachers who have not passed G.C.E. (O/L).
- Around 85% of preschool teachers possess professional qualifications of one year or more and around 10% of the teachers do not possess any professional qualifications.
- The average monthly income of a preschool teacher is LKR 11,117.00.
- Many ECD centres lack infrastructure facilities and learning and play materials. Around 28% of ECD centres do not have drinking water and about 10% of ECD centres operate without any toilet facilities. Except for swings and free play areas a majority of ECD centres do not have adequate outdoor equipment (*only 44.4% have climbing frames, 45.3% have sand and water play area*). Only around 5% of ECD centres have facilities for children with special needs (*ramps/ handrails and adequate space for a wheelchair to pass in*).
- Although registration of ECD centres is mandatory in all provinces, considerable percentages (26.3%) of unregistered centres are operating in the country.
- Fees charged by ECD centres per month vary from less than LKR 500.00 to more than LKR 2,000.00. The burden on parents is worsened by profit-oriented marketing of educational material.

70. UNESCO. (2015). *Education 2030 – Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Goal 4*.

71. Ministry of Women Empowerment and Social Welfare. (2004). *National Policy on Early Childhood Education*.

72. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2016). *National Census of Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka*.

A study conducted by the World Bank in 2014 reveals those mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing compliance with prescribed standards, and collecting data on ECCE provision, are weak⁷³. It has been further revealed that most ECD centres are managed by for-profit private service providers who operate in an environment of limited public investments for provision, oversight, regulation, and support^{74,75}.

Although child development is a joint responsibility of both parents and teachers, facilitation of parental involvement in ECD centre activities, focusing on children's holistic development is minimal in the existing ECCE system. Providing an explicit outline of activities containing the study programme and its overall objectives to parents so that they can intellectually engage in the process of child development is not considered as an important criterion in registration requirements formulated by the provincial administrative entities of ECCE.

1.3.3. Policy Initiatives

The first National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development was introduced by the Children's Secretariat in 2004, focusing on the holistic development of children from conception to five years⁷⁶. This was revised in 2018 and the revised policy on ECCD was approved by the Cabinet in 2019. This policy recognized the importance of comprehensive and integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) services for children and made an array of policy recommendations to improve access to, and quality of centre-based ECCE.

According to National Policy on ECCD approved by the Cabinet in 2019, the responsibility of overall early childhood development of Sri Lanka has been entrusted with the Ministry in-charge of Women and Child Affairs and the responsibility of formulating and implementing a National Policy on Preschool Education has been devolved on the Ministry of Education by the Gazette Extraordinary No. 2103/33 dated 12.12.2018. This was further confirmed by the Gazette Extraordinary No. 1253/12 dated 10.12.2019 through which the Ministry in-charge of Education was entrusted with the task of analysing and formulating sectoral policies related to education development including preschool education in consultation with the ministry in charge of the subject of child affairs and all other stakeholders. In keeping with this Gazette notification, the National Policy on Preschool Education was formulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Cabinet granted its approval for this policy in 2019, December. In the meantime, the NEC also has formulated a policy on preschool education in the third quarter of 2019⁷⁷ conforming to the powers and functions granted to it by the National Education Commission Act, No. 19 of 1991. According to this Act⁷⁸, one of the powers and functions of the NEC is to make recommendations to the President, on educational policy in all its aspects, with a view to, ensuring continuity in educational policy and enabling the education system to respond to changing needs in society, including an immediate review of educational policy and plan or plans and the making of recommendations to the President, on a comprehensive National Education Policy.

To resolve the issues related to the implementation process of the policies formulated by the MoE and other agencies, the Hon. Minister of Education, in November 2020 appointed a committee that included the officials from MoE, State Ministry of Women and Child Development, Pre-Schools & Primary Education, School Infrastructure & Education Services, and other relevant State Ministries, NEC, Ministry of Health, Children's Secretariat, representatives from Provincial Preschool regulatory bodies, and experts in the subject to review the situation critically and constructively and make suggestions. The policy framework for ECE (*Draft National Policy on to ECE, 2020*) proposed by this

73. World Bank. (2014). *Laying the Foundation for Early Childhood Education in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved June 6, 2021, from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/srilanka/publication/laying-foundation-early-childhood-education-sri-lanka>

74. United Nations Children's Fund. (2018). "required Investments to Deliver High Quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Sri Lanka, discussion paper presented at the 'Building Brains, Building Futures'-Sri Lanka Early Childhood Development High Level Meeting. <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/stories/building-brains-building-futures-sri-lanka-early-childhood-development-high-level-meeting>

75. Pathirana, B.D.D. (2017). *Profile of early childhood care and education (ECCD) in Sri Lanka: Analysis of the Past and Present*. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 5(3), 1372-1380.

76. Ministry of Women and Child Affairs. (2018). *National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development*.

77. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy on Preschool Education*.

78. National Education Commission Act No. 19 (1991, April).

committee was accepted by the Hon. Minister of Education.

A review of these policies reveals that although there is no substantial difference among goals, objectives, and strategies there is a difference among the proposed implementation process. The goals and objectives of all these policies have focused on equitable access, quality of services provided to children, professional development of teachers and other staff, financing ECE services, and parental involvement in children's learning. It is noted that the draft ECE policy of the committee appointed by the Minister of Education, 2020 complements the other two policies and emphasizes the need for central governance and parental involvement.

With the devolution of powers by the 13th Amendment of 1987 to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, the management and supervision of preschools were vested with Provincial Councils. To exercise this mandate, Provincial Councils have passed provincial statutes and set up provincial authorities/ bureaus/units for supervision and management of preschools which are currently known as ECD centres. Registration of ECD centres, providing guidance, introducing professional and educational standards, and providing teacher training opportunities to teachers have been stated in all provincial statutes as the main functions of these provincial establishments or regulatory bodies. However, recognizing the need to establish a central mechanism of standard-setting, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure the quality, equity, and social justice in ECCE, the Government in 2020 has established a dedicated State Ministry for preschool education.

1.3.4. Identified Issues/Gaps in ECCE Provisions

As highlighted by the NEC⁷⁹, WB^{80,81}, and the Presidential Taskforce Report⁸² as well as other documents, the ECCD/ ECCE sector is confronted with many issues that hinder the universal provision and full achievement of benefits of early childhood development. These issues are discussed under the headings of a) Need for an effective enforceable national policy on ECCE, b) Lack of clarity in role definition in the provision of ECCD/ECCE services, c) Inequalities for access and enrolment, d) Substandard quality of ECCE provisions, e) Inadequate focus on holistic nature of ECCE, f) Inadequacies of public investment, government regulation, coordination and oversight, g) Poor quality of preschool teachers and caregivers, and poor remuneration and inadequate social recognition, h) Lack of enforceable legal provisions for ECCE, and i) Limited engagement by parents.

- a. **Need for an effective enforceable national policy on ECCE:** Sri Lanka is yet to formulate an effective national policy on education. In terms of the National Education Commission Act, the President (subject to the provisions of the Constitution) may declare from time to time the National Education Policy which shall be conformed to by all authorities and institutions responsible for education in all its aspects [Section 2(1) of the NEC Act]. According to this Act, the structure of the educational system includes preschools as well. While powers in respect of education have been devolved to Provincial Councils, those powers must be exercised in conformity with national policy. Once the national policy has been duly formulated in respect of any subject, there cannot be any conflicting provincial policy on that same subject⁸³. Since there is no national policy on ECCE, the provinces have formulated their own policies and passed their own statutes. Therefore, to implement central government policy initiatives effectively across all provinces, Sri Lanka needs an effective enforceable national policy with a mechanism of implementing, monitoring, and evaluation declared by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

79. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy on Preschool Education*.

80. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shoji, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

81. World Bank. (2014). *Laying Foundation Early Childhood Education in Sri Lanka*.

82. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-Imaging Education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core Group Reports*.

83. *As observed by His Lordship Justice Mark Fernando in the Supreme Court case of Kamalawathie and Others v The Provincial Public Service Commission: [(2001) 1 SLR 1, 5]*.

- b. **Lack of clarity in the role definition in the provision of ECCE services:** The ECCD/ECCE sector is expected to be centrally directed and coordinated, and provincially managed. However, it is noted that there has been no consensus over who should take the lead role at the national level. This has arisen as a result of an existing policy of entrusting overlapping responsibilities to two agencies; the responsibility of overall childhood care and development to the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and the responsibility of formulating and implementing a national policy on preschool education to the Ministry of Education. It is claimed by the Children’s Secretariat that the policy submitted by the Ministry of Education in 2020, and approved by the Cabinet has overlooked their central role, and has proposed to implement the policy and activities overlooking the island-wide network of officers operated by the Children’s Secretariat. As mentioned in Section 1.4.1, the committee of experts appointed by the Minister of Education to resolve this issue has proposed to establish a National Management and Regulatory Committee in the Ministry of Education and a National Action/Working Committee in the State Ministry of Women and Child Development to carryout ECCE activities liaising with the Provincial Action/Working committees and other stakeholders. At present, the National Management and Regulatory Committee (NMRC) has been established in the Ministry of Education to guide the formulation of policies, projects and activities required for maintaining a high standard in early childhood education in Sri Lanka and monitoring and empowering the implementation of such activities⁸⁴.
- c. **Inequalities in access and enrolment:** There is a noticeable disparity in the enrolment rates across provinces (*ranging from 47.0% - 80.2%*), districts (*ranging from 46.1%-82.7%*), and among urban, rural, and estate sectors (*67.7%, 47.5%, and 43.9% respectively*). As stated elsewhere, statistics have shown that the average enrolment rate of 3-5-year-old children in ECD centres was around 56%. The age disaggregation of the same data shows that 22.6% of three-year-old children and 63.4% of 4-year-old children have enrolled in ECD centres. Further, access to ECCE for children with special needs is limited with only 49 ECD centres catering to children with special needs in the country (MoE, 2012)⁸⁵. Reasons for low attendance appear to be multifactorial; unavailability of preschools nears the households, terrain difficulties, high enrolment and tuition fees, and lack of parental awareness of the benefits of early childhood education.
- d. **Substandard quality of ECCE provisions:** Ensuring quality ECCE provisions in Sri Lanka is a key challenge. Misguided competition in achieving capabilities in reading, writing and, mathematics has marginalized the concept of holistic development in the minds of both teachers and parents. Even though some progress has been made in introducing guidelines and standards for ECD centres and learning and development, the extent to which these are adopted is not certain, and in general, the quality improvement through such interventions is uneven and generally low. Lack of national curriculum framework/guidelines has resulted in ECD centres carrying out activities that are neither age nor individually appropriate. Most ECD centres are relatively weak in terms of approaches to facilitating the learning of children with special needs and the use of materials for the development of cognitive skills⁸⁶. It has revealed that on a spectrum of minimal essential elements for high-quality ECCE, ECD centres at the lower end of the spectrum would not have proper infrastructure facilities, while ECD centres at the other extreme ensure child’s wellbeing, but may not offer developmentally appropriate learning programmes.
- e. **Inadequate focus on holistic nature of ECCE:** Holistic ECCE addresses health and wellbeing of children and coordination among sectors – pre-schools, parents and health care services, etc. For ECCE to be effective care and education must supplement each other. The psychosocial and spiritual development of the child should extend beyond schools and institutions to the family and society.

84. Ministry of Education. (2021). Cabinet Memorandum ED/ST/SER/21/01.

85. Ministry of Education. (2012). Education for All: Island wide Information on ECCE Centres by Province.

86. World Bank. (2014). Laying the Foundation for Early Childhood Education in Sri Lanka.

Opportunities should be available to the child to optimize development, especially during critical periods of brain development in the home environment through a process of advocacy and education in collaboration with other sectors that promote best parenting practices. To achieve this, an integrated approach to ECCE is essential since it focuses on holistic child development. The integrated approach fundamentally seeks to build cross-sectoral coordination systems, promote programme innovation, overcome gaps in knowledge, service, and resources⁸⁷.

- f. **Poor quality of ECCE teachers and caregivers, and poor remuneration and low social recognition:** As stated earlier, 83% of preschool teachers have completed a professional training of one year or more, and about 10% of teachers do not have any formal training on ECCE or recognized qualifications. Although there are certificate and diploma level training programs on ECCE conducted by different institutions including the Open University of Sri Lanka, there are no degree programmes that offer higher qualifications. On the other hand, teachers who have professional qualifications are not regularly updated on new knowledge⁸⁸ which affects the quality of the learning environment and interactions provided in ECD centres. A central foundation for learning in ECCE is formed by the peer group, play, and activities offered by adults⁸⁹. However, there is a tendency among Sri Lankan parents to view ECD centres as centres for preparing their children academically for primary school rather than as a place for promoting the holistic development of young children⁹⁰. Furthermore, ECCE teachers and support staff are usually underpaid, and these along with low social recognition given to the ECCE teachers have made it difficult to attract quality people into ECCE sector.
- g. **Inadequacies of public investment, government regulation and coordination, and oversight:** The government policy recognizes the importance of ECCD/ECCE in the optimal development of children in early years that impact lifelong productivity, health, and well-being. It has made a significant investment in ECCE through the World Bank-assisted ECD project established in the Ministry of Women and Child Development. However, the provision of ECCE services in Sri Lanka has been largely dependent on non-state resources and incentives. Thus, the quality of ECCD/ECCE services offered appears to vary among providers. Though the State's role has mainly been regulatory, even that lacks clarity. As a result of minimal public provision and control and oversight, there is considerable geographic variation in access to and quality of ECCE services, where the poor, mostly in rural areas depriving of the benefits of ECCE. As stated in Section 1.4 of this document, out of 19,668 preschools, 70% are managed by the private sector and 88.2% charge fees. And most of these are located in urban and semi-urban areas, and as a result provision of ECCE to rural areas is relatively low.

Further, there exist significant shortcomings in the vertical and horizontal coordination of ECCE provisions. As of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, in 1987, Provincial Councils have been assigned the responsibility of supervision of the management of preschools. There is significant inadequacy in the leadership capacity in ECCE-serving governmental agencies. With the decentralized role of supervision and management of ECD centres, there appears to be confusion with regard to roles and responsibilities of the national (*National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development*) and provincial administrative entities (*authorities/units/bureaus /departments*) established for ECCE and front-line workers. It also has affected the allocation of finances and other resources and leads to duplication of functions⁹¹. As a result, there is an inadequacy in quality and standards and disparities across provinces and districts.

87. Vargas-Baron, E. (2005). *Planning Policies for Early Childhood Development: Guidelines for Action*.

88. Athukorala, K. (2017). *Early Childhood Care and Development: Current Issues and Future Challenges*.

89. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2000). *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Finland*.

90. Warnasuriya, R., Sosale, S. and Dey, S. (2020). *Integrating Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka: From Evidence to National Action*. World Bank.

91. Warnasuriya, R., Sosale, S. and Dey, S. (2020). *Integrating Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka: From Evidence to National Action*. World Bank.

- h. **Lack of enforceable legal provisions for ECCE at national and provincial levels:** In keeping with the National ECCD policy, the NSECD has taken several measures to implement policy instructions that ensure the quality of ECCE services. Minimum standards for ECD centres, registration of ECCE teacher training programmes, early childhood development standards for preschool children aged 3-5 years are some of these measures initiated by the NSECD. Since these measures are not backed by enforceable legal provisions, the NSECD has not been able to take action against those who do not adhere to policy instructions.

Although the 13th Amendment of the Constitution empowers the Provincial Councils to make necessary legislation relating to supervision of the management of preschools and registration and supervision of preschools, provincial administrative entities (*Authorities/Bureaus/Departments/Units*) established for ECCE have failed to take any legal action against those who violate provincial statutes and regulations. Some of the ECD centres (*preschools*) in private schools and international schools are not registered with the regulatory bodies set up for ECCE and are not bound by standards introduced by the provinces. These ECCE centres run as profit-making businesses registered under the Companies Act. Lack of legal powers to take action against these centres and other centres which operate without obtaining registration is a serious challenge faced by the provincial administrative entities on ECCE. Therefore, a legislative act to empower the regulatory system of ECCE appears to be an urgent requirement.

- i. **Limited parental engagement in ECCE:** Parents' engagement in their children's early childhood education is not adequately facilitated and appears to have been misguided by the over-enthusiastic emphasis on physical growth and preparation for schooling. This stems from their lack of understanding of the value of ECCE in psychosocial development and their role and responsibilities in guiding preschool children to accrue intended benefits. Parents often place relatively less value on the intrinsic benefits of ECCE and tend to view ECD centres solely as learning centres that prepare children for their entry into primary school. On the other hand, strategies that encourage parents to participate in their children's learning are scarcely integrated into ECD centre activities. It is important to engage parents in a reciprocal way (two-way communication) which helps teachers to understand the child's family culture and provide culturally relevant learning experiences and parents to understand the school culture and share their child's unique strengths and weaknesses, and talents with teachers.

1.4 Conclusion

The Government of Sri Lanka (GOSL) and the Provincial Councils (PCs) have taken various measures to develop early childhood care and education system. As revealed by the National Survey on ECD centres conducted by the CS in 2010⁹² and the National Census Report published in 2016, the initiatives taken by the GOSL and PCs in expanding ECCE services and increasing enrolment rates of children have indeed resulted in a significant expansion of ECCD services across the country. Nevertheless, despite the expansion in the provision of ECCE services by various stakeholders, the problems pertaining to the ECCE sector seem to continue. These include issues pertaining to the need for an effective enforceable national policy on ECCE, lack of clarity in role definition in the regulation and supervision of management of ECCD/ECCE services, inequalities for access and enrolment, substandard quality of ECCE provision, inadequate focus on holistic nature of ECCE, inadequacies of public investment, government regulation, coordination and oversight, poor quality of ECCE teachers and caregivers and poor remuneration and inadequate social recognition, lack of enforceable legal provisions for ECCE and limited engagement by parents. These issues appear to curtail the quality and standards of the ECCE service provision in Sri Lanka.

92. *The Children's Secretariat. (2010). National Survey on Early Childhood Development Centres in Sri Lanka.*

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

This section presents proposed policy on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) formulated by the NEC in recognition of the right of every child in early childhood to learn and develop in an environment that lay the foundation for lifelong learning with physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and spiritual development, personality and attributes of social responsibilities. The ECCE policy proposals followed Guiding Principles (GP) constructed by the NEC for the National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030). However, its Directive Principles (DP) and core areas have been adapted to suit early childhood education.

The core areas include;

- i. Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness,
- ii. Holistic Development - Physical, Cognitive, and Socioemotional Development,
- iii. Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education - Structure, Processes and Outcomes,
- iv. Benchmarking and Quality Assurance,
- v. Financing of Early Childhood Care and Education, and
- vi. Regulation, and Governance and Management.

The policies set forth under each core area while addressing the current issues/gaps discussed in detail in section 1.3.4 of this document, shall provide guidance for the development of all legislation, programmes, funding, monitoring and evaluation, etc., for the establishment of an effective, integrated and sustainable ECCE system in Sri Lanka. Further, in order to ensure the efficient implementation of the proposed policy and strategic activity framework, a suitable institutional and regulatory framework for policy implementation is also proposed and it is given in Section 3.

2.1 Definitions of Key Terms in the Policy

Child-Centered Approach: Teachers who use child-centered approach place the child at the centre of the teaching-learning process in which children become active participants. It involves giving children choices of learning activities, with the teacher acting as a facilitator of learning⁹³. It concentrates on the child as an individual and gives priority to the interests and needs of children.

Child Outcomes: One of the criteria that determine the quality of ECCE programmes is child outcomes. It refers to the level of a child's development in areas that are central to normal and healthy development: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; communication skills, and general knowledge. Good quality programmes help children acquire require skills (*school readiness, general life skills, and independence*) and achieve desirable outcomes (*cognitive, social, emotional, physical, language, and other skills*)⁹⁴.

Code of Practice⁹⁵: This is a set of written rules which explains how people in a particular profession should behave in any work environment. In any work environment, a code of practice ensures that the activities of a particular professional comply with required standards. Violating a code of practice in any profession may have legal consequences⁹⁶.

93. International Bureau of Education. *Child Centred Approach*. Retrieved April 4, 2020 from <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/glossary-curriculum-terminology/c/child-centred-approach>

94. Rohacek, M., Adams, G.C., Kiske, E. E., with Danziger, A., Derrick - Mills, D., and Johnson, H. (2010). *Understanding Quality in Context: Child Care Centres, Communities, Markets and Public Policy*.

95. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/code-of-practice>

96. <https://www.reference.com/business-finance/meaning-code-practice-785df7315aefb2df>

Developmentally Appropriate Pedagogies: Pedagogy is a set of instructional techniques and strategies which enable learning to take place and provide opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions within a particular social and material context. It refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and the learning environment⁹⁷. Developmentally appropriate practices are methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning⁹⁸. Developmentally appropriate pedagogies focus on both the age and individual needs of children.

Early Childhood Education: Based on the universally accepted definitions, the term early childhood education is defined as the initial stage of organized instruction, designed primarily to introduce very young children (*between the ages around 3-5 years*) to an environment, that provides a bridge between home and a school-based atmosphere⁹⁹.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programmes: All centre-based educational programmes, designed to meet the educational and developmental needs of children at least from three to five years of age, and have staff that is adequately qualified to provide educational programmes for children are termed as ECCE programmes. There are different pedagogical practices such as Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), Creative Curriculum, etc., adopted in ECCE programmes across the world.

Equity and Inclusiveness: Equity is defined as personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnicity, language, disability, or family background, that are not obstacles to reaping the benefits of early childhood education. Inclusiveness is defined as the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized, such as those having physical or mental disabilities or belonging to other minority groups¹⁰⁰.

Inclusive Practices: Teaching that recognizes the diversity of students, enabling all students to access course content, fully participate in learning activities and demonstrate their knowledge and strengths at assessment is termed as inclusive practices. Inclusive practice values the diversity of the student as a resource that enhances the learning experience¹⁰¹. An inclusive approach to teaching means recognizing, accommodating, and meeting the learning needs of all students, acknowledging that students have a range of individual learning needs and are members of diverse communities and avoiding stereotyping of students as belonging to specific groups with fixed predictable and fixed approaches to learning¹⁰².

Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children: Children who are orphans, abused and neglected, children without families, refugees, children with disabilities, street children and children living in extreme poverty are considered as most vulnerable and disadvantaged children¹⁰³. Children who live in prisons with their mothers in Sri Lanka are also included in this category.

Play-based Learning: A teaching approach involving playful, child-directed elements along with some degree of adult guidance and scaffolded learning objectives denotes play-based learning. Child-directed play, collaboratively created play, and teacher-directed play present important opportunities for children's personal, social, and academic growth¹⁰⁴.

97. Siraj-Blatchford et al., (2002) As cited in Wall, S., Litjens, I., Taguma, M.(n.d.) *Early childhood Pedagogy and Care: England*. Retrieved July 5,2021,from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/early-childhood-education-and-care-pedagogy-review-england.pdf>

98. National Association for the Education of Young Children. (2020). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice: Position Statement*.

99. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Glossary. (2002). *Glossary of Statistical Terms*.

100. Oxford University Press. Retrieved January 23,2021 from <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>

101. Equality Challenge Unit (2013). Retrieved from <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/external/e-and-d-for-academics-factsheet-inclusive-practice.pdf>

102. University of Tasmania. (2018). *Teaching and Learning: Inclusive practices*. Retrieved July 4,2020, from <https://www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/unit-design/inclusive-practices>

103. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, General Comments No 7, (2005). *Implementing Rights of the Child*.

104. Pyle, A., and Danniels, E. (2017). *A Continuum of Play-Based Learning: The Role of the Teacher in Play-Based Pedagogy and the Fear of Hijacking Play, Early Education and Development*, 28(3), 274- 289.

2.2 Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities

Core Area – ECCE 1: Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness

Policy Context

Numerous studies show that children who participate in high-quality early childhood education programmes have better long-term outcomes than children who do not have these experiences^{105,106}. Despite this evidence on the lifelong benefits of ECCE, nearly half of all pre-primary aged children globally are not enrolled in pre-primary education¹⁰⁷. As mentioned elsewhere, in Sri Lanka, only 55.6% of children aged 3 to 5 years are enrolled in ECD centres. For children aged 3 years, the national enrolment rate is 23%. The equity issue is more prominent in ECCE enrolment than general education since it is neither compulsory nor provided free of charge. The ECD centre enrolment rates (*urban: 67.6%, rural: 47.5%, and estate: 43.9%*) presented in the National Census Report is a good example that reflects the issue of equity with regard to the provision of ECCE opportunities.

In this context, this policy framework is formulated to ensure every Sri Lankan child around the age of 3-5 years has equal access to education that will enable him/her to achieve his/ her true potential regardless of wealth, gender, ethnicity, geographical location or social background. Since social equity is an essential component of educational equity, strategic actions in this policy have been formulated focusing on both.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of provision of early childhood care and education with need-based support to all children including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.
- DP 2: The State considers diversity as an asset, and therefore, the State together with all educators should take the responsibility of identifying and removing barriers to equity and inclusion in early childhood education.
- DP 3: The State recognizes the role of the non-State sector in ECCE, and facilitates its participation as a parallel partner.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 1.1: All children around the age of 3 to 5 years should have access to at least a year of affordable early childhood care and education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the National Management and Regulatory Committee (NMRC), and through the National Secretariat for Early Childhood

105. Heckman, J. J. (2017). *Early Childhood Education, Quality and Access Payoff*. Retrieved March 6, 2021, from https://heckmanequation.org/www/assets/2017/01/F_Heckman_Moffitt_093016.pdf

106. Philpot, D. (2019). *New Research Shows Quality Early Childhood Education Reduces Need for Later Special Education*. Retrieved March 2, 2021, from <https://theconversation.com/new-research-shows-quality-early-childhood-education-reduces-need-for-later-special-ed-112275>

107. *Unite Nations Children's Fund (n.d.) Early Childhood Education: Every Child Deserves Access to Quality Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved January 25, 2021, from <https://www.unicef.org/education/early-childhood-education>

Development (NSECD) shall introduce early childhood education enrolment policy to ensure an equitable and inclusive enrolment process which would be implemented through Provincial Administrative Entities of ECCE.

- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall facilitate the Provincial Administrative Entities of ECCE (*i.e. authorities/units/bureaus/departments*) to set up quality ECD centres in unserved and underserved areas and disadvantaged locations.
- The NSECD together with Provincial Administrative Entities (PAEs) of ECCE shall take steps to enhance parental and community awareness about ECCE activities and healthy parenting practices through outreach campaigns in collaboration with all stakeholders.
- The NSECD shall provide funds and guidance to PAEs of ECCE to provide mandatory support for children at risk from poverty, disability, violence, disasters, gender biases, institutionalized care, truancy, and children residing with their mothers in prisons to attend ECCE programmes available in their localities.
- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to promote public-private partnerships and philanthropic initiatives to expand access to ECCE.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs shall take measures to offer concessionary/interest-free loans to non-State providers to establish ECCE centres in unserved and underserved provinces and regions.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject Child Affairs shall take steps to introduce incentives such as 'ECD Vouchers' for children of economically disadvantaged households to promote access to and enrolment in ECCE.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs through the NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE shall provide a system of continuous support to low-resourced ECD centres to expand the access to ECCE, and improve the facilities and resources.

Policy-ECCE 1.2:

Early childhood care and education should be inclusive and equitable in order to provide learning opportunities for all children around the age of 3-5 years regardless of their wealth, gender, caste, ethnicity, language, geographical location, social background or disability

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NMRC in collaboration and consultation with the National Education Commission (NEC) and the NSECD, shall establish minimum standards for ECD centres that ensure equity and inclusiveness.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall issue appropriate directives and guidelines through the NSECD and PAEs of ECCE to all ECCE providers/centres to comply with the principles of equity and inclusion.
- The NSECD and PAEs of ECCE shall promote and facilitate the use of mother tongue or child's home language in centre-based learning environments with the reasonable use of other national languages as well as English as the link language as children have the capacity to learn more than one language.
- The NSECD shall ensure the liaison between the ECCE providers/centres with relevant institutions such as National Child Protection Authority, Family Health Bureau and other relevant health sector institutions, and Social Service Department to create an environment that supports and implement equitable and inclusive

education for all children including those who are with special needs.

- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to facilitate the development of technical competencies and professionalism among the ECCE workforce (i.e. knowledge, skills and attitudes and etiquette and mannerism of the ECCE workforce) to ensure that diversity in the ECCE setting is respected and barriers to equity and inclusiveness are identified and eliminated.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs through NSECD shall provide grants and other funding for ECCE providers/centres that provide services to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.
- The NSECD shall take steps to facilitate all the State and non-State training institutions including universities, to train the professional staff of the ECCE centres on the application of screening tests and instruments for detection and identification of children at risk of developmental delays and psycho-social problems to ensure early interventions.
- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to promote the ECCE centres to establish and operate parent social networking such as parents' societies/associations in order to ensure equity by helping parents to get to know each other and develop a sense of togetherness.

Core Area – ECCE 2: Holistic Development - Physical, Cognitive and Socioemotional Development

Policy Context

Holistic development refers to children gaining skills and competence to develop their physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and linguistic skills¹⁰⁸. Since development is multi-dimensional and the progress in one dimension affects the other dimensions, early childhood education is expected to adopt a holistic approach to learning. A holistic approach in education means engaging and developing the whole person through education. The holistic approach serves learners of different levels of abilities. It is the fundamental reason why a human being is multi-dimensional, and every human being has conscious and unconscious aspects, rational and irrational aspects¹⁰⁹. In a holistic approach, teachers facilitate children to become well-rounded adults by focusing equally on the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of child development. In this context, the proposed policy promotes, the ECCE programmes to provide a broad range of life experiences and learning processes that enable children, individually and collectively to develop their personalities, talents, and abilities to live a full and satisfying life within society¹¹⁰ as they progress.

108. Welsh Joint Education Committee. (2019). *Health, Wellbeing, Learning and Development: How curriculum areas support the holistic development of children* Retrieved November 20, 2021, from http://resource.download.wjec.co.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/vtc/2018-19/hsc18-19_3-2/_multi-lang/unit01/09-how-curriculum-areas-support-holistic-development.html

109. Varun, A. (2015). *Holistic Approach for Early Childhood Education*. Retrieved July 2, 2021, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/297714485_Holistic_Approach_for_Early_Childhood_Education

110. The United Nations Human Rights, General Comments No 7. *The Aims of Education. Article 29, (2001)* Retrieved June 3, 2021, from [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/a\)GeneralCommentNo1TheAimsOfEducation\(article29\)\(2001\).asp](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/a)GeneralCommentNo1TheAimsOfEducation(article29)(2001).asp)

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State recognizes the value of well-organized early childhood care and education programmes in providing enriching and positive environmental experiences for each and every child that would ensure the holistic development of all children.
- DP 2: The State assures the responsibility of setting the regulations and strategic directions for the ECCE sector and prescribing criteria and minimum standards for the establishment and operation of ECCE centres.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 2.1: All early childhood care and education programmes should aim at supporting holistic development in children around the age of 3 to 5 years

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC and through the NSECD and PAEs of ECCE shall issue guidelines to all ECCE providers/centres to ensure the learning experiences that they provide allow the holistic development of children to achieve maximum potential in growth and development, cognitive skills and understand themselves and others, build positive self-concepts, enjoy relationships with peers and adults.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall prescribe standards for all ECCE providers/centres to ensure the facilities, resources and services offered by them are conducive for the holistic development of children.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall prescribe a 'Codes of Practice' for teachers and caregivers of ECCE centres to ensure the provision of learning experiences that are focused on the holistic development of children.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC and in working through the PAEs of ECCE shall facilitate ECCE providers/centres by providing financial assistance, materials, and technical guidance to strengthen their centres and programmes.
- The NSECD together with PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to ensure all ECCE providers/centres should pledge explicitly that all children including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable are unconditionally valued, respected, and loved.
- The NSECD shall facilitate the PAEs of ECCE to provide training manuals and guidelines for teachers and caregivers of ECCE centres to build positive individualized relationships between teachers and children and teachers and parents.
- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to develop the capacity of ECCE teachers in supporting parents to adopt positive parenting practices that include positive behavioural support techniques to develop children's self-concept, self-esteem, and parents' capacities to understand and deal appropriately with children's temperament.

Core Area – ECCE 3: Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education – Structure, Processes, and Outcomes

Policy Context

The quality of early childhood care and education programmes is generally assessed by its structural and process features and child outcomes. Structural quality refers to physical and human resources and time. Physical resources include infrastructure facilities and space, health and safety provisions as well teaching-learning materials and curriculum and consumable education material. Human resources address all the human stakeholders: adult-child ratios and group size; staff qualifications; staff wages and working conditions¹¹¹. Process quality refers to the daily experiences of children in ECCE settings. It consists of the social, emotional, physical, and instructional aspects of children's activities and interactions with teachers, peers and material that are considered as a proximal determinant of child development. Structural quality affects the quality of the interactions between staff and children in a dynamic reciprocal process¹¹². Performance outcome refers to the level of completeness and accuracy of achieving the target programme according to the plan that includes essential steps of regulation, monitoring, and quality assurance, and the achievement in a child's development in areas that are central to healthy development: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; communication skills and general knowledge¹¹³. However, it should be noted that there is an association among the aspects of quality i.e., structural and process features and child outcomes, and it is indeed essential to realize the aims of ECCE.

Many efforts have been taken to improve the standards and quality of ECCE programmes, particularly by the World Bank-Assisted Early Childhood Development Project established in the Ministry of Women and Child Development and UNICEF. As a progressive measure in this regard, the NSECD has introduced minimum standards for ECD centres¹¹⁴ and national early childhood development standards for children¹¹⁵ between 3-5 years. However, there are concerns about the quality of ECCE services as discussed earlier. In terms of process quality and child outcomes, a study conducted by the World Bank in 2014 found that ECD centres perform reasonably well in some teaching-learning activities and processes, related to personal care, hygiene and habit formation of the children, but they are weak in terms of approaches to facilitating the learning of children with special needs, and activities and use of materials for the development of cognitive skills. Therefore, this policy focuses on all three aspects of quality to overcome challenges faced in the present context.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of ensuring all ECCE centres provide safe, well-arranged and well-equipped learning environments that are crucial for early childhood care and education.
- DP 2: The State assumes the responsibility of prescribing the developmentally appropriate early childhood curricula and teachers' guides that would ensure the provision of adequate opportunities to explore,

111. Bonetti, S., (2018). *Structural Elements of Quality Early Years Provision: A Review of the Evidence*, Retrieved July 5, 2021, from https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Early-years-structural-quality-review_EPI.pdf

112. OECD iLibrary. (2019). *Starting Strong Teaching and Learning International Survey 2018 Conceptual Framework*, OECD Education Work Papers, No197, Retrieved June 6, 2021 from https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/starting-strong-teaching-and-learning-international-survey-2018-conceptual-framework_106b1c42-en

113. McKeown, K., Haase, T., Pratschke, J. (2015). *Determinants of child outcomes in a cohort of children in the Free Pre-School Year in Ireland, 2012/2013*, *Irish Educational Studies*, 34:3, 245-263.

114. *The Children's Secretariat. (2006). Starting Rights: Standards for Early Childhood Development Centres.*

115. *Children's Secretariat (n.d.) Early Childhood Development Standards for Sri Lankan Children.*

experiment, and learn, use age-appropriate technologies and interactive media.

- DP 3: All ECCE centres should ensure the adoption of teaching-learning processes that embrace child-centered, play-based methods that promote experiential/authentic learning that enables the children to become active learners in developing their knowledge and skills.
- DP 4: All ECCE centres should ensure the adoption of formative assessments of children to provide enriching experiences to the child and parents as well as to the teacher, and such information must be used by teachers to make well informed instructional decisions that support children's learning and development.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 3.1: All ECCE providers should ensure all early childhood care and education settings and learning experiences would promote the holistic development of children and facilitate the smooth transition of children from pre-school to formal school

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NSECD shall take steps to strengthen its technical capacity to function as the central focal point of the ECCE sector by establishing a Technical Unit consisting of permanent professionally qualified staff to formulate strategies for improving the quality of ECCE provisions and guide the adoption of those strategies by the ECCE providers/centres and monitor the implementation.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC and together with the NEC and NIE and experts in ECCE shall take steps to formulate minimum standards (*i.e. norms for physical and human resources, age-appropriate teaching-learning resources, and programme/activities*) required for establishment and operation of ECCE centres.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall issue regulations requiring all PAEs to ensure all ECCE providers/centres comply with minimum standards prescribed by the NSECD and register their operation under the respective provincial administrative authorities.
- The NSECD shall facilitate the PAEs of ECCE to establish and maintain a consolidated ECCE centre registration system for all provinces in Sri Lanka while simultaneously feeding the information to the central database at the NSECD.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC and in collaboration with NIE and other stakeholders shall develop and introduce a curriculum framework and teachers' guides prepared in accordance with the NEC prescribed National Learning Competency Framework for ECED programmes.
- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to ensure the adoption of NSECD/NIE prescribed curriculum framework and teachers' guides. In instances where different curricula are adopted such ECD providers/centres should map those curricula and teachers' guides with the NSECD/NIE prescribed curriculum framework and teachers' guides and seek approval from the NSECD.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall

issue regulations and standards for the production, publication, and distribution of educational material produced with commercial or non-commercial intent for ECD centres and preschool-aged children.

- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under technical advice and guidance of the NMRC and in consultation with the TVEC shall decide the appropriate NVQ Level that would be considered as the minimum qualifications to function as ECCE teaching staff and support staff and issue regulations prescribing the minimum qualifications required for recruitment of teachers and support staff.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall regulate and monitor the scope, content, and quality of all professional development programmes on ECCE conducted by training providers.
- The NSECD together with the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to establish ECD Training and Resource Centres in each province and appoint qualified NSECD personnel to provide in-service training for the ECD workforce and also conduct parental educational programmes in collaboration with relevant agencies/institutes/centres and NGOs.
- The NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE shall use the ECD Training and Resource Centres as well as training providers to conduct regular continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for all categories of staff involved in the provision of ECCE services enabling them to update their knowledge, skills, and practices.
- The NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE shall facilitate universities, the National Institute of Education (NIE) and other institutes of higher education to design, and offer programmes for the ECCE workforce to acquire necessary pre-service professional qualifications.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall take measures to ensure the dignity of the ECD teachers, their job security, and career progress through implementing a suitable institutional mechanism that enables them to secure decent wages and service conditions.

Policy-ECCE 3.2:

All early childhood care and education programmes should implement developmentally appropriate, child-centered, play-based pedagogical approaches that promote children's holistic development and their lifelong learning

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC and in liaison with the NEC and NIE shall prescribe Codes of Practice and guidelines for ECCE teachers and support staff to ensure that all ECCE settings implement child-centred, play-based developmentally appropriate pedagogies.
- The NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE shall implement programmes through Provincial level ECD Training and Resource Centres as well as in liaison with other suitable institutions to develop teacher capacities on the application of pedagogically well-planned methods that promote children's holistic development including their motivation for learning, positive peer relationships, and peer acceptance.
- The NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to implement programmes to ensure positive interactions between ECCE teachers and Grade 1 teachers of primary school and ECCE teachers and parent/guardians to ensure a smooth transition from ECCE centre to Primary School.

Policy-ECCE 3.3:

All early childhood care and education programmes should ensure that child outcomes reflect children’s holistic development and their learning dispositions

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NSECD and PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to ensure that all ECCE providers/centres adopt the nationally prescribed ECCE curriculum framework and teachers’ guides to ensure the attainment of intended learning outcomes by the children enrolled in their programmes.
- The NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE should facilitate ECCE teachers to use developmentally appropriate formative assessments to support children’s holistic development and learning.
- The NSECD through PAEs of ECCE shall facilitate and promote ECD centres to implement early childhood development standards and assessments that measure child outcomes.
- The NSECD shall use child outcomes data at the national and provincial levels to inform, evaluate and improve the ECCE system.
- The NSECD and PAEs of ECCE shall ensure all ECCE providers/centres would provide a document containing curricula followed by the respective ECD centres including the expectations for developmentally appropriate child outcomes to parents and regulatory authorities.

Core Area – ECCE 4: Benchmarking and Quality Assurance**Policy Context**

Research proves that children exposed to rich simulative experiences in early childhood perform better in school and in life as adults. This has prompted many countries to introduce quality assurance mechanisms for early childhood education envisaging higher quality outcomes for children. In developed countries, authorities have been established to inspect/review and certify the quality of services provided by early childhood education and care centres. To maintain the quality ECD centres should be regularly and systematically evaluated through monitoring, documenting, and analysing curriculum implementation and the child’s learning and development¹¹⁶. Furthermore, regular inspections and certification would ensure the quality of education provided by different institutions. However, such mechanisms to monitor, maintain and enhance the quality of early childhood care and education are yet to be initiated in Sri Lanka.

116. Taguma, M., Litjens, I., and Makowiecki, K. (2013). *Quality Matters in Early Childhood Education and Care: SWEDEN*.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State is committed to ensuring quality and standards of ECE provisions by institutionalizing the concept of quality and quality culture in ECCE centres through a nationally prescribed quality assurance and accreditation framework (*i.e. criteria, elements, standards and best practices*)
- DP 2: All ECCE providers/centres and programmes should be subjected to national quality assurance and accreditation process.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 4.1: A national quality assurance and accreditation system matching with international benchmarks should be in place to guide, review and certify/ accredit all ECCE programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NMRC in collaboration with the NEC shall formulate a quality assurance framework that includes criteria and elements, best practices, and standards covering all aspects of ECCE to promote the standards and quality of ECCE service provisions across all provinces and all ECCE centres.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall facilitate the establishment of a National Quality Assurance Council (NQAC) at the NEC supported by national regulations to administer the quality assurance and accreditation programme through the NSECD and PAEs of ECCE.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall facilitate the PAEs of ECCE to establish Provincial Quality Assurance Units (PQAUs) in respective provinces to liaise with NQAC of NEC in implementing the quality assurance and accreditation programme.
- The NSECD and PAEs of ECCE in liaison with NQAC of the NEC and the PQAUs shall promote all the ECCE centres to establish an internal quality assurance system within their centres.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall prescribe regulations requiring all ECCE providers/ centres and programmes to comply with the guidelines issued by the NSECD and NQAC and PQAUs, and subject their centres and programmes for mandatory periodic external quality assurance review conducted by the PQAUs under the guidance and technical support of the NQAC of the NEC.
- The PQAUs in liaison with the NQAC of the NEC shall conduct periodical reviews of the quality of the ECD centres and the services provided to them.
- The NSECD in liaison with NQAC of the NEC shall promote a quality and quality culture within the centres managed by government institutions, higher education institutions, private sector institutions, NGOs and religious organizations and facilitate the NQAC of the NEC to conduct periodical reviews of the quality of the ECCE centres established and operated in their respective institutions.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall promote research on ECCE by

providing grants and conducting regular research conferences in collaboration with NEC, NIE, and other relevant institutions to strengthen the links among policy, research and practices.

- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall ensure NSECD develops and maintains an Education Management Information System (EMIS) for the ECCE sector. The EMIS shall be centrally hosted and provincially managed. The main purpose of the EMIS would be to improve preschool registration, monitoring, analyses, planning, and use of the data for decision making, as well as to harmonize procedures, indicators and data across the different provinces.

Core Area- ECCE 5: Financing of Early Childhood Care and Education

Policy Context

Investing in early childhood care and education is considered an investment that brings social and economic benefits to a country. Research reveals that investments in high-quality early childhood services save costly expenditures for compensatory services over time¹¹⁷. Therefore, the investment in young children is a powerful contributing factor for cost-effective, child-positive country development. Regrettably, the public expenditure on early childhood education is relatively small in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, a vast majority (around 70%) of ECD centres are managed by private individuals or non-governmental organizations. At present, the government through the World Bank-assisted ECD Project supports both private and public centres equally by investing in upgrading early childhood development centres and quality improvements. However, the World Bank feels that differences in the country's geography and other sub regional factors present unique challenges for investment and require nuanced reforms and investments¹¹⁸.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State considers education as a public good and ensures the provision of adequate public investment to ensure equity and quality of early childhood care and education.
- DP 2: The State recognizes the benefits that the ECCE sector could accrue from public-private partnerships.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 5.1: Adequate equitable and sustainable funding should be ensured for early childhood care and education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs and the Provincial Ministries of Education shall take

117. García, J.L, Heckman, J.J, Leaf, D.E, and Prados, M.J. (2017). "Quantifying the Life-Cycle Benefits of a Prototypical Early Childhood Program", NBER Working Paper No. w23479, National Bureau of Economic Affairs.

118. World Bank. (2019). Sri Lanka Human Capital Development: Realizing the Promise and Potential of Human Capital.

steps to Increase public investments/budgetary allocations to promote equitable access and enhance the quality of ECCE provisions.

- The Ministry in-charge of Child Affairs and the Provincial Ministries of Education through the NSECD and PAEs of ECCE shall take steps to promote investments by development partners (Local and International NGOs and Private sector) in the ECCE sector.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs shall take necessary steps to introduce tax incentives to encourage private investment in ECCE especially for the investment projects that are aimed to serve in unserved and underserved areas and for most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
- The Ministry in-charge of Child Affairs through the NSECD and Provincial Ministries of Education through the PAEs of ECCE shall promote the non-State sector to establish and operate affordable early childhood development centres in unserved and underserved areas.
- The Ministry in-charge of Child Affairs through NSECD and Provincial Ministries of Education through the PAEs of ECCE shall finance scholarships for the ECCE workforce and for those who wish to join the ECCE workforce to acquire necessary pre-service qualifications.

Core Area-ECCE 6: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy Context

The ECCE sector in Sri Lanka is very diverse as in many countries. It is diverse with regard to service delivery and methods implemented. There are different agents (public-private and voluntary organizations etc.) active in the field of ECCE, and different methods (*Montessori, preschool, etc.*) are implemented in the teaching-learning processes. This has made regulating ECCE services a challenging task for many countries. Nevertheless, countries have taken many measures to maintain the quality of ECCE through effective governance. For example, the Council of the Australian Government (COAG) which is the apex intergovernmental forum in Australia has introduced a 'National Early Childhood Development Strategy' to ensure that by 2020 all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and the nation¹¹⁹. In Sweden, the National Education Act which came into force in the year 2010 supports the educational system through guidelines, recommendations and suggestions for implementation. The National Agency for Inspection (NAI) monitors the equality and high quality of the educational system. Sweden has introduced a maximum fee policy that makes preschool education affordable to many¹²⁰. Sri Lanka also needs to be ensured through a cohesive policy and a well-aligned system, with effective and accountable governance, to equitably meet the needs of all preschool-aged children, their parents, educators and other stakeholders.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State ensures the enactment of the legal framework for the ECCE sector to guarantee the rights of every preschool-aged child to have the access to quality early childhood education and regulate the ECCE sector.
- DP 2: The State recognizes the need for having an appropriate governance and management structure with a clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of central and provincial authorities and agencies.

119. The Council of Australian Government. (2009). *Investing in Early Years-A National Early Childhood Development Strategy*.

120. Schreyer, I. & Oberhuemer, P. (2017). *Sweden-Key Contextual Data*.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-ECCE 6.1: Legal and regulatory framework, cohesive policy and a well-aligned system, with effective and accountable governance and management, shall be ensured for early childhood care and education

Recommended Strategic Activities

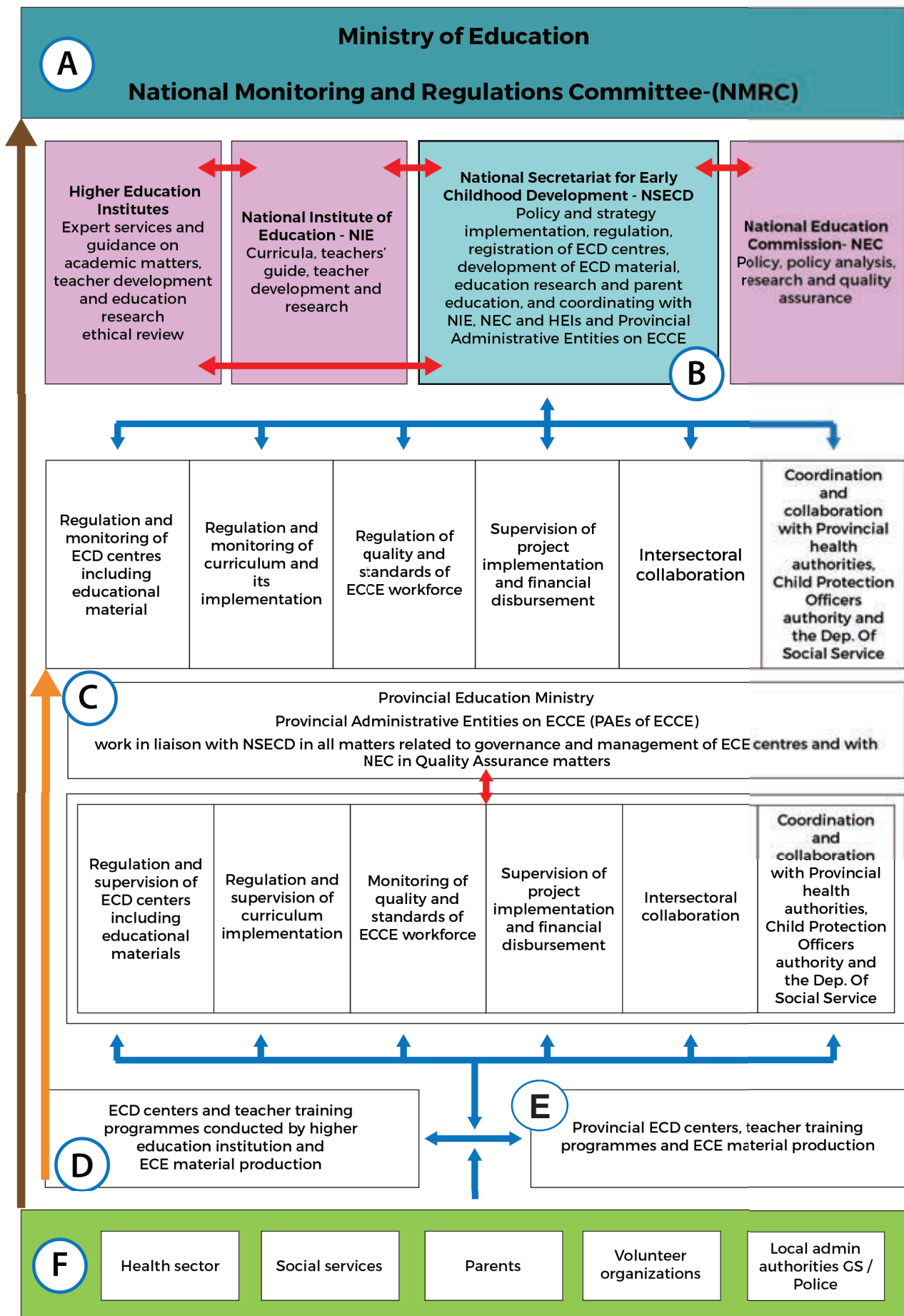
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs shall take necessary steps to enact appropriate legislation and establish an institutional and regulatory framework for the ECCE sector to empower the State agencies to prescribe and enforce necessary regulations to ensure the equity and inclusiveness, and quality of the early childhood care and education system. The proposed institutional and regulatory framework for the ECCE sector is detailed in Section 3.
- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC shall take steps to strengthen the NSECD and the PAEs of ECCE to oversee the governance, management and coordination, and quality assurance process of ECCE.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall facilitate PAEs of ECCE to set up Provincial Coordinating and Monitoring Committees on ECCE to monitor ECCE institutions, training programmes, workforce, financing services, etc. in their respective provinces.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of the NMRC and in collaboration with PAEs of ECCE shall promote multisectoral planning between national and provincial level agencies and among provinces to ensure efficiency, coordination, and alignment across programmes.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall prescribe appropriate regulations and codes of practice to all ECCE providers/centres to ensure they explicitly commit to provide respectful and responsive care and ensure the safety and security of children and refrain and prevent any form of exploitation within as well as outside the ECD centres.
- The NSECD in collaboration with PAEs of ECCE shall mandate ECCE centres to obtain an explicit pledge on the commitment of teachers and other staff for respectful and responsive care and the safety and security of children and refrain and prevent any form of exploitation within as well as outside the ECD centres.
- The NSECD in collaboration with PAEs of ECCE shall mandate all ECCE centres to obtain an explicit pledge from parents to commit to respectful and responsive care and safety and security of children and refrain and prevent any form of exploitation within as well as outside the ECD centres.
- The NSECD in collaboration with PAEs of ECCE shall ensure that all ECCE centres refrain from propagating any form of extremist ideas, antisocial attitudes or behaviours that lead to ethnic or religious disharmony and have detrimental effects on peace and harmony of the society.
- The NSECD under the technical advice and guidance of NMRC shall facilitate the establishment of national-level Ethical Review Committees (ERC) at the NEC and make mandatory for any research group/donor-funded project teams to obtain prior approval from the ERC of the NEC to ensure that children in ECCE centres are not exploited in research and/or development activities.

3. PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR THE ECCE SECTOR

The NEC recognizes the importance of having a well-defined institutional and regulatory framework for the effective functioning of the ECCE sector, and also for successful implementation of the proposed Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on ECCE. Accordingly, an appropriate institutional and regulatory framework with well-delineated roles and responsibilities of key agencies at the central and provincial levels is proposed herewith. The proposed institutional and regulatory framework also ensures the inclusion of all stakeholders of ECCE in the decision making and policy implementation process through committees established at various levels of governance and management.

The proposed institutional and regulatory framework including the key agencies at central and provincial levels and their roles and responsibilities, and coordinating committees and their compositions and functions are detailed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Proposed Institutional and Regulatory Framework for the ECCE Sector



Source: Author's illustration

(A) NATIONAL MONITORING AND REGULATION COMMITTEE (NMRC)

The NMRC which is currently established in the Ministry of Education is the central level advisory and monitoring and regulatory body of the ECCE sector. The composition of the Committee according to the approved Cabinet Paper is as follows:

1. Secretary, Ministry of Education - Committee Chairman
2. Secretary, State Ministry in-charge of the subject preschools - Convenor
3. Chairman of the National Education Commission or a representative appointed by the Chairman to represent the relevant field
4. Chairman of the University Grants Commission or a representative appointed by the Chairman to represent the relevant field
5. Chairman of the Finance Commission or a representative appointed by the Chairman to represent the relevant field
6. A Senior Staff Grade Officer of the Ministry of Health nominated by the Secretary to the same Ministry representing maternal, child and nutrition divisions
7. A Senior Staff Officer of the Ministry in-charge of the subject of Provincial Councils and Local Government nominated by the same Ministry
8. A Senior Executive Officer nominated by the Ministry in-charge of the subject of Law/Justice
9. Director General of the Department of National Planning or a representative of the senior executive level appointed by the Director General to represent the relevant field
10. Director General of the National Institute of Education or a representative of the senior executive level appointed by the Director General
11. Dean of the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka
12. Representatives from all 9 Provinces representing administrative authorities in charge of ECCE matters
13. One member who has knowledge of early childhood and specific details with the above field appointed by the State Minister-in-charge of the subject of preschools
14. One member representing the university faculties of child psychology, child diseases, and special needs
15. Members who have expertise in early childhood development/child psychology/child diseases
16. Director of the National Secretariat for Early Child Development (NSECD), functioning as the Secretary to the NMRC

The primary function of the NMRC is to guide the formulation of policies and regulation, reforms and projects activities, promote compliance of key stakeholders with such policies and regulation and also facilitate the implementation reforms and projects launched while monitoring the ECCE services of the entire country through the process of the regular review.

1. The NMRC shall be the authoritative body to initiate the processes of review of policy documents prepared by the NEC and endorse them as a national policy.
2. The NMRC shall guide the NSECD in liaison with the NIE to prepare curricula and instructional material and

teachers' guides for ECD teachers and teacher training centres. Such curricula shall be evaluated by the NMRC and endorsed as national guides.

3. The NMRC shall develop minimum standards for ECD centres, teacher training centres, and ECD material producers and establish a method of registration and monitoring at the provincial and national levels.
4. The NMRC shall facilitate the development of a system and procedure for quality assurance and accreditation of ECCE centres by the NEC and facilitate the implementation of the quality assurance and accreditation process through the National Quality Assurance Council (NQAC) established at the NEC and Provincial Quality Assurance Units (PQAUs) at the provincial level.
5. The NMRC shall advise and monitor the implementation of approved policies and strategies, curricula, and quality assurance and accreditation process through the NSECD through a process of regular review.
6. The NMRC shall facilitate NSECD to ensure progressive development of the ECCE sector by offering continuous professional development programmes for ECCE staff, promoting innovations and education research, establishing a process of self-evaluation, and monitoring of ECD centres at national and provincial levels.
7. The NMRC shall facilitate the NSECD to develop parents' education material in collaboration with the NIE and relevant health sector agencies, and disseminate them at national and provincial levels in collaboration with Provincial Administrative Entities of ECCE (PAEs of ECCE) and the health sector agencies.
8. The NMRC shall also entertain communication with grassroot-level stakeholders that include parents, teachers, community leaders, volunteer organizations and responsible officers and listen to their opinions, grievances and suggestion, and take such inputs into consideration in proposing modifications for existing programmes, and designing new interventions/programmes.

(B) NATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (NSECD)

The NSECD of the Ministry of Education /State Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs shall function as the central focal point and catalytic unit of the ECCE sector of the country and it shall function under the directions and technical advice and guidance of the NMRC.

1. The NSECD shall function as the coordinating agency in the process of evaluation of policy documents drafted by the NEC.
2. The NSECD shall collaborate and coordinate with the NIE in the process of ECE curriculum development and teachers' guide preparation, and shall also liaise with the NIE in the design and conduct of pre-service and in-service training programmes for preschool teachers.
3. The NSECD shall collaborate with the NIE and NEC and Provincial Administrative Entities in charge of ECCE (PAEs of ECCE) in the development of minimum standards for ECCE centres, ECE teacher training centres and programmes, and ECD material production and submit them to the NMRC for review and approval.
4. The NSECD shall collaborate with the NEC to develop a quality assurance and accreditation framework (*i.e. criteria, elements, best practices and standards*) for the quality assurance and accreditation process of ECCE centres and ECCE teacher training centres, and facilitate the implementation of the quality assurance and accreditation system by the Provincial Quality Assurance Units (PQAUs) under the guidance of the National Quality Assurance Council (NQAC) of the NEC.
5. The NSECD shall promote the implementation of the approved policy and strategies, curricula, and quality

assurance and accreditation mechanism through its network of ECCE officers in liaison with the PAEs of ECCE, and shall regularly report to NMRC the progress of implementation of approved projects and programmes.

6. The NSECD shall liaise with the Provincial Administrative Entities of ECCE in implementing nationally prescribed regulations, standards and guidelines, policies and strategies, curricula, and instructional guides.
7. The NSECD shall develop strategic activity plans and programmes to ensure equity in the provision of programmes for continuous professional development of ECCE teachers of the entire country by coordinating with the national level training institutions while promoting and supporting provincial/regional level CPD activities
8. The NSECD in liaison with NEC and NIE shall promote research and innovations, and shall organize regular national-level research conferences in liaison with NEC, NIE and universities.
9. The NSECD shall liaise with the NIE and Ministry of Health in the development of parents' education material, and disseminate them at the national and provincial levels in collaboration with the PAEs of ECCE and the health sector agencies.

(C) PROVINCIAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE ENTITIES ON ECCE

The Provincial Ministry of Education shall function as the authority in regulating all ECCE activities in the respective provinces in compliance and synchrony with national policies and guidelines. It shall take the responsibility of designing and promoting development activities and monitoring the progressive development of ECCE activities in their respective provinces. Provincial authorities are also required to contribute to the development of national policies and strategies.

1. The Provincial Administrative Entity (PAE) established for ECCE in each province shall be responsible for regulating, promoting and monitoring all ECCE activities.
2. The Head of the PAE of ECCE in the respective province should ensure the compliance of ECCE centres, teacher training centres and ECCE material production with the nationally prescribed curricula, regulations, standards, and guidelines.
3. The Head of the PAE of ECCE in the respective province shall ensure all the ECCE centres register their operations with the provincial authorities, and the process of registration shall be made through a process of simultaneous registration at the provincial and national levels.
4. The PAEs of ECCE shall liaise with the NSECD and collaborate very closely with provincial-level health, social service and child protection authorities in dealing with all matters related to the ECCE sector.
5. The PAEs of ECCE shall share information on registration, quality assurance assessments and all other activities with NSECD and participate in regular progress reviews at the central level.
6. The NSECD through PAEs of ECCE of respective provinces shall establish Provincial Quality Assurance Units (PQAUs) in respective provinces by adopting the NEC-prescribed quality assurance and accreditation system and accompanying guidelines.
7. Provincial Quality Assurance Unit (PQAU) of each province shall conduct quality assurance and accreditation of ECCE centres under the guidance and assistance from the National Quality Assurance Council (NQAC) of the NEC.
8. The PAEs of ECCE shall facilitate provincial-level teacher training centres to conduct progressively evolving CPD

programmes and education research activities in the respective provinces. They should harness opportunities to engage in national-level programmes for CPD provided and education research conducted by the NSECD, NIE, NEC, and higher education institutes.

9. The PAEs of ECCE shall implement parent education programmes at the provincial level in liaison with the ECCE centres.

(D) NATIONAL LEVEL ECCE CENTRES, TEACHER TRAINING CENTRES AND ECCE MATERIAL PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

1. All national-level ECCE centres, teacher training programmes and ECD material production industry should comply with national guidelines, the process of registration, quality assurance and accreditation as prescribed by the NSECD.
2. Experts attached to higher education institutes (HEIs) are expected to provide guidance on academic matters, teacher training and education provisions.
3. Experts attached to HEIs conducting ECCE programmes should collaborate with the NEC in the development of policies, with the NIE in the development of ECCE curricula and teachers' guides, and with the NSECD and NMRC on matters related to the regulation of the ECCE sector.

(E) PROVINCIAL LEVEL ECCE CENTRES, TEACHER TRAINING CENTRES AND ECCE MATERIAL PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

1. Provincial ECCE centres and teacher training centres and ECCE material production industry shall be regulated by the respective PAEs of ECCE.
2. The PAEs of ECCE shall ensure equity and standard of care provided by the ECCE centres through regular monitoring.
3. The PAEs of ECCE shall maintain a Provincial Database on ECCE centres which should be shared with the NSECD through an appropriate data sharing process.
4. The ECCE centres are required to adhere to nationally prescribed regulations, guidelines and standards, and the compliance will be monitored through regular quality and accreditation processes that shall be implemented by the respective the PQAUs of respective provinces under the guidance of the NQAC of the NEC.
5. All provincial teacher training centres and ECCE material production industry in the respective provinces should comply with national guidelines, the process of registration and quality assurance and accreditation.

(F) STAKEHOLDERS AT GRASSROOT-LEVEL

1. Officers in the health sector, social services, and local administrative authorities (*Grama Seva Niladhari/Police*) as well as parents, and volunteer organizations shall cooperate and collaborate in the implementation of the ECCE policy at the grassroot-level.
2. The PAEs of ECCE shall liaise with divisional-level health, social service and child protection authorities working of the respective provinces at the grassroot-level and shall collaborate with the NSECD in dealing with all

matters related to the ECCE sector.

3. Parents and other stakeholders at the ground-level should be empowered to engage in ECCE activities and report their grievances and submit their suggestions to PAEs of ECCE, NSECD, and the Ministry in-charge of the subject of Child Affairs and Ministry of Education.
4. Parents should be provided with a handbook by the respective ECCE centres that contains the philosophy of ECCE, centre calendar and the curriculum adopted.
5. All ECCE centres are expected to provide parent the education material produced and issued by the NSECD to the parents, and they, the parents in turn are expected to abide by the prescribed guidelines.

PART IV - VOLUME II

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON GENERAL EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Sri Lanka has made impressive progress in getting children of ages 5 to 16 years into primary and secondary school education and having them complete up to 11 years of compulsory schooling. Nonetheless, many appraisals conducted by international agencies such as World Bank (2017)¹²¹ and Asian Development Bank (2020)¹²² highlighted that Sri Lanka falls behind in terms of learning outcomes, which are vital for the high level industrial, manufacturing and service sector activities of a country aspiring to achieve upper-middle-income status in the medium-term and high-income status over the long-term.

Therefore, the main issue the country faces now is to lift the learning achievements of Sri Lankan students on par with those of upper-middle and high-income countries. In this regard, the general education system has a crucial role in laying the foundation of a child by imparting cognitive skills¹²³ (*cognitive skills, or cognitive abilities; the ways that one's brain remembers, reasons, holds attention, solves problems, thinks, reads and learns*¹²⁴), psycho-motor skills (*hands-on skills, manual dexterity, practical skills*), and psycho-social and emotional skills (*resilience, achievement motivation, control, teamwork, confidence, initiative, and ethics*) that are important for them to become productive in the modern global economy and be good citizens in adult life. Currently, the general education curriculum, teaching-learning, and assessment are insufficiently oriented to the promotion of not only the cognitive but also psycho-motor and psycho-social and emotional skills¹²⁴.

These shortcomings can be addressed by adopting a learner-centered approach for curriculum development, introducing a suitable learning model that will shift students from passive to active learning and from surface to deep learning, and implementing problem-based learning methods to enhance students' learning performance specifically in self-regulated learning and higher-order thinking skills. The integration of such activities into the school education system will help students to achieve the 21st-century skills¹²⁵ required to prepare them for their future careers.

1.2. Salient Features of General Education System

Sri Lanka adopts a 13-year general education system, starting at age five. School education is divided into four levels: Primary, Junior Secondary, Senior Secondary, and Upper Senior Secondary or Collegiate levels.

1.2.1. Basic Statistics and Trends and School Classification

Basic statistics of the general education system with respect to the number of schools, types, and classification of schools in terms of levels/grades of education, medium of instruction, student number and gender pattern, and teacher population and qualification and their distribution are given in Table 1 and 2 and Figures 1 to 5.

121. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

122. Asian Development Bank (2020). *Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka: Education Sector Development Program, Validation Report*.

123. Peng, P., & Kievit, R. A. (2020). *The development of academic achievement and cognitive abilities: A bidirectional perspective*. *Child Development Perspectives*, 14(1), 15–20.

124. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Social and Emotional Skills: Well-being, Connectedness and Success, Directorate for Education and Skills*. Retrieved June 15, 2021 from <https://www.oecd.org/education>

125. The term 21st-century skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed—by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today's world, particularly in collegiate programs and contemporary careers and workplaces.

Sri Lanka over the past 5 decades has made progressive improvements in the coverage of education provision to cater to the rising demand of student enrolment. This has culminated in achieving universal level enrolment, particularly in the early years of education. As shown in Table 1, the number of government schools has increased from 8,585 in 1971 to 10,155 in 2020, and student enrolment has increased from 2,828,070 to 4,063,685 during the same period. The teacher population has increased from 94,858 in 1971 to 249,494 in 2020 and in parallel to that, the student: staff ratio has also improved from 30:1 to 16:1. A reflection of this progressive improvement is manifested in the increase in adult literacy rate, which has increased from 79% in 1971 to 91.7% in 2018.

Table 1: Trends in General Education Provision and Attainment 1971 – 2020

Indicator	1971	1981	1991	2002	2008	2020
Government schools	8,585	9,521	9,998	9,826	9,662	10,155
Students in government schools	2,828,070	3,451,358	4,258,698	4,027,075	3,929,234	4,063,685
Teachers in government schools	94,858	135,869	177,231	191,812	212,683	249,494
The student-teacher ratio in government schools	30	25	24	21	18	16
Student-school ratio	329	362	426	410	406	400
Adult literacy rate (Percent)	79	87	87	91	92.5	91.71*

* Note: data in 2018¹²⁶

Source: Author's illustration

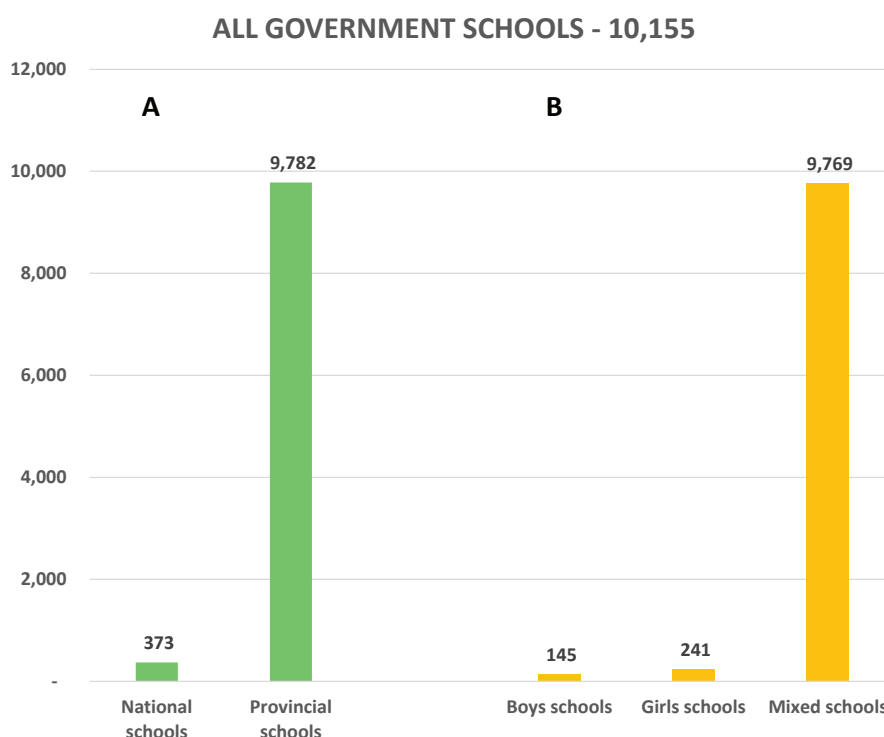
As of 2020¹²⁷, there were a total of 11,091 schools in the country. Of these 10,155 (91.56%) were government schools and 90 (0.81%) were government-approved private schools. Further, there were 816 (7.35%) Pirivena schools and another 30 (0.27%) special schools to cater to children with special education needs. In addition to the above, as of unofficial data, there exist 395 international schools and an unknown number of schools run by religious denominations, both of which are yet to be brought under government regulation.

As of 2020 data, out of 10,155 government schools, 373 (3.7%) are generally called 'National Schools' coming directly under the purview of central government (*under the Ministry of Education*) while the remaining 9,782 (96.3%) are generally called 'Provincial Schools', coming under the purview of Provincial Departments of Education (PDE). The vast majority of schools are mixed schools while 145 and 241 are all-boys and all-girls schools, respectively (Figure 1).

126. Socio Demography/Literacy rate Indicators 2022. Country economy. Retrieved November 20, 2021 from <https://countryeconomy.com/demography/literacy-rate/sri-anka>

127. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka.

Figure 1: Basic Statistics of Government Schools – (A) National and Provincial Schools and (B) Schools by Gender of the Students



Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹²⁸

The government schools, as shown in Table 2, are again classified into 4 types, based on the Level/Grades offered: 3,999 (39.38%) schools offer education only up to Grade 5 or Grade 8 (*Primary Schools*) (Type 3); 3,224 (31.75%); schools offer up to Senior Secondary level {G.C.E. (O/L) (Type 2)}; and 2,932 (28.87%) offer up to G.C.E. (A/L) Examination (*Upper Senior Secondary or Collegiate level*) (Type 1AB and Type 1C).

As of this data, out of 2,932 schools (28.87% of the total schools) that, offer up to upper senior secondary or collegiate level education, only 1,000 (34.1%) offer all four streams (*Science and Mathematics, Arts, Commerce, and Technology*), while 1,932 (65.89%) schools offer only Arts and Commerce streams of education preparing for the G.C.E. (A/L) examination.

Table 2: Classification, Description, and Distribution of Schools

Type of School	Description	Number of schools	Percentage of Total
Type 1AB	Schools with Grades 1-13 or 6-13 with all 4 academic streams at G.C.E. (A/L) – Science and Mathematics, Arts, Commerce, and Technology	1,000	9.85%
Type 1C	Schools with Grades 1-13 or 6-13 and with Arts and Commerce streams at G.C.E. (A/L) (<i>without Science and Mathematics</i>)	1,932	19.02%
Type 2	Schools with only Grades 1-11	3,224	31.75%
Type 3	Primary Schools with only Grades 1-5 or 1-8	3,999	39.38%

Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹²⁹

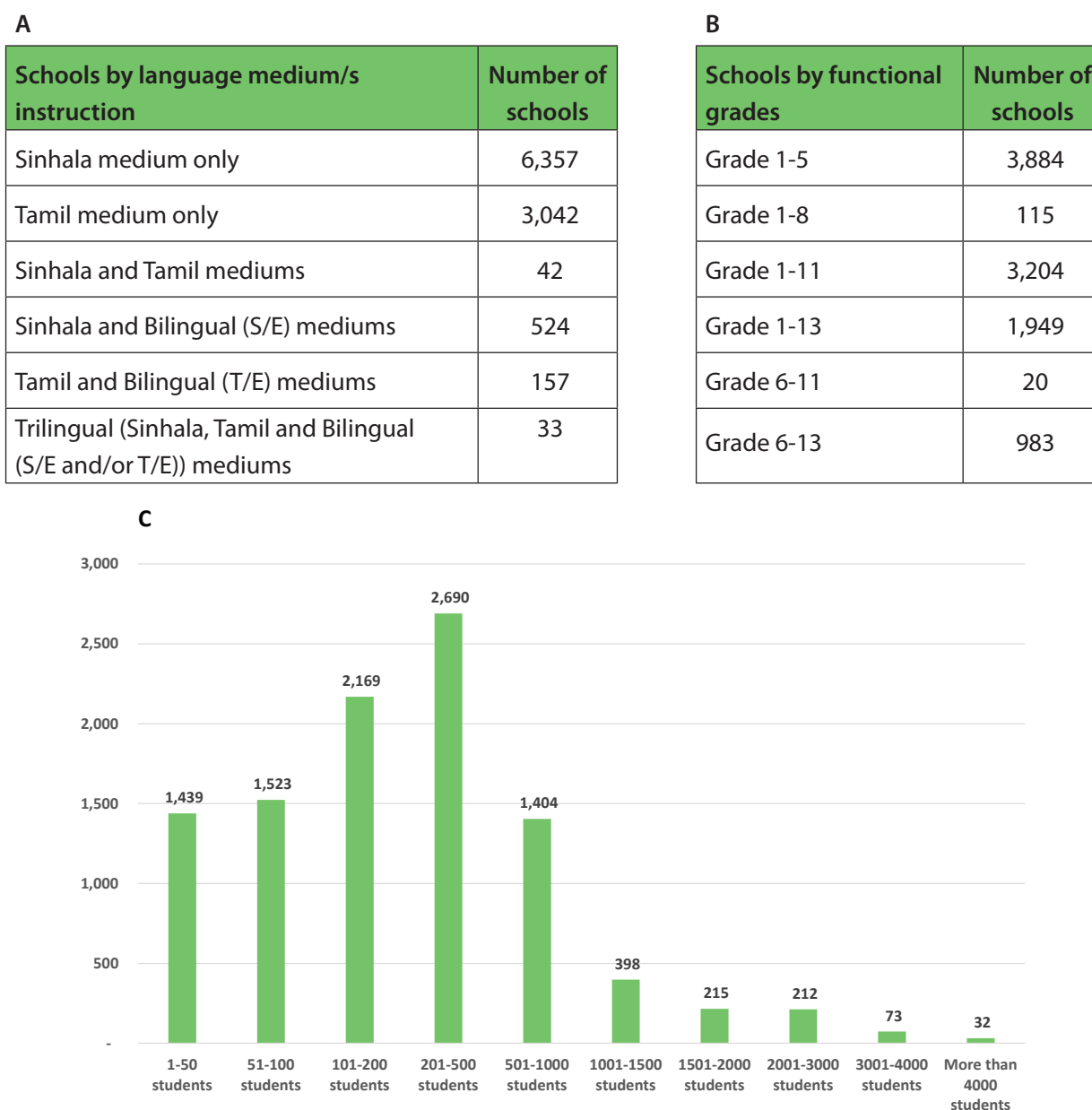
128. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka.

129. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka

The categorization of schools according to the medium of instruction, functional grades, and student number is depicted in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2A, a majority of schools offer education only in Sinhala medium (6,357; 62.60%) while 3,042 (29.95 %) schools offer in Tamil medium with a limited number of schools offering bi-medium/ bilingual education: Sinhala and Tamil (42; 0.41%); Sinhala and bilingual (*Sinhala and English*) medium (524; 5.16%), Tamil and bilingual (*Tamil and English*) (157; 1.55%). A very small number of schools (33; 0.3%) offer education in all three languages — Sinhala, Tamil, and English medium of education (*Trilingual*).

As shown in Figure 2B and Figure 2C, schools in Sri Lanka could also be categorized according to the functional grades and the number of students per school. Out of the total of 10,155 schools, 3,884 (40.70%) schools are categorized as primary schools, offering only up to Grade 5, while 1,949 (19.19%) schools offer education from Grade 1 to 13 with another 983 (9.67%) schools offering classes from Grade 6-13 (Figure 2B). As shown in Figure 2C, out of the total of 10,155 schools, 2,962 (29.17%) schools carry less than 100 students while a vast majority of schools (6,263; 61.67%) carrying students' populations ranging from 101 to 1,000 students.

Figure 2: Basic Statistics of Government Schools – 2020 (A) Schools by language medium/s of instruction (B) Schools by functional Grade span (C) Schools by student population



Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹³⁰

130. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka

The student enrolment data, as of Grade 1 admission are shown in Figure 3. The total enrolment into Grade 1 in 2020 was 319,405 students, and 161,853 (50.67%) were males and 157,552 (49.33) were females. Out of the 319,405 students, 293,733 (92%) were enrolled into provincial schools, and again a majority of students enrolments were either in Type 2 (70,125; 21.95%) or Type 3 (130,009; 40.7%) schools. According to the medium of instruction, 239,236 students (74.90%) were enrolled in Sinhala medium schools while 80,169 (25.1%) were admitted into Tamil medium schools.

Figure 3: Grade 1 Admission – 2020 - (A) Grade 1 admission distribution according to the gender of the student; (B) Grade 1 admission distribution in National and Provincial schools; (C) Grade 1 admission distribution according to the medium of instruction; (D) Grade 1 admissions according to the type of school; and (E) Percentage distribution of Grade 1 admissions according to the gender of students and female, national vs provincial, medium of the institution and school types

A

Male Students	161,853
Female Students	157,552
Total grade 1 admissions	319,405

C

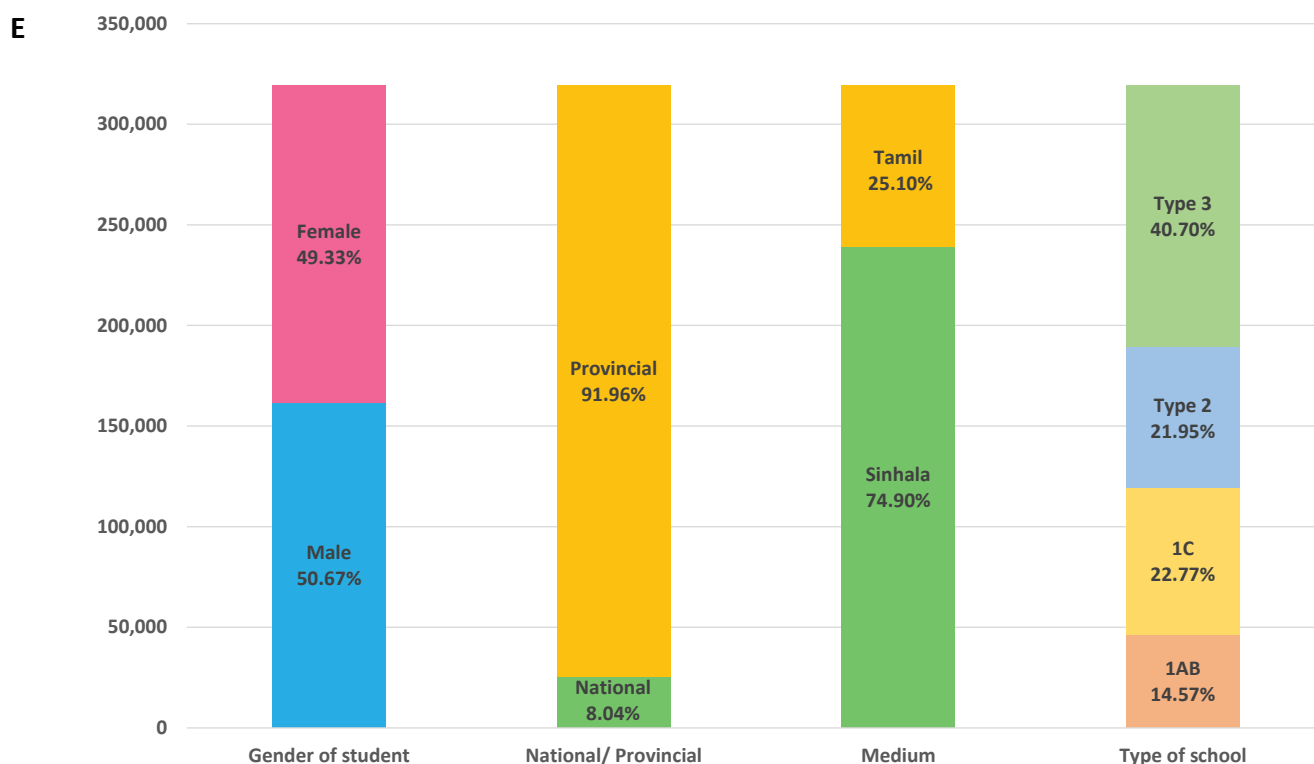
Sinhala Medium	239,236
Tamil Medium	80,169

B

National Schools	25,672
Provincial Schools	293,733

D

1AB Schools	46,539
1C Schools	72,732
Type 2 Schools	70,125
Type 3 Schools	130,009

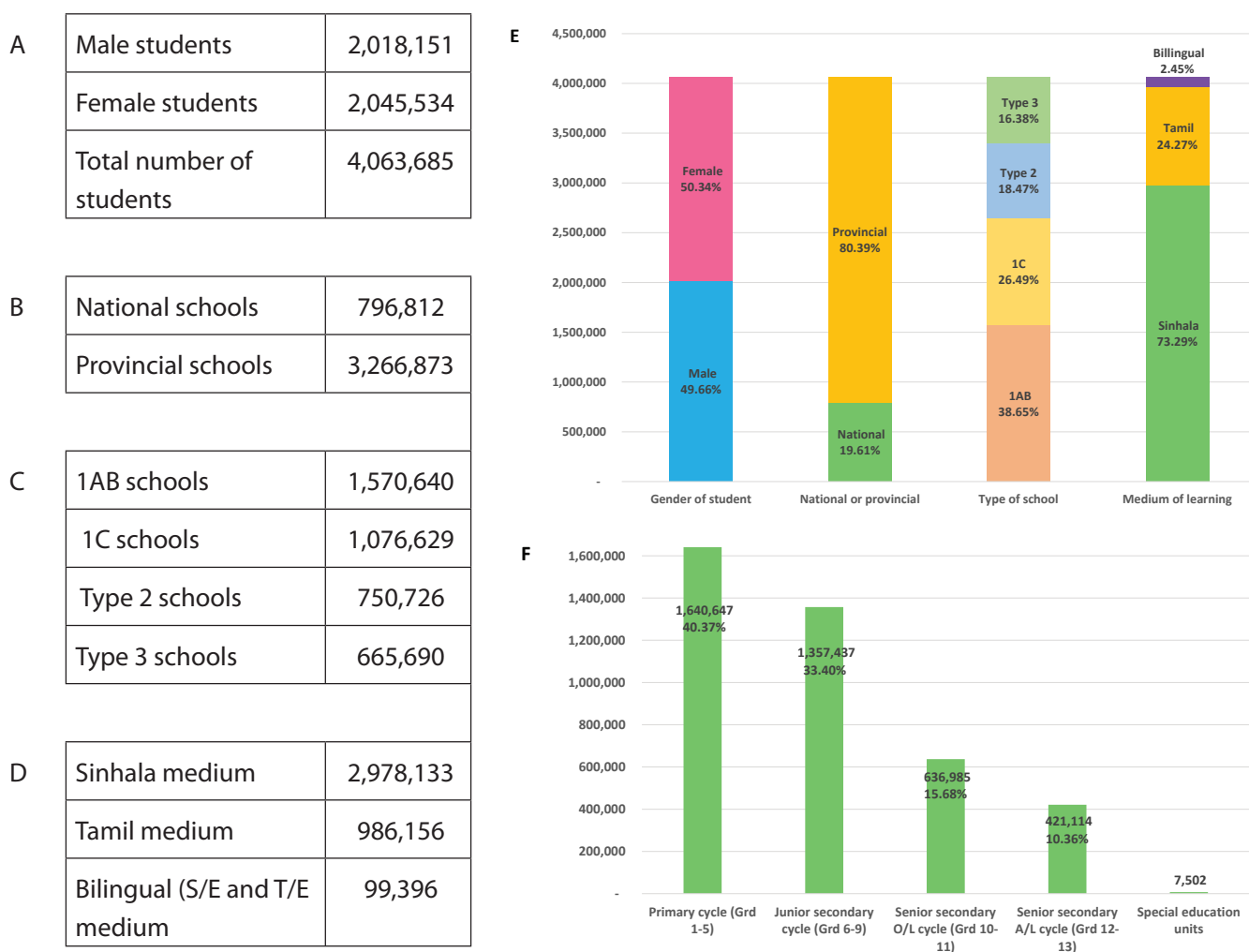


Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹³¹

131. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka

The distribution of the total number of students according to gender and medium of instruction, and across grades and types of schools is depicted in Figure 4. As of 2020 data, out of the total 4,063,685 students, 49.66% are males while 50.34% are females (Figure 4A & 4E). A vast majority of students (3,266,873; 80.39%) (Figure 4B and 4E) are studying in the provincial schools. Student distribution across different types of schools (Figure 4C and 4E), show that more than half of students are distributed in the 1AB (1,570,640; 38.65%) and 1C schools (1,076,629; 26.49%). In terms of distribution according to the medium of instruction, a vast majority of students are studying in Sinhala medium only (2,978,133; 73.29%) while 986,156 (24.27%) are in Tamil medium only schools with a small number of students (99,396; 2.45%) studying in bi-medium schools (Figure 4D and 4E). When analyzed the estimated distribution across grades (Figure 4A & 4F), there are 1,640,667 (40.37%) students in Primary Cycle (Grade 1 to 5), 1,357,437 (33.40%) students in Junior Secondary Cycle (Grade 6 to 9), 636,985 (15.68%) students in Senior Secondary Cycle (Grade 10 to 11) and 423,114 (10.36%) students in Upper Senior Secondary Cycle (Grade 12 to 13). In terms of the number of students per year per grade, as estimated on average there are 328,129, 339,359, 318,493, and 210,557 students per year in junior primary, secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary grades, respectively reflecting significant dropout rates occurring from primary to upper senior secondary education.

Figure 4: Basic Statistics on Student Numbers – 2020 (A) Student distribution according to the gender; (B) Student number in National and Provincial schools; (C) Students by the type of school; (D) Student number by language medium/s study; (E) Percentage distribution of students; and (F) Students by Grade cycle of studying



Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹³²

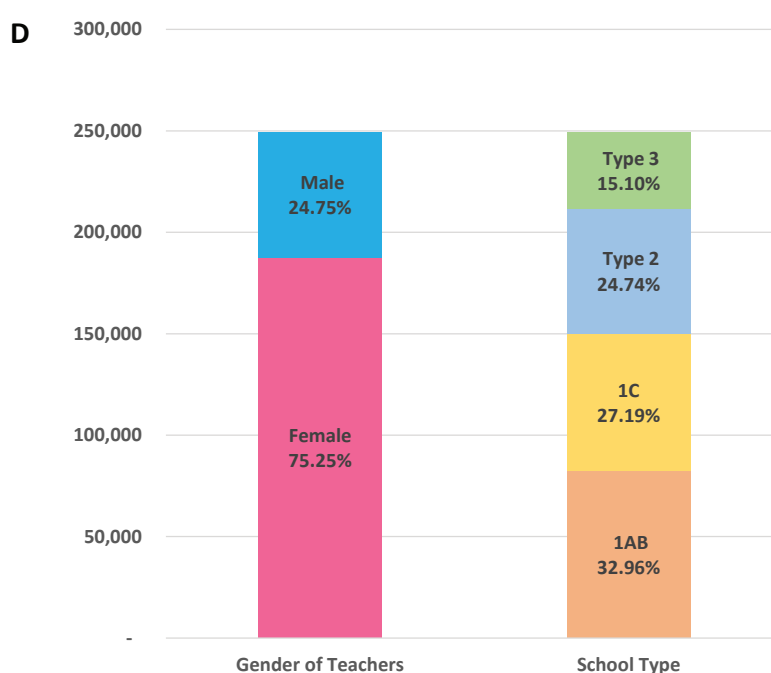
The distribution of teachers across the types of schools and their qualifications is depicted in Figure 5. As shown in the figure, the total number of teachers is 249,494 (Figure 5A), and out of those numbers, 243,365 are graduate teachers (121,569) or trained teachers (121,769) reflecting that approximately 97% of teachers have received adequate training (Figure 5B). The distribution of teachers by the school category are shown in Figure 5C, 82,244 (32.96%) teachers are in Type 1AB schools, 67,837 (27.19%) are in Type C schools, 61,728 (24.74%) are in Type 2 Schools and 37,685 (15.10%) are in Type 3 schools.

Figure 5: Basic Statistics on Teacher Numbers – 2020 - (A) Teacher distribution according to the gender; (B) Teacher distribution according to their level of education and training; (C) Student-Teacher distribution according to the school type; and (D) Percentage distribution of teachers according to the gender and school type

A	Male teachers	61,747
	Female teachers	187,747
	Total number of teachers	249,494

B	Graduate teachers	121,569
	Trained teachers	121,796
	Trainee teachers	4,525
	Untrained teachers	1,472
	Other teachers	132

C	1AB schools	82,244
	1C schools	67,837
	Type 2 schools	61,728
	Type 3 schools	37,685



Source: Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka (2020)¹³³

1.3. Issues and Gaps

As a prelude to formulating the sector-specific policy proposal and strategic activities, a comprehensive review of issues faced by the general education (GE) subsector was carried out, and it is discussed under 11 categories: (i) Types of educational offerings and inequalities of Science and Mathematics and Language Education opportunities to students; (ii) Teacher education, management, and quality; (iii) Curriculum, content development, and documentation; (iv) Duration of school education; (v) Monitoring of student learning; (vi) Guidance and counselling service for students; (vii) Governance and management of general education system; (viii) Physical resources and learning environment and teaching-learning process; (ix) Accountability and quality assurance framework; (x) Medium of instruction, national, second and international languages; (xi) Cost and financing of schools in Sri Lanka.

133. Ministry of Education. (2020). Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka.

1.3.1. Types of Educational Offerings and Inequalities of Science and Mathematics and Language Education Opportunities to Students

As explained in Section 1.2.1, public schools are divided into 'National Schools' and 'Provincial Schools' and again classified into 4 types, based on the number of Grades offered by the school and the types of subjects offered for G.C.E.(A/L) Examinations. This organizational structure and classification of the school system are both inequitable and detrimental to the future of the country. Subject streams offered in semi-urban and rural areas are limited, reducing the opportunities offered to children in those areas to have access to Science (*Biological/Physical*) stream and learn English and other foreign languages. As a result, besides being inequitable, the distribution of upper senior secondary/collegiate level students is highly skewed towards the arts and humanities fields that are not in high demand in the labour market.

It is indeed encouraging to note that the successive Governments of Sri Lanka have recognized that this education structure is not only inequitable but also would create adverse effects for the future of the country. The most recent initiative to expand senior secondary education opportunities for rural students by upgrading 1,000 senior secondary schools¹³⁴ throughout the country to offer all four G.C.E. (A/L) streams (*Arts, Science, Commerce, and Technology*) is a noteworthy move. Nonetheless, much more efforts are needed to address this chronic issue in a coherent and sustainable manner.

1.3.2. Teacher Education, Management and Quality

The efficiency of teacher education, teacher management and the teacher quality are undermined by many issues.

1.3.2.1. Pre-service teacher training

At present, only two pathways exist for providing pre-service teacher education; namely National Diploma in Teaching (NDT) offered by the National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) and B.Ed. Degree programmes are offered by a limited number of Faculties/Departments of Education in Universities¹³⁵. The B.Ed. programmes offered in the Sri Lankan universities are not in line with the similar qualifications offered in other countries since they do not have separate specializations to train the graduates to teach at primary and secondary education. Further, the structure and content of B.Ed. programmes in the universities do not match with the entire range of subjects in the school curriculum. As reported by many previous policy documents and review reports, it appears that¹³⁶ the annual output of these two pathways is hardly adequate to meet the requirement of the country particularly to cater to science and mathematics stream subjects, particularly in the upper senior secondary level. Besides, that B.Ed. degree programmes are offered primarily for the students in the Arts streams, and there is hardly any B.Ed. the degree programme in other streams of education. Hence, teachers with B.Ed. qualifications appear to be inadequately prepared to teach subjects such as Science, Mathematics, IT, Aesthetics, Commerce, Technology, and Languages where there is a dearth of teachers.

Besides that, the curricula of the NCoEs appear to be deficient in providing adequate pre-service teacher education. The training provided has been criticized for not being balanced as the practical and pedagogical components are reported as inadequate in comparison with the theoretical components¹⁵.

In addition, there have been critical shortages of staff in NCoEs, and Faculties and Departments of Education in Universities, which seriously affect the quality of output. Further, the opportunities for professional development for

134. Ministry of Education. (2020). *Increasing the number of National Schools up to 1,000 by upgrading the schools in the school system into National Schools and Establishment of 20 full-fledged trilingual secondary National Schools at District Level and Establishment of a school network with a core school networking the said schools.* Circular No: 3/2020.

135. Sethunga, P., Wijesundera, S., Kalamany, T., Karunanayake, S. (2016). *Study on the Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 02, National Education Commission.*

136. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*

academics serving these institutions are inadequate.

To add to the above woes, the policy and the process of recruitment of students to the NCoEs and the selection criteria have been inconsistent in the recent past. Widely varying, as opposed to uniform, ability levels of the candidates selected adversely affect the overall quality of the output. Hence, the quality of teachers produced by the NCoEs appears to have deteriorated over the years¹³⁷.

1.3.2.2. Teacher recruitment and deployment and transfers

As mentioned in Section 1.2.1 the general education system is catered by 249,494 teachers of which 48% are graduates and 49% are trained teachers. The rest 3% are untrained, trainee teachers and other categories of teachers¹³⁸. However, many of these graduate teachers haven't had formal institution-based, pre-service training on education technologies. This together with the inconsistencies in teacher recruitment rules related to minimum qualifications, which occur mostly due to political influence, has led to shortcomings in the quality of teaching and learning. Moreover, unfair deployment of teachers in different categories of schools has resulted in a surplus of teachers in urban schools and shortages in rural schools, and also an acute shortage of teachers in Mathematics, Science, and English. Furthermore, the involvement of school teachers in private tuitions has created a serious problem in the quality of school education due to unethical practices adopted by some teachers in schools to get a higher number of students to their private tuition classes. Multiple reasons such as low salary scales, low level of career recognition, and non-existence of incentives and reward systems for teachers are some of the underline causes for the above scenario.

In the recent past, the teacher recruitments have been done at three levels (at Central Government/MoE, Provincial/MoE, and School level). These teachers have been recruited with different qualifications such as formal institution-based pre-service Diplomas (NDT at NCoEs), B.Ed. degrees (offered by Faculties/Departments of Education of Universities), any Bachelor's degree (BA, BSc, BCom, etc.) or Diploma (NDT and Higher National Diploma from Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE)). However, the latter two categories of recruits are without any formal, or pre-service teacher education. Therefore, it appears that their performances in the job undoubtedly fall short due to these inadequacies. However, if the recruitment of teachers is done at the school level, as happened a few decades ago, it may create additional problems; it prevents the rotation of competent teachers through the system. In addition, there may be no application for schools in remote areas as such schools would not be attractive.

Though the national level statistics do not reflect the actual ground situation, there is a visible shortage of teachers in Mathematics, Science, and English, particularly in peri-urban and rural areas. Further, the study conducted by the National Institute of Education (NIE) concluded that many teachers in service do not appear to have adequate knowledge in Mathematics, Science, and English. Research conducted to test the mathematics knowledge of 170 teachers in schools where students scored less than 30 % on the G.C.E. (O/L) Examination for Mathematics revealed that 36% of teachers from the Western province and 51% from other provinces could score only less than 5 marks out of 10¹³⁹.

137. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*

138. Ministry of Education (2019). *Annual School Census Report of Sri Lanka*

139. National Institute of Education. (2008). *A Study on the Subject Knowledge of Mathematics Teachers in Schools that Perform Poorly in G.C.E. (O/L) Mathematics.*

1.3.2.3. In-service training

In-service training programmes are offered as long-term and short-term training sessions by the NIE and Provincial Education Authorities (PEA) without a long-term perspective¹⁴⁰. NIE and Teacher Training Colleges are the main providers of long-term in-service teacher training while different types of short-term in-service programmes are offered by different sources. The NIE has also designed short-term courses for teachers which fall under the cascade model; one day to one-week courses that are conducted at the provincial level through NIE trained In-Service Advisors (ISAs) and Subject Directors of Zonal Education Departments¹⁹. In addition, some programmes are need-based, and they were mostly related to some of the reforms introduced into the curriculum by the NIE. However, most of the other programmes have not been well-planned, well-structured and most of them are irrelevant to the work they perform, and as such most of these training programmes are unattractive to participants. Further, allowances paid for the trainees are inadequate to encourage attendance. Also, most of these programmes are clustered towards the latter part of the year owing to delays in fund availability¹⁴¹.

1.3.2.4. Continuing professional development

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes assist practitioners to update their professional knowledge and skills. Furthermore, it can make a positive contribution to teachers' knowledge and skills, motivation, and morale¹⁴². Several institutions, such as Faculties and Departments of Education in Universities (Colombo, Peradeniya, Jaffna, Eastern, and OUSL) and the NIE offer post-recruitment, professional development programmes leading to a recognized qualification. However, the number of programmes offered is far less than the demand, and even the limited opportunities provided are not meeting the requirements as the curricula of most programmes do not fulfil the current needs. In addition, the MoE and the provincial level educational authorities and Teacher Centres (TCs) offer short-term CPD programmes, but they are not very effective because of their inability to design the programmes to meet the needs of teachers at different career stages. Further, all three categories of staff, teachers, ISAs, and teacher-educators face difficulty in getting released from their workplace for such training programmes. Moreover, the unavailability of funds in time also affects the implementation of CPD programmes.

1.3.2.5. Teacher service conditions and prospects

The current Teacher Service Minute is in force for more than 15 years, and it is indeed in need of urgent revision to make the teaching profession attractive. Salary scales prescribed in the Service Minute are inadequate in comparison with scales applicable to other parallel services. In addition, the promotion system is also based on the length of service rather than qualifications and performance. As such, teachers lack incentives to invest in career advancement. Further, the pay level of a teacher is relatively low compared to many other parallel categories of occupations, and the salary scale is compressed. Therefore, teachers often seek opportunities outside school (e.g., private tutoring). Finally, absenteeism is a significant problem in terms of teacher accountability, especially in areas with poor facilities. It results in disparities in learning outcome achievement and suboptimal completion rates, especially in rural areas and under-developed districts¹⁴³.

At present, there is no institutional mechanism (such as a regulatory professional body) to promote professionalism in the teaching cadre. The teaching profession must be given the responsibility of regulating and managing their professional activities in a dignified manner as seen in other established professions such as doctors, engineers,

140. Gunawardhane, R. (2011). *A study on the effectiveness of short-term in-service teacher training in the teaching-learning process*. National Education Commission.

141. Sethunga, P., Wijesundera, S., Kalamany, T., Karunanayake, S. (2016). *Study on the Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 02*, National Education Commission

142. Bolam, R., and Weindling, D. (2006). *Synthesis of research and evaluation projects concerned with capacity-building through teachers' professional development*. London: General Teaching Council for England.

143. Sethunga, P., Wijesundera, S., Kalamany, T., Karunanayake, S. (2016). *Study on the Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 02*, National Education Commission

lawyers, etc. Such a professional body will be responsible for specifying, maintaining, controlling academic and professional standards, including ethics and discipline of its members.

1.3.3. Curriculum, Content Development, and Documentation

Curriculum in general education is common to each Grade in schools and designed centrally by the NIE to ensure nationwide uniformity of content and standard of education. Sri Lanka has followed global trends and adopted an integrated curriculum in the primary stage and gradually move on to a subject-based specialized curriculum as the student progresses to the secondary level. Besides that, there is an increasing adaption of ICT-based tools and techniques in delivery thus increasing influence on information technology in education provisions.

Though Sri Lanka has changed its general education curriculum, content, methods of delivery, and assessment, to an extent, in keeping with global trends such as moving towards competency-based education, the teaching and learning and assessment in the classroom has not changed much from the traditional knowledge-imparting model. Students tend to learn facts for reproduction at public examinations to obtain high grades. Even then, the results in that respect too are not encouraging. As shown by the data from the Department of Examinations, still only around 3.0% of students obtain 'A' Grade passes for all subjects, and about 2.5% of the students fail to obtain a single pass despite the gradual improvement of the pass rate from 64% in 2012 to 74% in 2019 in G.C.E. (O/L) examination¹⁴⁴. Moreover, employers very often complain that the outputs from the general education system do not possess the basic competencies and proper attitude required by the workplace¹⁴⁵.

Meanwhile, the private tuition industry in parallel to the formal system has expanded which has turned out to be a costly commodity for parents and detrimental for children enjoying their childhood. Students are deprived of time to engage in common childhood activities such as sports, social and recreational activities that are crucial for personality development. Another criticism directed at schools is the deterioration of the moral standards of students. Further, there has been a growing mistrust and lack of understanding among the student groups of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Besides these criticisms, the available evidence suggests that learning outcomes in school education in Sri Lanka do not meet international standards. A National Assessment carried out by NEREC by incorporating TIMSS (*Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*) items in 2009, revealed that Sri Lanka's learning outcomes trail those of middle and high-income countries, in terms of mathematics test scores¹⁴⁶.

1.3.3.1. Curriculum development process and cycle

Serious shortcomings and flaws in curriculum designing and development have been identified. One of the issues noted is the shorter duration of the curriculum cycle. At present, the curriculum reform cycle consists of 8 years, and it appears to be too short period for a curriculum change, which involves assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum and the development of a new curriculum. The curriculum development process itself contains several steps including obtaining feedback from teachers and students, seeking views of stakeholders, and then preparing revised curriculum specifications, syllabi, teacher instructional manuals and textbooks, and pilot testing of the new curriculum. In the past, some of these essential steps were bypassed due to time constraints. For example, pilot testing was hardly done. Furthermore, these revisions have not affected the subject matter or the curriculum structure substantially¹⁴⁵.

144. Department of Examination. (2019). *G. C. E. (O/L) Examination 2019, Performance of Candidates, National Evaluation and Testing Service*

145. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the quality of education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

146. Aturupane, H., Sankar, D., Saeki, H., Shojo, M., Glewwe, P., & Deolalikar, A. (2011). *Transforming school education in Sri Lanka: From cut stones to polished jewels*. The World Bank.

1.3.3.2. Curriculum content

Overcrowding of the curriculum with a heavy load of subject contents has been one of the major criticisms directed at general education¹⁴⁷. Many teachers claim that covering the content specified for a year in the curriculum of most subjects is not possible. This has burdened the teachers as well as students. To overcome this, students appear to have resorted to private tuition to prepare themselves for public examinations, and the leisure time of the students that should have been spent on playing, interacting with the environment, and creative thinking has to be spent in attending the homework received from schools and tuition classes. This scenario creates a huge issue in the development of the child. Further, the distribution of contents across grades is also uneven. For a given grade, there are overlaps of content between subjects. This seems to have arisen due to the failure to pay attention to adopting a suitable measure to calculate the volume of learning and to estimate the maximum workload for different Grades. Similarly, there is a lack of attention by the curriculum planners to do the vertical and horizontal integration of subjects of the curriculum¹⁴⁷.

1.3.3.3. Mismatch of the curriculum with national education goals and basic competencies

Though the NEC has prescribed National Education Goals and Basic Competencies that should be achieved through education since early as 1992, curricula adopted in general education have not been reflected them adequately. Curriculum developers appear to have been more concerned with imparting subject specific-knowledge rather than aligning the contents, their delivery, and assessments with the prescribed NEGs and basic competencies. As such, what is offered and taught has failed to inculcate desired competencies among students, and thus to realize the national education goals.

1.3.3.4. Shortcomings in curriculum documentation

The teacher instruction manuals known as Teachers' Guides (TGs) prepared by the NIE to guide the teachers in implementing the curriculum appear to provide too many details on content rather than providing guidelines on the educational process. Further, there is a mismatch between the TGs and the textbooks prepared by the Educational Publications Department. This has led teachers to ignore the contents given in TGs and use the textbooks possessed by the students. Another problem is both teachers and students are misled by the discrepancies between the TGs and Textbooks and this has led to confusion regarding the validity of some sources of content. To make matters worse, there appears to be a lack of coherence in presenting the contents. In addition, what is presented too not presented in an easily readable and attractive manner. Moreover, there have been many mismatches in the content given in English and Tamil translations of both the TGs and Textbooks compared with the original Sinhala version¹⁴⁷.

1.3.4. Duration of School Education

Sri Lanka follows the K-12 model which is widely adopted in the world, and the duration of school education in Sri Lanka is 13 years, and it is within the global range of 12-13 years. As shown in Table 3, this includes 5 years at the primary stage, 4 years in the junior secondary stage, 2 years in senior secondary, and 2 years in upper senior secondary or collegiate level.

In this system, a child enters school at the age of 5-6 years, spend 13 years in the school, and with a sizable delay between the G.C.E. (O/L) Examinations and commencement of G.C.E. (A/L) classes, and as a result, the average age of a Sri Lankan student at the time of graduation from the secondary school is 19 plus years. Then there will be another delay of 8-12 months in between the G.C.E. (A/L) Examination and university admission. Under these circumstances, by the time a student enters a university, he/she will be 21 years old, and likely to be graduated at the age of 24 or 25 years if they have been successful in passing all exams at the first attempt. This age limit is much higher than the

147. Widanapathirana, S., Mampitiya, U., Jayawardena, R. C., Chandrathilleke, K. L. (2016). *Study on Curriculum Development in General Education in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 01, National Education Commission*

middle-income and developed country standards, and it appears that approximately 2 years of the best productive life of Sri Lankan youth is wasted during school education and during the transition from school to university due to inefficiencies of the systems and procedures.

Table 3: School Span in Sri Lankan Education System

School Span in Sri Lankan Education System	Age of Student	Classification
Pre-School	3–5	Pre-Primary
Grade 1	5–6	Primary
Grade 2	6–7	
Grade 3	7–8	
Grade 4	8–9	
Grade 5	9–10	
Grade 6	10–11	Junior Secondary
Grade 7	11–12	
Grade 8	12–13	
Grade 9	13–14	
Grade 10	14–15	Senior Secondary
Grade 11	15–16	
Grade 12	16–17	Upper-Senior Secondary or Collegiate
Grade 13	17–18	

Source: Author's illustration.

Two solutions that are often proposed to overcome the above problems are the need for reducing the duration of school education from 13 years to 12 years, and eliminating the delays between G.C.E. (O/L) Examinations and commencement of G.C.E. (A/L) classes and the delay between G.C.E. (A/L) Examinations and entry into a university/ HEI. It is worth noting that the first proposed solution is not in keeping with the international standards in school education. Currently, more than 140 countries offer¹⁴⁸ or are in transition to, what has become the international norm for pre-tertiary education, namely a kindergarten through Grade 12 (K–12) school education system. It includes the kindergarten prior to the first year (or 1st Grade as designated in Sri Lanka) of formal schooling through secondary school graduation (12th Grade). For countries following the UK system of education, including Sri Lanka, the K-12 model is equivalent to 13 years of school education. The following table (Table 4) shows the equivalence in terms of the age of students, “Years” in school, and the “Grades” in school in the two systems.

148. Sarvi, J., Munger, F., and Pillay, H., (2015), *Transitions to k-12 education systems: Experiences from five case countries*. Asian Development Bank.

Table 4: Comparison of School Span in UK and K-12 education system

The UK System	Age of Student	K-12 System
Nursery	3–4	Preschool
Reception	4–5	Preschool
Year 1	5–6	Kindergarten
Year 2	6–7	Grade 1
Year 3	7–8	Grade 2
Year 4	8–9	Grade 3
Year 5	9–10	Grade 4
Year 6	10–11	Grade 5
Year 7	11–12	Grade 6
Year 8	12–13	Grade 7
Year 9	13–14	Grade 8
Year 10	14–15	Grade 9
Year 11	15–16	Grade 10
Year 12	16–17	Grade 11
Year 13	17–18	Grade 12

Source: *K-12 Curriculum and pupil assessment (2017, June)*¹⁴⁹

Tables 3 and 4 show that though the school span of the Sri Lanka education system is in line with international norms or the K-12 model, it is not in line with international nomenclature for a country following the UK system of education as it uses “Grades” as opposed to ‘Years’ to indicate the duration. This is because the kindergarten year in Sri Lanka is designated as Grade 1, thus designating the school span as 13 Grades. This has often created a misconception among some as it wrongly suggests that Grade 13 in the Sri Lankan system is one year more than the 12 Grades in the K-12 system.

1.3.5. Monitoring and Assessment of Student Learning

1.3.5.1. Classroom Assessment

Two types of classroom assessments are in place at present; formative assessment and summative assessment. **Formative assessment** refers to “assessment for learning” to measure students’ progression in learning and diagnose student learning problems, provide feedback to students, and inform parents about their child’s learning. **Summative assessment** is “assessment of learning”, and is used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period typically at the end of a project, unit, course, semester, programme, or school year.

¹⁴⁹ K-12 Curriculum and pupil assessment (2017, June). Relocate Global. <https://www.relocatemagazine.com/articles/education-k-12-curriculum-the-us-education-system>

In addition, districts and schools may use interim measures or benchmark tests to monitor the academic progress of students and determine whether they are on track to mastering the prescribed learning tasks¹⁵⁰. This is the basis for adopting the **School-Based Assessment (SBA)** scheme in general education¹⁵¹.

All forms of classroom assessment appear to suffer from several shortcomings. For example, though the formative assessment is widely adopted in Sri Lanka, it has descended to a level where the teacher administered tests and compiled the marks for adding to a total for a summative assessment. Rarely use the outcomes of the formative assessments to provide feedback to students about their performance, or to inform parents about their child's learning. As regard summative assessments and SBAs, the assessments do not usually cover the full spectrum of prescribed content, learning methods, and intended learning outcomes or competencies, particularly the skill components, and the teachers continue to use "pen and paper" tests despite the availability of several better options. Further, the classroom assessments are not fully integrated into teaching practices and school management. Moreover, the long-time taken to do paper marking and give results/feedback to students in formative (in-class assessments) and summative assessments (term tests) is another major concern.

1.3.5.2. Public examinations

There are three public examinations, namely, Grade 5-scholarship examination, G.C.E. (O/L) examination (*at the end of Grade 11*), and G.C.E. (A/L) examination (*at the end of Grade 13*). These examinations attract the excessive attention of students, parents, and schools. Combined with parental pressure to ensure that their children perform well, each of these examinations has placed students under intense stress.

Grade 5 scholarship examination: This is conducted with two purposes: to provide bursaries to talented students from economically disadvantaged families and to select students for secondary education in more resourceful schools. However, owing to the unnecessary attention given by the media, the enthusiasm created by the authorities to recognize a few students who reach the top, and the improper parental influence, the whole exercise has proven detrimental to the psycho-emotional development of the vast majority of students. However, this examination offers attractive opportunities for rural students to enter more resourceful schools in the country, together with small financial assistance. Therefore, this examination is important for a child to get access to a good school. However, a high level of expectation of parents and competition among tuition teachers appear to have created undue pressure on students and drawn much criticism from the public.

G.C.E. (O/L) examinations: This is intended to certify the subject-wise achievement of children after the end of education at the Senior Secondary Level. Some students leave school after this examination, and those who are eligible proceed to continue their education in the upper senior secondary/ collegiate level education leading to G.C.E. (A/L) examination. A matter of concern is that still there are many children who fail in all subjects at the G.C.E. (O/L) Examinations after being in the school for 11 years. Even though the pass rate in Mathematics has improved to a great extent over the years (Table 4), it's still a worrying factor since it is a very vital subject for tertiary level education.

150. Ministry of Education. (2017). "Pasala padanam karagath thakserukaranaya 6-13 shreni sandaha warsha 2017 saha in idiriyata kriyathmaka kireema". Circular No. 23/2017

151. Sedere, U. M., Karunaratne, S., Karunanithy, M., Jayasinghemudalige, U. K. (2016). *Study on Evaluation & the Assessment System in General Education in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 03, National Education Commission.*

Table 4: G.C.E. (O/L) Examinations - 2013 – 2019 School Candidates (1st Attempt) Results by Grades in Mathematics Subject

Year	Passed %
2013	57.23
2014	56.70
2015	55.18
2016	62.81
2017	67.24
2018	68.30
2019	71.08

Source: Department of Examination. Retrieved July 5, 2021 from <https://www.doenets.lk/statistics>

G.C.E. (A/L) Examination: This is a measure of students' achievement at the end of the school education at Grade 13, and a criterion for selection of students to universities. However, with university admission becoming so competitive, the school teaching has been focused on preparing students to pass written examination papers. Further, the students, often due to undue pressure from parents, tend to forego co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at school, home, and community, and flock to coaching/tuition classes. As a result, the school system has failed to ensure the holistic development of the children as envisaged by the broad educational goals and basic competencies, prescribed by the NEC.

1.3.5.3. Shortcomings in question paper formats and test items

Framework for 21st Century Learning¹⁵² emphasizes a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that a student must acquire to succeed in work and life. Accordingly, the question paper formats and test items in the public examinations at senior secondary and collegiate level must be well balanced in terms of the three educational domains, namely, cognitive (*thinking*), affective (*social/emotional / feeling*), and psychomotor (*physical/ kinaesthetic*).

Nonetheless, this does not appear to happen, and there is growing public criticism in this regard. Both the curriculum and examination continue to run on traditional prototype models that give more weightage to memory-based, Lower Order Thinking (LOT) questions in classroom testing and public examinations at the expense of Higher Order Thinking (HOT) questions, which promote creativity and high cognitive abilities. Consequently, students obtain high grades by memorizing facts learned in school and tuition classes.

1.3.5.4. Large-scale national assessments

Since 2003, the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) based at the University of Colombo has been conducting national assessments with samples of schools and students in Grades 4, 8, and 10 in selected subject areas. These are designed to gauge system-level performance over time and to provide feedback to curriculum developers and teachers about content areas in which students are finding it difficult. While they permit monitoring learning achievements over time, data limitations do not allow a deeper analysis of determinants of learning that could disentangle the impact of schools and teachers from that of social background. The available

152. Nawaratne, S., Ponnampereuma, G., & Nanayakkara, V. (2018). *K-SAM graduates for the 21st century. Honjo Foundation Conference Book*, 34-44.

evidence suggests that learning outcomes in Sri Lanka do not meet international standards¹⁵³.

The national assessment conducted by NEREC nevertheless suggests that learning achievement in Sri Lanka in the early stages of education seems relatively good. For example, the 2009 national assessment of Grade 4 students conducted by the NEREC found that a large proportion of Grade 4 students were able to master the essential learning competencies expected by the national curriculum. The mean achievement score in mathematics was 77% in Sinhala-medium schools and 62% in Tamil-medium schools¹⁵⁴.

Nonetheless, at higher Grades, such as Grade 8, there are concerns about the ability of students to master the learning content creating disparities. Although there is some evidence that test scores, thus the quality have been rising over time, the mean scores of the Grade 8 students in 2012 were still just 51% for Mathematics, 42% for Science, and 40% for English. Disparities by school type have also widened significantly. Furthermore, national averages mask serious disparities in learning outcomes by regional and socio-economic variations. Students in remote locations, especially in plantations and under-developed provinces, and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have far lower learning levels than the comparator groups from urban and peri-urban areas¹⁵³.

However, there is no data to make a comparison of Sri Lankan students' performance with those of other countries as Sri Lanka has never participated in international assessments such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). However, in 2009, a TIMSS module was added to the National Assessments, which made it possible to benchmark some national learning outcomes against international standards. The result shows in terms of mathematics test scores, Sri Lankan students' learning outcomes trail those of middle- and high-income countries¹⁵⁵.

1.3.5.5. Assessment competencies of teachers

Although the PGDE, B.Ed., and Diploma in Teaching programmes have an assessment component, they do not appear to impart enough competencies for teachers to satisfactorily assess students' learning. Available empirical data also suggest that most of the teachers are deficient in competencies in conducting classroom assessments effectively¹⁵⁶.

1.3.5.6. Use of assessment information in system improvement

The most important outcome of the general education system is the educational attainment of the student, and it is an indicator of student performance. As such, the assessment is the means to gather information on students' attainment. The wealth of information that can be derived from students' assessments, both formative and summative, should be effectively used for a variety of purposes ranging from helping the student through improving learning achievements to the monitoring of the system performance and policy level decision making. For example, the assessment information could be used by Provincial and Zonal Authorities to improve the school system by paying more attention to poorly performing schools and providing teachers, infrastructure facilities, and quality inputs for effective curriculum delivery. Unfortunately, at present, this does not appear to take place in the system¹⁵⁶.

153. Aturupane, H., Sankar, D., Saeki, H., Shojo, M., Glewwe, P., & Deolalikar, A. (2011). *Transforming school education in Sri Lanka: From cut stones to polished jewels*. The World Bank.

154. National Education Research and Evaluation Centre. (2009). *National Assessment of Achievement of Grade 4 Students in Sri Lanka*.

155. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

156. Sethunga, P., Wijesundera, S., Kalamany, T., Karunanayake, S. (2016). *Study on the Professional Development of Teachers and Teacher Educators in Sri Lanka, Research Series 2014 – No. 02*, National Education Commission.

1.3.6. Guidance and Counselling Service for Students

The importance of guidance and counselling services at the school level has amply been recognized. Guidance and Counselling at the school level refer to the provision of as psychological and pedagogical support to pupils in nursery schools, schools, and other educational institutions, assessing pupils' individual developmental and educational needs, psychological and physical abilities, and environmental factors which have an impact on their functioning in a nursery school, school or educational institution¹⁵⁷.

A Guidance and Counselling Service for schools was established in 2001 through the directives issued by the MoE Circular 2001/16¹⁵⁸ with the intention of maintaining the physical, mental, and social well-being of the students. The School Guidance and Counselling (SGC) has been continued with some minor improvements under the provision of MoE Circular No.16 of 2006¹⁵⁹, as amended in 2013 through MoE Circular 6/2013¹⁶⁰. At present, the SGC Units are operating in large secondary schools under the teacher-in-charge who fulfils the qualifications pointed out in the most recent MoE Circular.

Numerous studies and reports have shown the significance and necessity of effective school guidance and counselling service to assist the students to resolve the issues pertaining to the personal, academic, and career aspects emerging in this competitive and complex society. It is very conceivable, through such service, students should be able to make informed choices for higher studies and future careers, and connect and integrate their academic and career aspirations into whole-person development and life-long learning. This aspect has been well emphasized and recommended by the NEC National Policy Framework on General Education in 2003 and again in 2016¹⁶¹.

Nonetheless, though the SGC has been functioning in the school system in Sri Lanka, at least in large schools, for over a considerable period, the extent to which the expected outcomes from this particular service have been achieved is questionable and the following issues have been identified as needing attention.

1.3.6.1. Absence of a professional approach and dedicated cadre in relation to guidance and counselling service

The unavailability of professionally qualified officials in the policymaking and training bodies in relation to guidance and counselling has been the main issue in developing this service in the country. Further, at present, no special cadre of teachers exists for guidance and counselling, and as such the responsibility of providing guidance and counselling is assigned to the teachers on a part-time basis after providing short-term training, which is hardly adequate.

1.3.6.2. Inadequacy of commitment and resources for guidance and counselling service

Though the circular instructions provide provision for a full-time teacher for guidance and counselling service, most schools do not have a teacher dedicated for this purpose. In addition, some principals do not recognize the importance of guidance and counselling services very much. It is entrusted to a teacher who may not have any formal training. In addition to normal teaching duties, the teacher can neither develop specialist knowledge on the subject nor find time for guidance and counselling service. Most schools do not have a physical entity called Guidance and Counselling Service Unit and as such, there is no provision to collate and retain career information and

157. European Union. (2021). *Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education*. Retrieved January 26, 2022 from https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/guidance-and-counselling-early-childhood-and-school-education-50_en#:~:text=Counselling%2

158. Ministry of Education. (2001). "Sri Lankawe siyaluma pasal thula upadeshana wedasatahan kriyathmaka kireema". Circular No.16/2001.

159. Ministry of Education. (2006). Circular No.16/2006.

160. Ministry of Education. (2013). "Pasal upadeshaka ha margopadesha wedasatahana". Circular No. 6/2013

161. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the quality of education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*

to provide guidance and counselling service in a regular manner.

1.3.6.3. Absence of career information

The absence of a regular flow of information on higher education and technical and vocational career opportunities and promotional pathways, service conditions, career-related training places and institutions, etc., has made the guidance and counselling service somewhat redundant. Therefore, a mechanism to ensure a regular flow of information on the above, coordinated centrally is a must to deliver effective guidance and counselling service.

1.3.6.4. Insufficient engagement of parents

Many parents today are generally unaware of the diverse post-secondary education training opportunities available for school leavers. This ignorance as well as the social value system lends many parents to persuade children to seek career paths that are recognized as socially prestigious careers or professions without allowing the children to make informed decisions based on their preferences, aptitude, and the information presented to them.

1.3.6.5. Lack of coordination among career education agencies

There appears to be very little coordination and information flow among the agencies responsible for career promotion activities. Although there are many institutions and agencies exist such as the Department of Labour, Department of Technical Education, TVEC, VTA, and employer's organizations such as Chambers of Commerce and Industry with a network of branch offices/units, they appear to make very little attempt to coordinate and share information among themselves as well between them and school guidance and counselling services.

1.3.7. Governance and Management

1.3.7.1. Governance and management structure of general education

With the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution and the concurrent establishment of Provincial Councils, the governance structure of general education has become very complex. It has elements of decentralization, delegation, and devolution of functions and powers between the Central Government and the nine Provincial Councils. Policymakers and legislators have sought to combine the advantages of centralized governance in the general education system, which facilitates goals such as nation-building, social cohesion, and uniform quality standards, with those of the delegated management system such as proximity of administrative services and ease of supervision and oversight. Nevertheless, there is still some degree of ambiguity as regards the delineation of powers and functions between the Centre and Provinces as some of the devolved subjects are still handled by the MoE.

The central government is responsible for national policy, curriculum, textbook choices, providing incentives to increase attendance, administering national schools, human resource management and professional development for teachers and principals, conducting exams, and other services, such as special education and non-formal education. Actual delivery of these services often combines central and provincial staff, with the latter operating within a matrix of management structure — Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Offices, and Divisional Education Offices and schools. Provincial Councils draw up education plans and budgets and employ and deploy provincial education administrators, principals, and teachers. Zonal authorities transfer and deploy principals and teachers within the zones.

However, the progress and quality improvement in general education has suffered from several drawbacks stemming from the central and provincial governance and management¹⁶². These are discussed under the following headings;

162. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the quality of education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*

i) Lack of delineation of functions between the Central and Provincial Authorities, ii) Weaknesses of the provincial structure and their adverse impact on schools, iii) Lack of inter-agency communication and coordination at the central level, iv) Shortage of competent staff at central level agencies, v) Lack of foresight and coordination in education planning, vi) Inadequate empowerment of schools to develop as distinct entities, vii) Issues related to the current structure of schools, viii) Inadequacies in data compilation and use of information on education system in decision making, ix) Issues related to the Ministry of Education, and x) Lack of rationality in cadre provision for Educational Services.

Lack of delineation of functions between the Central and Provincial Authorities – Though 30 years have passed since devolution, there is still some degree of ambiguity as regard to the delineation of powers and functions between the Centre and Provinces as some of the devolved subjects and functions are still handled by the MoE.

Weaknesses of the provincial structure and their adverse impact on schools – The provincial education structure comprises of Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Office, and Divisional Education Office. The Divisional Education Office, the smallest unit, which oversees 30-40 schools lacks facilities and staff; the building and transport facilities are poor and a single officer functions as the in-charge of the office with inadequate support staff. As a result, effective service is denied to the schools.

Lack of inter-agency communication and coordination at the central level – The central level structure comprises the Ministry of Education, Department of Examinations (DoE), Department of Educational Publications (DEP), and the National Institute of Education (NIE). The National Education Commission, apex policy formulation body functions immediately external to this structure. It is very conceivable that strong coordination between the functions of MoE and the three institutions (DoE, DEP, and NIE) and the NEC is essential for the general education system to function for the benefit of the students and the country. The MoE is an umbrella organization that should take the leadership, coordination, and supervision role to ensure the consistency, efficiency, and productivity of the general education system as a whole.

The NIE is responsible for developing national curricula, providing professional development for educational managers, teacher educators, in-service advisers, and teachers, and conducting educational research and development. The DEP is responsible for the production and distribution of school textbooks. The DoE under the Commissioner General of Examinations is responsible for conducting public examinations. The NEC is responsible for policy formulation and setting standards, monitoring, and regular reporting to the President on matters of concern in education. Owing to a long-standing lack of coordination, significant mismatches have developed between the prescribed policies as well as technical aspects of education such as curriculum specifications, textbooks development, and public examinations.

There are also overlaps of functions of the MoE and the four institutions. Duplication in functions mandated to institutions results in waste. The role, functions, and responsibilities of institutions have been precisely defined and specified in a complementary manner in the relevant Acts of Parliament. There, however, has been a tendency for institutions to exceed their mandate without due consultation or authority, resulting in duplication as well as confusion among personnel responsible for policy formulation, policy implementation, and monitoring. It is important that the MoE, NEC, NIE, DEP, and DoE through a process of consultation and planning must act in concert to ensure that each organization confines itself to its boundaries and limits in the interest of effective functioning of the general education system.

Shortage of competent people at central level agencies – It is well recognized that most of the central agencies, particularly, the MoE and the NIE lack the required competent professionals to perform the functions as well as to perform inter-organizational linkages and liaison. This needs to be rectified urgently by providing in-service, postgraduate level training and recruiting qualified personnel by providing attractive remunerations.

Lack of foresight and coordination in education planning – There is a misconception among the people concerned with the education that educational planning is exclusively related to the quantitative expansion of education. Contrary to that view, education planning is the application of rational systematic analysis to the education system, backed by well compiled and collated data and information, to make education more effective, efficient, and relevant to the needs and aspirations of students and society. Society is in the midst of a rapid and ceaseless technological transformation process in the midst of Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR). It is said that in this context, the school must provide students with a broad set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in chosen core subject areas, with emphasis on numerical and analytical skills, ICT skills, and a wide array of soft skills or life skills, including learning to learn and life-long learning to succeed in life.

Inadequate empowerment of schools to develop as distinct entities – The education delivery unit of the provincial chain, the school most often lacks adequate resources to function effectively. Most principals lack the confidence to play the role of chief executive and take the responsibility for the successful running of the school. To make this situation worse, the delay in filling vacancies at the top management level in schools has resulted in acting appointments. Thus, a large number of schools are headed by “acting principals” appointed on considerations other than their competencies. Further, there is no regular scheme to provide resources to schools, and the school authorities could not make meaningful annual action plans for improvement, as they are not certain about the fund availability. In addition, schools are not provided with support staff to attend to administrative work. The community involvement in the management of the school is also minimal.

Inadequacies in data compilation and use of information in decision-making – The Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a versatile tool in leading education to the future. It is relevant in contexts where the use of technology is identified as a key global trend in education planning. Hence, the greater use of technology would facilitate the management of the MoE and its agencies efficiently. The main role of the Data Management and Research Branch (DMR) is to collect, collate and analyse, and present data expeditiously. One of its main activities in this regard is conducting and processing the school census. Although the process has been computerized, still there are delays in finalizing and publishing the data, thus making them unavailable for use in decision-making in a timely manner. Further, there is fragmentation within the MoE in data collection and collation; DMR prepares the database of teachers while some other divisions maintain databases in isolation relevant to their mandate. Therefore, it appears that the current data management system is not very effective for use in education planning.

Issues related to current structure and types of schools – In the absence of any rigid national policy on types of schools, there has been a gradual increase in different types of schools. The government is the primary provider of general education and accounts for 95.4% of total schools. As detailed in section 1.2, the state sector schools can be categorized into 4 types: (a) Type 1AB schools - (9.85% of the total); (b) Type 1C schools - (19.02% of the total); (c) Type 2 schools - (31.75% of the total); and (d) Type 3 schools (39.38% of the total). Besides that, there are schools operated by religious denomination bodies, private individuals, or corporate bodies. In addition, there are 395 international schools, including 23 international schools registered under the Department of Muslim Cultural Affairs.

In terms of the number of students and teachers per school, within the state sector, as of 2020, there are 1,439 schools with less than 50 students (*4 in Type 1C, 135 in Type 2, and 1329 in Type 3 Schools*) and 3,038 schools with less than 10 teachers. In these schools, teachers are demoralized, the quality of education is so poor and the school environment is not conducive to the total development of the child. In general, there has been a tendency for small schools to become smaller making them uneconomical to manage, and the large urban schools to become larger making them unmanageable.

Another issue in the school structure is sectarian considerations, which hinder social and religious cohesion and harmony. Within the state sector, there are Sinhala, Tamil, Buddhist, Catholic, Hindu, or Islamic schools. Further, most schools are monolingual and some schools are organized along ethnic lines even in areas that are multi-ethnic and multireligious. Such sectarian arrangement in schools is indeed very detrimental to the social, cultural, and ethnic

harmony of the country.

Issues related to the Ministry of Education – At present, the Secretary of the Ministry of Education holds two portfolios, namely the Secretary of the Ministry and the Director General of Education. The dual role has indeed overburdened the Secretary. As the Secretary, he/she is responsible for general administration and financial management of the Ministry, while as the Director General, he/she as the chief operating officer is responsible for educational matters relating to planning, implementation, and monitoring. As most Secretaries are appointed from the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, the Secretary's institutional memory, as opposed to the Director General's is limited to the duration of service in the post.

Lack of rationality in cadre provision for Educational Services – The cadre of officers in the Sri Lanka Education Administration Service (SLEAS), Sri Lanka Principals' Service (SLPS), Sri Lanka Teacher Educators' Service (SLTES), Sri Lanka Teacher Advisors' Service (SLTAS) and Sri Lanka Teachers Service (SLTS) has not been determined based on actual needs. It is necessary to identify the numbers required for each service based on actual need, and take action to create required cadres or suppress excess cadres and fill the available positions in a speedy manner.

1.3.8. Physical Resources, Learning Environment, and Teaching-learning Process

The learning environment plays a central role in the education of a learner as it provides the platform through which the learner acquires knowledge, skills, and attitude, which results in lifelong learning. Learning environments always have physical, social (*interpersonal/intellectual/psychological*), and technological and didactic dimensions. The social dimension of the learning environment refers, for example to the group's role and interaction, teacher-student interactions, as well as an atmosphere of mutual respect, cooperation, and enjoyment. The physical environment is typified by the layout of desks and chairs, the lighting and comfort of seats, and the significance of the physical environment generally. Technological dimensions of the learning environment refer to the availability of various teaching aids and devices (*such as chalkboards, whiteboards, teaching models, television, etc.*) and ICT-based tools (*such as computers and multimedia*). Didactic learning environment is an indispensable element for the learning process. Within this environment, the teacher may adopt, depending on the circumstances, different approaches of teaching and learning: teacher-centered, student-centered, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, etc.

The general education environment must be equipped with best practices of learning environments that uphold child's right to education and foster the development of children to their full potential. A safe, caring, participatory responsive school system and home support are required for children to grow up as healthy, right-minded democratic citizens.

Besides physical facilities, safety provisions such as security of premises, and staff and students, cleanliness in classrooms, restrooms, and outside environment, and procedures/practices to ensure food safety, availability and safety of drinking water, chemical safety, noise management, outdoor air quality, etc., are also important to healthy leaning environments.

Another element in this regard is the students' and parents' involvement in decision-making and planning. Furthermore, four accepted major components to improve the school environment are caring relationships, academic environment, physical facilities, and safety and participatory learning engagement. Therefore, it is universally accepted that students have to be provided with inspirational spaces, furniture, storage systems, and communication facilities to improve their experience in learning.

However, most of the above aspects have not been addressed satisfactorily. Those are discussed below.

1.3.8.1. Issues in physical resources and learning environment

Overcrowded and underutilized classrooms – A marked feature of the school system in Sri Lanka is its polarization, with a few congested and overcrowded large schools and a large number of underutilized and neglected small schools. Of the 10,155 government schools, nearly 3000 schools have enrolment less than 100 pupils and 315 schools have an enrolment of approximately 2000 pupils or above. The big schools situated in urban areas are popular with high demand for admission, and the classrooms are overcrowded, sometimes with more than 50 students in a class. It is reported that this situation has affected the teaching-learning process, quality of output, discipline, and efficiency of management. Teachers of these schools have complained about lack of resources, large classes, and time-consuming record-keeping and evaluation tasks. On the other hand, in a larger number of Type 2 and Type 3 schools, the number of pupils per class is small and the schools are considered as non-economical units. In a study conducted by NEC (2003), it was found that most of such schools had adequate buildings and trained teachers, but only about 50% of the building space is utilized for educational purposes.

Disparities in the provision of physical infrastructure facilities – The MoE has proposed a set of norms for physical infrastructure facilities, based on student enrolment and subjects taught at schools. However, the MoE does not have an accurate record of available facilities across the school system. A study conducted by Aturupane and Little (2020)¹⁶³, reported that the facilities with regard to electricity and water vary among schools and provinces. Across the country, 97% of schools have electricity with the distribution of schools with electricity ranging from 99% in the Western and Southern Provinces to 93% in the Central Province. According to the same report, 76% of schools have access to safe drinking water, 8% lack access to safe drinking water, and 16% of schools lack access to any water facilities at all. The regions which experience the most acute deficiencies in access to safe drinking water are located in some parts of the Uva, Central Province, and the Sabaragamuwa Provinces. These provinces have interior mountainous regions where supplying electricity and water can be difficult and costly. This situation, nevertheless, violates the government policy in providing free and equitable education facilities for every student.

Inadequate facilities in primary schools – Most primary school classrooms do not have basic facilities to make the learning exciting and to promote activity-based learning. The MoE, under the Primary Education Reforms Project, stipulated minimum standards. Some of them are: classrooms must be enclosed in order to keep the children's finished work displayed in the classroom safely; classroom must be colour-washed and the furniture must be painted, and there should be a book corner and a sand corner for activities; a worktable to suit the height of student, with an attached sink and pipe-borne water, if available; a wall-mounted blackboard that can be used by children; and a play area in the garden.

Inappropriate classroom arrangement in secondary schools – Most school buildings are inappropriate for teaching and learning purposes. They are open halls with un-separated and unprotected classrooms. A few schools have screens to separate classes, but it does not solve the problem of noise penetrating from adjoining classes. Further, most schools do not have the recommended classroom facilities to match the student numbers and to suit the teaching-learning process.

1.3.8.2. Poor teaching-learning process

Although the prescribed teaching-learning process in schools should be student-centered and activity-based, most teachers have not adopted this approach. Instead, many teachers in most of the schools continue to practice a passive, teacher-centered, one-way process. Students who are weak in studies are at the risk of dropping out owing to negative experiences such as punishments, ridicule and discrimination, and lack of attention from teachers. The social distance between the teachers and students is often visible and many teachers do not possess considerate and favourable positive attitudes towards students, particularly those who get behind.

163. Aturupane H., Little A.W. (2020) *General Education in Sri Lanka*. In: Sarangapani P, Pappu R. (eds) *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia*. Global Education Systems. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3309-5_18-1

Heavy examination-oriented learning process and student conduct - Undesirable competition created in school education among students has created an undue burden on students and has brought undesirable consequences. A student will have to invest a lot of his or her free time, which is available for extracurricular or social activities in studies or tuition if a student wants to excel academically. They will lose their childhood in the process, missing the chance to mix around with their peers. This can hamper their acquisition of soft skills related to leadership, teamwork, life-long learning, and building mutual trust among students of diverse social, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds – the skills and attributes which are bound to be important throughout their lives.

Poor quality of inputs for teaching and learning – Most schools and classrooms lack basic material inputs required for effective teaching-learning, such as games, videos, flashcards, project supplies, flip charts, magi boards, computers with an internet connection, multi-media projectors, televisions with CD/DVD players, etc. This has happened, despite providing “Quality Improvement Grants” allocated by the government. It appears that the funds provided under this grant were not fully utilized by the schools owing to excessive regulations and fear of taking heavy responsibilities placed on the principal. Further, there appear to be delays and restrictions on fund release by the provincial authorities.

1.3.8.3. School discipline

The United Nations promulgated the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” which has been ratified by almost all member countries including Sri Lanka. This has recognized the rights of children and elaborated on them comprehensively. However, in Sri Lanka, some teachers still resort to corporal punishment and other forms of degrading punishments. This has to be completely eliminated from schools. However, this does not mean to neglect the discipline in schools but requires more gentle and caring strategies to strengthen the disciplinary control of students. All students should be made to feel that they are a part of the school and that the school belongs to them. Further, the school authorities should create opportunities for students to participate in school activities and to be involved in the decision-making process of the school. It helps students to recognize their responsibility, and avoid the sense of alienation that may often lead to disengagement, aloofness, or sometimes unruliness,

1.3.9. Accountability and Quality Assurance

1.3.9.1. Accountability at the national level

The basic institutional foundation to deliver public education services exists in Sri Lanka, with responsibilities shared between the central government and provincial councils. There are good characteristics already established in public services such as (a) input-oriented, line-item budgeting, (b) cadres of public education officials, such as principals, teachers, education administrators, teacher educators, etc., (c) opportunities for professional development and career progression for both academic and administrative staff, (d) cash accounting systems, (e) formal performance auditing by the Auditor General’s Department, and (f) internal education system audits. Nevertheless, the incentive system is feeble. As mentioned above, the promotion system based on seniority and the low and compressed salary structure does not provide incentives for better performance to public employees.

1.3.9.2. Accountability at the school level

The government is seeking accountability at the school level in two ways: 1) Monitoring schools through Quality Assurance (QA) system, and 2) Empowering schools and local communities through School-based Management¹⁶⁴.

164. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

Quality Assurance Process – Sri Lanka adapted QA model in schools based on the UK and Scottish models that assess school performance in eight areas: (i) student achievement; (ii) teaching, learning, and assessment; (iii) curriculum management; (iv) co-curricular activities; (v) student welfare; (vi) leadership and management; (vii) physical resource management; and (viii) school and community relations⁴³. This was implemented across all schools through the circular instructions issued by the Ministry of Education, initially in 2008/16,¹⁶⁵ and then again in 2014, circular No. 31/2014¹⁶⁶.

Internal QA – Internal monitoring is considered as the foundation of modern quality enhancement systems. This system promotes a culture of continuous self-evaluation and quality improvement. Internal QA has earned positive feedback from schools and principals, and it is considered a useful tool for monitoring school performance and improving quality. However, the internal quality assurance system in schools is not adequately used to conduct annual self-evaluation, the results of which could be fed into the school development plan and shared with the divisional and zonal offices to promote adoption of best practices identified from certain schools for the benefit of other schools.

External QA – External evaluation by an external reviewer complements the internal monitoring and validates its findings, and helps schools to identify and address their shortcomings. Hence, the internal and external QA are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Annual internal QA self-assessment is also the first step of external review. After the annual internal QA self-assessment, the external reviewer panel validates the results of the self-assessment and looks at dimensions of quality that go beyond the internal reviews. These external reviews occur on annual basis¹⁶⁷. Though the internal and external QA systems are in operation, there is a need for further tightening the link between the two processes.

School-based Management Programmes – A programme called Programme for School Improvement (PSI), which is seeking to make individual schools more accountable through a School-based Management initiative was begun in 2006¹⁶⁸. This system was influenced by reforms in developed countries, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, and in developing countries in East and South Asia¹⁶⁹. This system enables schools to become self-managed, with deep community involvement, and to improve the quality of delivery of education services. The response from principals and teachers on this approach has been positive, and they feel that they are more empowered and motivated by the active involvement of parents, past pupils, and other local communities in school management. For parents, their involvement in school management has given them a greater sense of ownership. Past pupils saw their involvement in school management as “giving something back” to schools from which they had benefited.

1.3.10. Medium of Instruction

There is consensus among many educationists that the mother tongue must be the natural medium of education, particularly in primary and secondary education. However, they also recognize the importance of mastering the link languages, particularly in multilingual societies, and for ease of communication in the globalized world.

Since the inception of the island-wide school system in Sri Lanka, which evolved under British colonial rule, the

165. Ministry of Education. (2008). “Adyapanaye gunathmakabhawaya thahawuru kireema sandaha wu nawa egayeem ha niyamana wedapiliwela”. Circular No.2008/06

166. Ministry of Education. (2014). “Pasal adyapanaye gunathmakabhawaya thahawuru kireema sandaha wu egayeem ha niyamana wedapiliwela”. Circular No. 31/2014

167. Ministry of Education. (2017). “Ape pasala kotharam gunathmakada?, Pasal adyapanaye gunathmaka thahawuruwa sandaha wu egayeem kriyawaliya” (2nd Edition).

168. Aturupane, H., Glewwe, P., Ravina, R., Sonnadara, U. & Wisniewski, S. (2014). An Assessment of the Impacts of Sri Lanka's Programme for School Improvement and School Report Card Programme on Students' Academic Progress. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 50(12), 1647-1669, DOI: 10.1080/00220388.2014.936396

169. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

medium of instruction has been Sinhala or Tamil in most schools except in the urban elite schools. The first effort to formulate a policy on medium of instruction was attempted in 1943, and the report of the committee, which is widely known as “Kannangara Report” declared that the “mother tongue is the natural medium of education and the genius of a national finds full expression only through its own language and literature”.

There were two other historical events in the mid-twentieth century that influenced the policy on the medium of instruction in schools. Firstly, the Free Education Act of 1947 and secondly bringing the whole education system under government control in the 1960s. Concurrently, with the increase in demand to switch the medium of instruction to the national languages, Sinhala or Tamil, the government in the 1970s decided to change the medium of instruction gradually by stopping the English medium in the Grade I class from 1971 and eliminating it class by class in succession. By 1983, there were no English medium classes in government or private schools.

However, this policy proved to be a setback for the individuals concerned and society. The government, educators, and the public began to notice the vacuum created by the neglect of teaching in the English medium, and the promotion of the English medium in the last decade is a consequence of this change of perception. Now the education system actively promotes programmes to enhance the working knowledge of English among students. The Bilingual Education Programme implemented recently in some government schools is a part of this process, under which selected subjects are taught in English at the secondary level.

In addition, the first report of the National Education Commission, published in 1992, stated that “one of the major goals of education is the achievement of national cohesion, national integrity, and national unity”. It promoted the adaptation of school education to promote peaceful living and coexistence in a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse country like Sri Lanka with a citizenry speaking two main languages. For the attainment of the above goal and afford opportunities for the use of national languages and mutual appreciation of cultures, the teaching of a second language from Grade 6 to 9 was initiated in 1999. The second national language was an additional subject for Grades 10 and 11 from 2001. The second national language was introduced in 2003 for Grades 3, 4, and 5 as well and oral teaching of the second national language commenced in 2007 for Grades 1 and 2.

Currently, students learn their first language (*Sinhala or Tamil*), second national language (*Tamil for Sinhala students and Sinhala for Tamil students*), and a link language (*English*). The medium of instruction in the primary and secondary stages is the mother tongue. However, a minority of students in the secondary schools learn some subjects in English medium and are said to be having bilingual or bimedium education.

1.3.10.1. Issues of teaching second national language and English as a link language

NEC 2016 in preparing the policy proposal system has highlighted the following shortcomings¹⁷⁰.

Shortage of second national language teachers – Though the national language policy is well adopted across the school system, there is a shortage of teachers in both language streams. At present, only one National College of Education offers a diploma programme in second national language education teaching, and the annual output is 60 diploma holders, which is hardly sufficient to meet the requirement of the system.

Inadequate competency of Sinhala and Tamil language teachers – There is considerable dissatisfaction about the competency levels of language teachers in both languages. Language teachers need a basic knowledge of linguistics to teach a language effectively. The existing teacher training programmes appear to lack sufficient components on psycholinguistics and the pedagogy of teaching languages.

The unsuitability of curricular material for teaching second language – The present curricular material (*i.e., syllabi, teachers’ guides, and textbooks*) is not based on sound principles of teaching a second language. There is a lack

170. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the quality of education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

of logical interconnectedness among syllabi, teachers' guides, and textbooks. Topics of lessons are not lined up in a manner that promotes the incremental acquisition of language skills. Thus, the material does not meet the requirements of students, and learning a second language is a difficult exercise for students. Furthermore, Teachers' Guides have failed to equip teachers with the teaching methods and theories needed for teaching a second language. The textbooks of the second language are not designed for self-study by students. Further, the textbooks are essentially concerned with written language, and students are not made aware of grammatical differences between spoken and written forms.

Unsatisfactory teaching of the English language – Teaching of the English language in school is not done as a teaching of a second language. The current teaching methods of English as the second language is the reason for a large number of failures in the subject of English at the G.C.E (O/L) examination. Even those who pass that examination are unable to use English for practical communication purposes and in employment.

Lack of exposure to English from an early age – There is consensus that the medium of instruction in primary education should be the mother tongue. However, English needs to be made accessible at primary education level to develop familiarity and for formal learning later to read and write. Currently, two programmes are available to achieve it. The first is Activity-Based Oral English (ABOE) and the second is English as a Second Language taught from Grade 3 onwards. It is reported that the ABOE component is not successfully implemented owing to the lack of proper preparation of primary teachers for the purpose.

1.3.10.2. Issues of implementation of bilingual education

Bilingual Education (BE) refers to using two languages at varying degrees to study the subject matter. In the Sri Lankan context, the approach adopted in providing bilingual education is referred to as Bi-Medium Education in which the students are given the choice of taking one or more selected subjects in English medium while the rest of the subjects are taken in the first language.

Absence of a sound bilingual education policy and discrepancies in implementing the MoE directives on bilingual education in schools – State and State-assisted schools have no uniformity in the selection of students and practice of bilingual education. Many schools have overlooked the directives of the MoE and followed their own implementation procedures. Although the MoE has recommended teaching only a few selected subjects in English from Grade six after the student has completed the primary education in the first language¹⁷¹, some schools have introduced bimediate education from the primary school and some schools have adopted an all-English approach contravening the MoE guidelines. It appears that this situation has arisen mainly due to the absence of a policy that states clear instructions to all the schools on bilingual education.^{172,173,174,175}

Inadequacy of competent teachers to teach in bi-medium classes using bilingual approach – The majority of the schools in the rural areas, in which BE has been implemented, offered only Mathematics and Science in English due to teacher shortage. Teachers who had been trained from the Colleges of Education to teach Science and Mathematics in English medium claimed that they do not know the bilingual education approach and the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methodology because they had been trained to teach the subjects that they learned in the English medium. Further, there is an acute shortage of teachers for the subjects related to social sciences such as History, Geography, and Civic/Citizenship education in the English medium, particularly in rural areas^{53,54}. Further, the

171. Ministry of Education. (2002). *Amity School Project. Circular No. HRD/EQD/2002/12*

172. Perera, E.R.K. & Perera, A.N.F. (2009). *Factors affecting employability of graduates holding non-professional degrees in Sri Lanka. A concept paper. Country Reports – Enhancement of Graduate Employment. ASAIHL Conference. 157-170.*

173. Perera, M. & Kularathne, S.A. (2014). *An attempt to develop bilingualism in Sri Lanka through content and language integrated learning (CLIL). International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 7(3)107-116.*

174. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the quality of education, Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka.*

175. Neranjani, E.S. (2021). *Factors affecting the successful implementation of English Medium Education in the general education in Sri Lanka. International Journal of Creative Research and Studies, 5(5), 1-13.*

poor English language skills of the teachers have made it difficult for the students to understand complex concepts and hindered their English language development¹⁷⁷.

Student conflicts due to inequality of opportunities – Implementation procedures and practices of bilingual education in the schools had caused division among students. The best performers in the schools were given the option to study in bilingual education. This resulted in the belief that the performance of the bilingual education students was higher than that of the monolingual students. To address this issue MoE issued a circular¹⁷⁶ instructing to keep both bilingual education and vernacular medium students in the same class and to separate only for the subjects that are offered in English but this had not been successful due to the lack of understanding of teachers on uniting the two groups¹⁷⁷. Further, bilingual education opportunity was available only for the students in the schools that had implemented bilingual education, but the students who performed well in other schools did not have this opportunity. While bilingual education in popular schools in urban areas has been successful due to the availability of physical and human resources, the majority of the schools in Sri Lanka are deprived of this opportunity due to unavailability of required resources. Students in these schools who have the desire to study in bilingual education feel that they are being deprived of the opportunity¹⁷⁷.

Deficiencies in textbooks and other learning material in bilingual education – Most of the teachers' guides, textbooks, and other material prescribed for bilingual education are not appropriate for the task¹⁷⁸. It stems from the fact that most of the texts are direct translations from Sinhala to English. The translators are often not technical persons conversant with the subject matter, and the final product is not accurate, technical terms are not appropriate, the language is unsuitable, and the meaning is often distorted.

1.3.11. Cost and Financing of Schools in Sri Lanka

1.3.11.1. Public expenditure

Sri Lanka is one of the few countries in the world, which provided free education from kindergarten until completion of tertiary education. Therefore, the sole investment for education comes from the State. Amidst many competing priorities, the public expenditure on primary and secondary education has gradually increased over the years. Yet, the annual public investment in education has been around 2% of GDP for the past several years¹⁷⁹, compared to an average of over 4% for lower-middle-income countries and 5% for upper-middle-income countries. Even the spending on public education as a percentage of total government spending, which is at about 10% is among the lowest.

1.3.11.2. Household expenditure

Even though education is provided free of charge, household spending on education is substantial. It goes to supplementary expenditures, such as books and stationery, transportation, private tuition fees, and the costs of attending private and international schools, boarding schools, colleges, and universities.

1.3.11.3. Cost and effects of private tutoring

As seen in many other countries, private tuition is a growing phenomenon. It accounts for one of the largest items in the household education budget. Though it is costly, fee-based supplementary instruction in academic subjects

176. Ministry of Education. *Implementing new curriculum for secondary grades (6-11)*. Circular No. 2008/12.

177. Neranjani, E. S. (2018). *Developing the English academic reading skills of undergraduates*. Book of Abstract: South Asia Conference on Multidisciplinary Research, International Research and Development Institution (TIRDI), Sri Lanka

178. Wickramagamage, C., Sethunga, P., Kalugampitiya M. (2010). *The Pursuit of Equity and Excellence in English through English Medium/Bilingual Education in the Sri Lankan Education System: Effective Strategy to Meet Desired End*.

179. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2022). *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) – Sri Lanka*. World Bank. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=LK>

is widespread among all socioeconomic groups. Several possible reasons have been responsible for this; the most notable reason being the compensating for shortcomings and distortions in the delivery of school services. Whatever the reason, the decision to obtain tutoring can be viewed as rational and potentially efficient. Some studies in Sri Lanka and elsewhere indeed suggest that tutoring has positive effects on student academic achievement, with substantial effects for poorer households than for richer ones¹⁸⁰. However, tutoring is also having many negative effects on the system; it can, for example, distort the efforts of regular teachers, reduce student engagement in school activities, intensify socioeconomic disparities in education outcomes, reduce the student leisure time for extra-curricular activities, and dampen the demand for educational reforms¹⁸¹.

1.4. Conclusion

Though the Sri Lankan general education system has made steady progress over the past seven decades, paving the way to produce world-class scientists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and sportsmen, there are still issues and gaps that hinder the reaping of full benefits that the system potentially offers. In addition to developing 'good' citizens, these benefits mainly refer to producing a human resource base for tertiary education, middle-level technicians and service personnel, and skilled manpower for the formal and informal labour market.

In this context, the key areas which require the strategic interventions backed by sound policies include, i) addressing the structural deformities and distortions that prevail in the general education system in terms of providing quality education in all subject streams in senior secondary and upper senior secondary/collegiate level education, ii) improving the quality and standards of education through modernizing curricula in all levels of education, with the adoption of learner-centered, technology-enhanced teaching-learning methods, iii) improving the learning environment with the provision of required physical and learning resources, and guidance and counselling services, iv) improving the competencies of teachers and promoting teacher professionalism, and teacher deployment, v) strengthening the quality assurance system, and vi) improving regulation, governance, and management of national education system backed by enhanced public and private financing and regulatory mechanisms. These issues indeed need urgent attention to make secondary education more relevant to national needs and to raise the learning achievements of Sri Lankan students on par with those of upper-middle and high-income countries.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

Backed by a comprehensive status review, the policy proposals and recommended strategic activities are formulated in accordance with general education sector-specific 12 core areas and elements and accompanying directive principles as elaborated in Part III of NEPF (2020-2030).

These 12 core areas include: i) Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness, ii) Duration of school Education, Curriculum Design, Content, and Learning Outcomes, iii) Medium of Instruction, Teaching-learning Process, and Assessments, iv) Learners' and Learner Support, Learning Environment and Learners, Welfare, v) Benchmarking and Quality Assurance, vi) Personality Development, vii) Civic Consciousness and Patriotism, viii) Financing of General Education, ix) Physical Resources – Teaching Facilities and Common Amenities, x) Physical Resources – Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity, Content, and Capacity, xi) Quality of Human Resources and, xii) Regulation, and Governance and Management.

This approach is taken, as stated previously, to ensure the policy planning process gives comprehensive coverage across all core areas and elements of the national education system while giving due consideration to issues and gaps lingering the progressive developments of the general education sector.

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181. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

Core Area- GE 1: Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness

Policy Context

Though Sri Lanka has achieved a fairly high school enrolment rate (96%), it is estimated around 4% of children aged 6-10 years do not attend schools, 5% of those who enrol do not complete primary education, and 13% dropout before 14 years of age. Further, the net enrolment rates have been falling at higher Grades with 87% for G.C.E. (O/L) classes (Grades 10-11) and 51% at G.C.E. (A/L) classes (Grades 12-13). These leakages occur despite offering free education and having a network of 10,155 schools island-wide.

Lack of an accurate information system with regard to the details of non-enrolled children and dropouts is an issue. But the studies have shown that the out-of-school children concentrated in poor urban neighbourhoods, disadvantaged and remote villages. Possible reasons for non-attendance as cited by these studies are ignorance of parents grappled with poverty, distance to school, and lack of empathy on the part of officials, heads of schools, and teachers to motivate out-of-school children to enrol.

There are noticeable disparities in the G.C.E. (O/L) Examination's success rates by income groups showing that education is less equitable in the senior secondary levels. Lack of economic resources prevents parents in poverty groups from enrolling their children in schools and compels them to engage children in child labour, begging, and engaging in demeaning acts to earn an income. Statistics show that the enrolment rates vary from 29% for children in the poorest 10% of households to 73% for children in the richest 10% of households.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of ensuring "Education for All".
- DP 2: The State assures the provision of 13 years of guaranteed free education.
- DP 3: The State ensures full equity and inclusion in education by providing need-based support to all students to thrive within the education system, regardless of gender, race, religion or social status, geographical location, or disabilities.
- DP 4: All students, regardless of any challenges they may have, would be placed in age-appropriate general education classes to receive instructions, interventions, and support that enable them to meet success in the core curriculum.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 1.1:

Ensure equal access to all levels of school education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to enact legislation to legally prohibit parents or guardians from keeping their children without sending them to school.
- The MoE shall take measures for strict implementation of regulations pertaining to compulsory education to ensure all children from the ages 5 to 16 years attend schools.

- The State shall continue to offer bursaries and subsidies for needy children to facilitate their education.
- Non-formal Project Officers who are attached to the Zonal/Divisional Education Offices and respective School Development Societies to take the responsibility of examining the tendency of schooling of 5-16 year age group in the school zone/division, and to assure the total attendance of the group as well directing those that require alternative education pathways to non-formal education institutions (*such as Community Learning Centres and Open Schools*) and vocational training institutions.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Department of Education together with the NIE shall take steps for strengthen the 13- years of guaranteed education programme offered for those who do not qualify to proceed to G.C.E. (A/L) classes should be strengthened in collaboration with the TVEC and TVET Institutes and must lead to the award of a pre-vocational qualification at successful completion.

Policy-GE 1.2:

Ensure inclusion of marginalized children into the mainstream education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to enact legislation to make it compulsory for the parents and guardians of vulnerable children and children with special education needs to secure their educational rights.
- The MoE shall develop and implement a scientific and systematic method to identify the marginalized groups of children which includes children with special education needs and disabilities, children of displaced families, and children of poverty-stricken families. In this context, the following specific strategic approach is proposed:
 - Non-formal Education Project Officers assigned to Divisional Education Offices shall be given the responsibility to liaise with *Grama Niladaris*, *Samurdi* Development Officers, local healthcare workers, and school administrators in identifying; a) children with special education needs or disabilities, b) children who have no access to education in their respective catchment areas, c) children of migrant parents, and (d) marginalized children, and bringing them into the mainstream of education and/or channelling them to non-formal education or vocational and technical education.
- The MoE in liaison with the Ministry of Social Services shall take steps to provide special subsidies and welfare packages for children in need so as to facilitate their schooling/education.

Policy-GE 1.3:

Rationalize and consolidate the school system in the country

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall review the existing system of school categorization and construct a more simplified classification such as; i) Primary Schools (*from Grade 1– 5*), ii) Secondary Schools (*from Grade 1-11 or Grade 6-11*), and iii) Senior Secondary schools (*from Grade 1-13 or Grade 6-13*) as recommended by the NEC (2003) and also by many other policy reports where Senior Secondary category is functioning as the National Schools offering all 4 streams of education (*science and mathematics, arts, commerce, and technology*) at Grades 12 and 13, while Primary and Junior Secondary Schools functioning as feeder schools to Senior Secondary schools.
- The MoE shall critically review the status of schools with less than 100 students and develop a method to rationalize the existence of those schools with the option of appropriately merging uneconomical and

unproductive school units with viable schools with the provision of incentives for those affected by the rationalization and reorganization of the schools.

- The MoE shall implement a need-based and fair system of teacher deployment across all schools with provisions of appropriate incentives for those who are posted in small, isolated, and disadvantaged schools.
- Local political leadership, administrative authorities, and school communities shall take the initiative to seek private sector/philanthropic assistance for the development of needy schools in disadvantaged areas in terms of resources and patronage.

Core Area- GE 2: Duration of School Education, Curriculum Design, Content, and Learning Outcomes

Policy Context

Sri Lanka adopts the K-12 education system, which includes the kindergarten prior to the first year (or 1st Grade) of formal schooling, through primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary/collegiate levels (12th Grade) and this is equivalent to 13 years of school education. This practice is adopted in countries that are acclaimed as having the best school education system, such as the UK, USA, Singapore & Finland where the students spend 13 years in schools before getting into universities.

However, the average age of a student who starts university education in the country is currently closer to 21 years. This is about 2 years more than the respective average age in most countries. Though this issue has continuously been discussed in many forums, no intervention has yet been agreed upon and implemented to bring this down to an internationally comparable level. Among the options discussed in this connection is the possibility of reducing the number of school years to 12 from the current 13 as a way out of the present problem. Yet, there is no evidence we can get from the countries like the UK, USA, Singapore, Finland, etc., to support this argument. Therefore, the most logical approach to resolve this issue is by identifying and eliminating the delays that may happen during school education from G.C.E. (O/L) examination to commencement of year 12 classes, and also in the transition phase from G.C.E. (A/L) to commencement of university education which cost students nearly about 12-18 months in most instances.

The general education curriculum has been overloaded over the years, and this has drawn continuous criticism from parents, teachers, and the public. This results in increasing pressure on teachers, students, and parents. In this context, the syllabi of subjects taught at both the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) have not been designed in keeping with the benchmarks set by other countries offering the same qualifications on both the volume of learning and the depth of learning. The basis for deciding the content and the level of the study material of a syllabus should be the total number of periods available for that subject in a school year and the subject material that can be presented in a meaningful way to students in each of those 40-minute periods. The current process followed by the authorities in the country is the exact opposite of this method.

In determining the “volume of learning” or the workload of a student, the estimated learning time taken by the ‘average’ student to achieve the specified learning outcomes of the subject, termed as “notional learning hours”, must be considered. In ascertaining the volume of learning required for a subject, in terms of the notional learning hours, not only the number of teaching periods assigned to a particular subject in its syllabus but also several other associated factors such as the time that a student needs to review and reinforce what’s taught in the classroom, doing any homework assigned by the teacher, the level of difficulty of the study material, and the preparation for

examination should also be considered.

The present National Curriculum Policy specifies that the curriculum cycle should be of 8 years' duration. This appears to be short as the next revision has to be based on the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum, feedback obtained from teachers, and the views of all stakeholders. Besides that, this involves the preparation of specifications for the new curriculum, syllabi, teacher instructional manuals, and textbooks, pilot testing, and conducting training for teachers on the delivery of the revised curriculum. At present some of these essential steps are bypassed due to time constraints. For example, pilot testing is hardly done. Also, these revisions have not affected most of the subject matter.

Another worrying factor in this regard is despite introducing a new curriculum with the training of teachers through a widespread network of ISAs, the teaching-learning methods in the classroom have continued to remain unchanged from the traditional knowledge imparting model. Students tend to learn facts for reproduction at public examinations to obtain high grades.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State guarantees 13 years of school education (*i.e.* 1-5 primary; 6-9 junior secondary, 10-11 year senior secondary, and 12-13 collegiate years of education) for every child.
- DP 2: The responsibility of the design and development of the national curriculum and instructional material in primary and secondary education should be a State function.
- DP 3: Pre-school, primary, and secondary education curriculum should be designed in conformity with the NEC prescribed National Education Goals, National Learning Competency Domains, and Level-specific Learning Outcomes.
- DP 4: School education must be broad-based by widening the span of subjects/learning areas offered to cater to current and emerging needs and promote the holistic development of learners.
- DP 5: The National School Curriculum should adopt a globally accepted system for recognizing the volume of learning and student achievements.
- DP 6: Curriculum design should ensure synergy and additive effects in curricula seamlessly across all levels of education from early childhood education to school education to higher education.
- DP 7: Curriculum in general education should not make any hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. to eliminate harmful hierarchies among, and silos between different areas of learning.
- DP 8: Curriculum in general education should offer flexibility and diversity from junior secondary to upper senior secondary level thus broadening the choices of study streams offered to students.
- DP 9: Curriculum at all levels must offer outcome-based (*i.e.*, *constructively aligned with intended programme outcomes/subject learning outcomes*), multidisciplinary, integrated, and holistic education to build interest and competencies in science, mathematics, engineering, technology, humanities, and aesthetics.
- DP 10: All curricula should undergo periodic evaluation and continuous monitoring and revision.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 2.1:

Broaden the study streams while guaranteeing 13 years of general education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall continue to adopt K-12 system of education (*i.e. kindergarten+12 years*) /13 years of school span (*Grade 1 to 13*) that includes: Grade 1 to 5 primary education; Grade 6 to 9 junior secondary education; Grade 10 to 11 senior secondary education; and Grade 12 to 13 upper senior secondary/collegiate education.
- The MoE and the NIE shall consider broadening the choices of study streams offered at upper senior secondary/collegiate-level (*Grade 12 and 13*) students. Recommended new streams include Information and Communication Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, and Sports and Health Sciences.
- The MoE shall set up at least one National School in each Education Division offering all G.C.E. (A/L) streams of education (*i.e., science and mathematics, commerce, arts, technology, and vocational streams*).
- The MoE shall take steps to streamline the existing School Guidance and Counselling Service (SGCS) operating across the school network so as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided by SGCS Units. The SGCS Units shall not only assist the students to overcome learning and psycho-social and emotional problems, but it must also ensure providing guidance and counselling to the students in choosing their optional subjects during the senior secondary education (*i.e. for G.C.E. O/L examination*) by taking into account the students' preferred study stream at the upper senior secondary level/ collegiate level (*i.e. for G.C.E. A/L examination*).
- The MoE shall strengthen the current vocational stream of education by offering it at least in all proposed 1000 national schools (*in partnership with state technical and vocational training institutions*), and offering them appropriate NVQ level entry qualification/pre-vocational qualification at the exit from the schools after 13 years of guaranteed education programme.
- The MoE shall conduct regular awareness programmes through print and electronic media to educate the children and parents about diverse study opportunities and career paths, and about the parents' responsibility of ensuring the children in school-going age to attend the schools and engage in all forms of school activities. This message must be reinforced by School Development Committees as well.

Policy-GE 2.2:

The National School Curriculum should contribute to the holistic development of a child to become a productive, caring, and patriotic Sri Lankan citizen

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NIE shall consider the National Education Goals and National Learning Competency Domains and Level-specific Learning Competencies/Outcomes recommended by the NEC in this document (*NEPF 2020-2030: Part II – Vision for Education, National Education Goals and National Learning Competency Framework*) as the basis for the development of National Curriculum in order to ensure that it contributes to the holistic development of children to become 'productive, caring and patriotic citizens'.
- The NIE shall make sure that the curricula are prepared in an age-appropriate manner to suit the general level of intelligence of Sri Lankan children that will contribute to the balanced development of a child as specified by the NEC prescribed National Learning Competency Framework (NEPF-2020-2030).

- The NIE shall take steps to broaden the span of subjects (learning areas) offered for primary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education to accommodate learning areas dedicated for personality development and promotion of civic consciousness, aesthetic education, environment and sustainability development, health and physical education, information and communication technology, and education for the world of work.
- The NIE shall take steps to separate the subjects/learning areas into two categories – core/essential learning areas and supplementary/further learning areas. In this approach, the school curriculum should consist of core and supplementary components.
- The NIE shall take steps to adopt a modular curriculum to facilitate the ease of curriculum implementation, reduce the burden on students, and adopt a globally accepted approach, terminology, and norms of curriculum (*Refer to Policy GE – GE 2.3 for more technical details*).
- The NIE shall consider offering flexibility in general education by allowing the students to select supplementary subjects to suit the learners' interests, thus enabling the students to choose from a basket of courses/modules, based on their preferences.
- The MoE shall adopt the policy to give more flexibility for students in choosing their G.C.E. A/L subjects by allowing a maximum of two subjects from selected areas of specialization to be stipulated by Faculties of Universities for admission purposes while allowing the third subject to be selected from the full range of subjects according to the student's choice, as recommended by the NEC in 2003 and 2014 reports.
- The NIE in developing all curricula and syllabi shall consider the international benchmarks set by other countries offering the same qualifications in terms of the volume of learning and the depth of learning associated with each subject (*Refer to Policy GE – GE 2.3 for more technical details*).
- All curricula and syllabi developed by the NIE should be subjected to external review.

Policy GE 2.3:

The National School Curriculum should adopt a globally accepted system for recognizing the volume of learning and student achievements

The NIE shall take steps to structure the general education curriculum in the following lines:

- Contents of a given subject area should be divided into learning units/modules based on a rational basis (*i.e. where similar learning contents are grouped together*). In doing so, a step-wise build-up of learning from one module to the next module should be ensured (*i.e. prerequisites for a given module should be determined based on the content of previous modules*). This will ensure that the students will not forget (*or learn superficially*) the core content areas.
- Volume of learning of each module/course shall be defined by adopting the credit currency system in line with the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF). In this system, 1 credit is equivalent to 50 notional hours that include face-to-face teaching-learning, formal assessments, self-studies, time spent on assignments, etc.
- Outcomes of assessments at the end of the semester or term/each year of the different learning stages (*i.e. junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate/upper senior secondary*) must be expressed as a cumulative expression of student performance by adopting Grade Point Average (GPA) system. The GPA should be calculated by adopting a globally accepted weighted average of modular credits achieved in each term/year of each stage of learning.

- Offer a certification completion to students with transcripts at the successful completion of each stage of education – primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, and upper senior secondary/collegiate levels.

Policy-GE 2.4:

Establish a research-based feedback mechanism during the implementation of the curriculum cycle

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC and the NIE shall jointly review the existing guidelines of general education curriculum revision, including the current curriculum reform cycle of 8 years, and adopt appropriate reforms through a research-based approach.
- Before starting a new cycle, a comprehensive study of the implementation of the ongoing curriculum should be carried out by the NEC in liaison with the NIE, NCoEs, and Education Faculties of Universities with findings being submitted for public discussion, and finally the NEC shall make specific recommendations for the next cycle of curriculum revision.
- The MoE, through the NIE, should develop an effective training mechanism to replace the ‘Cascade Model’ currently adopted by the NIE to train all involved in implementing the school curriculum effectively.
- The NIE shall ensure that a continuous supply of information on new developments in all subjects, communicated to teachers through the in-service advisors’ network, and through Teachers’ Guides and textbooks.

Core Area- GE 3: Medium of Instruction, Teaching-Learning Process, and Assessments

Policy Context

The medium of instruction in schools seems to emerge as a controversial subject in the field of education. Many studies have shown that the mother tongue is considered to be the best medium of instruction in the early years of education. However, there is a growing demand to use English as the medium of instruction in the country. Most of the private schools use English as the medium of instruction from the primary level.

According to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, Sinhala is the official language and Sinhala and Tamil are the two national languages. As regards the medium of instruction, a person is entitled to be educated through the medium of either of the national languages. Further, there is a policy on the second national language (*Sinhala for Tamil speaking students and Tamil for Sinhala speaking students*) to introduce the language as a means for communication from Grade 3 onwards, while, formal teaching begins in Grade 6. However, the implementation of this policy has been hindered due to the lack of competent teachers throughout the country.

It is evident that the present system of education has failed to develop an acceptable level of proficiency in English among the students. Hence, those educated in Sinhala and Tamil have been disadvantaged in access to remunerative employment and pursuing higher studies. To a great extent, this has caused social polarization. Even though, several strategies have been used to remedy this situation those strategies have not yielded satisfactory results primarily owing to the dearth of qualified English teachers at primary and secondary levels of education.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging to observe that the following desirable key aspects of teaching and learning in general

education are currently in place throughout the system: Teaching of activity-based functional English from Grade 1, and formal compulsory teaching of English from Grade 3 to 13; and provision for bilingual or bi-medium delivery (*i.e. offering selected subjects in English medium*) as an option at the secondary education level.

Conventional, teacher-centered curriculum delivery methods currently adopted for teaching and learning make schooling unexciting, boring, superficial, and irrelevant and stressful for the majority of school children, and many such feelings often lead to disciplinary problems as well. In addition, there is inadequate support for learning provided by the teachers during the teaching-learning process. This together with limited opportunities provided to students to get to know about their progress in learning, has deterred a majority of learners to reach the learning goals set out for them.

Further, the poor institutional leadership at all levels of the education hierarchy does not allow the environment at the classroom level to be aligned adequately with the new educational technologies. Moreover, the heavy examination orientation and the inadequacies of testing through public examinations have adversely affected the total development of the child. In schools, teaching has been reduced to prepare students to answer examination papers. Further, the lack of adequate emphasis given to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities appears to have affected the development of the personality of students.

Very often, the question paper formats and test items in the public examinations are criticized for the lack of balance between the three educational domains, namely cognitive, psychomotor and affective. As the curriculum and examinations continue on the outdated models, more weightage is assigned currently for memory-based, Lower Order Thinking (LOT) questions in the classroom testing and public examinations instead of Higher Order Thinking (HOT) questions, which promote high cognitive ability including creativity.

The School-Based Assessment (SBA) programme that currently is practiced in all government and private schools is a positive step. The responsibility of implementation of SBA rests with the provincial authorities under the purview of the Department of Examinations, which provides instructions and model test items for Grades 10 and 11, while the National Institute of Education provides instructions and model test items for Grades 6 to 9. Despite the claim in the SBA Circular of the Ministry of Education¹⁸² that the programme will help to bring the results of existing public examinations to a satisfactory level, reduce the drop-out rate and convert the school into a place where students are offered enjoyable learning experiences, the reality is otherwise. Thus, there is a need to review and modify the current SBA programme to make it simpler, feasible, and comprehensible which ensures consistency in teacher judgment and comparability of reported SBA results with those of the national examinations.

In a properly designed education system, the contents, instructional strategies, and assessments must be aligned with learning outcomes. Thus, in Sri Lankan general education context, it is important that the three organizations are responsible for these three components, namely, the National Institute of Education (NIE), the Educational Publication Department (EPD), and the Department of Examinations (DoE) work closely together to realize the goal.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Mother Tongue (*Sinhala/Tamil*) should continue to be the medium of instruction at primary and secondary levels.
- DP 2: Provision should be made available for Sinhala speaking children to learn Tamil and Tamil speaking children to learn Sinhala.
- DP 3: Teaching activity-based functional English should be encouraged from Grade 1, and the formal teaching of English should be made compulsory from Grade 3 to 13.

¹⁸². Ministry of Education. (2017). *Implementation of School Based Assessment Program for grades 6-13 from 2017 and onwards*. Circular No. - 23/2017

- DP 4: Bilingual or bimedium delivery should be made as an option at the secondary education level.
- DP 5: The teaching-learning process must emphasize conceptual understanding and acquisition of higher-order cognitive skills rather than rote learning and learning-for-examinations.
- DP 6: The teaching-learning process shall embrace as much as possible learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods to promote experiential/authentic learning and self-regulated learning skills (*that enables the learner to construct her/his knowledge and skills*) through active participation in the teaching-learning process.
- DP 7: Curricula delivery should adopt a blended mode of teaching-learning approach with the extensive use of technology, along with the provision of adequate opportunity for hands-on learning and open-ended exploration using ICT applications.
- DP 8: School children should be educated to keep themselves safe from internet threats.
- DP 9: Teaching-learning and assessment process should conform to quality standards and guidelines prescribed in the Teachers' Guides.
- DP 10: Evaluation of students' achievement should be based on both formative and summative assessments to achieve all intended learning outcomes while ensuring the validity and reliability of assessments.
- DP 11: School-based Assessments must be adopted as a tool to make learning at school mandatory, enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding and it must be blueprinted to the National Learning Competency Framework prescribed by the National Education Commission.
- DP 12: The outcomes of the School-based Assessments should be considered in determining the overall performance of students at the two national examinations – at the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) Examinations.
- DP 13: Assessment of learning at Grade 5 scholarship examination, G.C.E. (O/L) Examination, and G.C.E. (A/L) Examination shall be a State function

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 3.1:

Mother tongue (Sinhala/Tamil) should continue to be the medium of instruction at primary and secondary levels with bilingual education is offered as an option at the secondary level

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE should continue the current policy that the mother tongue is the medium of instruction at the primary level while teaching English as a compulsory subject from grade 3 to grade 13 with an emphasis on strengthening oral English to facilitate the development of communication skills.
- The NEC in liaison with relevant stakeholders shall undertake a comprehensive review of current practices of implementation of bilingual education and formulate a comprehensive policy and strategic framework on bilingual education and teaching of English as the second language.
- The MoE by taking into consideration of the policy and strategic framework that would be recommended by the NEC based on the proposed review, shall take steps to issue comprehensive circular instructions to promote bilingual education while taking steps to improve English language standards of school children in

an equitable manner across all schools in all regions.

- The MoE should promote bilingualism throughout the country by using English as the medium of instruction in selected subjects such as mathematics, science, information technology in the secondary grades, year by year from Grade 6.
- The MoE should continue the current practice of students of secondary grades having the option to; (a) study any subject in the English medium in the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) grades subject to the availability of teachers, and (b) sit the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations in the medium of their choice.
- The MoE should take steps to strengthen the multilingualism - Sinhala speaking children to learn Tamil and Tamil speaking children to learn Sinhala while both groups learning English as an international language.

Policy-GE 3.2:

Promote new approaches including STEAM education and blended mode of teaching and learning thus allowing every child to derive real satisfaction from learning and reach her/his full potential

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the NIE, NCoEs, and Universities shall take steps to promote the adoption of STEAM education¹⁸³ and learner-centered and authentic teaching-learning approaches, and methods and tools in school education to make learning a rewarding, purposeful, and joyous experience
- The MoE shall ensure that the teacher education providers (*i.e. NIE, NCoEs, and the Universities*) take the steps to orient the teachers with a suitable pedagogy to adopt STEAM education approach and blended mode of teaching-learning methods and tools with judicious use of appropriate ICT-based tools.

Policy-GE 3.3:

The curricula, syllabi, teachers' guides, and other teaching-learning material should conform to prescribed specifications

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Educational Publications Department (EPD) and the NIE together shall streamline the process of preparing the teaching-learning material and Teachers' Guides and textbooks concurrently in all three languages by expert panels comprising subject specialists, language specialists, and textbook designers.
- The NIE shall ensure the Teachers' Guides (TGs) consist of teaching methodology and appropriate assessment methods including the guidelines on curriculum adaptation that allows the teachers to make necessary adaptations to suit the specific situations and to prepare lesson of a given subject to achieve as many as possible the age-specific National Learning Competencies/Outcomes prescribed by the NEC (NEFE – 2020-2030).
- The EPD, in writing textbooks, shall ensure that the textbooks are closely aligned with the prescribed content, intended learning outcomes, and suggested methodologies given in the curriculum and the Teachers' Guides.

¹⁸³. STEAM education which stands for science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics education is an approach to learning that uses Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking.

- The EPD and the NIE should take action to develop teaching-learning material including textbooks for all G.C.E. (A/L) examination subjects.

Policy-GE 3.4:

Strengthen the school-based assessments process to improve its relevance, reliability, and validity, and its outcomes must be taken into consideration in determining the students' performance at the national examinations

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE in liaison with the NEC, NIE, and Department of Examinations shall take steps to blueprint School-based Assessments (SBA)s to National Learning Competency Framework prescribed by the NEC (NEPF 2020-2030).
- The MoE shall take steps through NCoEs, NIE, and Universities to train teachers on SBA procedures – modern and alternative assessment methods (*i.e. use of presentations, reports, projects, assignments, portfolios, etc*).
- The MoE shall work in liaison with the NIE, Department of Examinations, and Provincial Departments of Education to work out the technical and logistics aspects in conducting SBAs to ensure the relevance, reliability, and accuracy.
- The MoE and NIE shall consider the introduction of SBA outcomes as an element in determining the students' performance at the national examinations with the implementation of the next cycle of curriculum revision that is scheduled in 2023-2024.

Policy-GE 3.5:

Review the formats of Grade 5 Scholarship Examination, and G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) Examinations

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the NEC, NIE, and DoE shall take steps to review the current Grade 5 Scholarship Examination and introduce appropriate reforms to eliminate its undesirable effects.
- The NIE and the Department of Education (DoE) should standardize the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations and qualifications by benchmarking them with similar examination and qualifications offered by other countries in terms of the number of subjects required, notional learning hours (*i.e. the sum of classroom face to face teaching and practical hours, guided learning hours and self-learning hours*), and the assessment time required for each subject.
- The DoE shall ensure that the question papers are constructively aligned with the intended learning outcomes stated in the curricula to achieve the final aim of the assessment of student learning.
- The MoE shall take steps together with the NEC, NIE, and DoE to develop a policy and the framework for the use of School-based Assessment (SBA) marks in determining the grades of G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) subjects.
- The MoE together with the DoE and the NIE shall adopt a policy to implement the following structure for all subjects in G.C.E. (O/L) examination: Paper - I in any subject will assess 'Minimum Competencies' and the Paper-II of the subject will assess the 'Higher Order Abilities and Competencies, and the contents and the

competencies of the respective papers shall be defined in the syllabus.

- The MoE together with the DoE and the NIE shall adopt a policy to make sure that the subject of General English is taught and tested appropriately at the G.C.E. (A/L) examination.
- The MoE together with the DoE and the NIE shall adopt a policy to restructure the current Common General Paper at the G.C.E. (A/L) examination by including the test items to assess the competencies in the mother tongue and link language, English.
- The MoE shall introduce a best practice in the form of a new quality control mechanism for the NIE to independently verify whether the question papers have assessed the expected learning outcomes to an appropriate level as prescribed by the respective syllabi. Since sending the paper to the NIE before an exam will be an exam security/confidentiality concern, the DoE itself should do this by preparing an Exam Blueprint or a Table of Specifications and submitting them to NIE after the end of the each examinations. Subsequently, after verifying it, the Director General of the NIE shall submit an annual report to the Commissioner General of Examinations evaluating the alignment of the question papers in the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations with the expected learning outcomes at the end of each of examination.
- The MoE together with the DoE and the NIE shall find ways to reduce the current time gap between holding the G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations and releasing the results to ensure uninterrupted education for students.
- The MoE shall ensure that reporting of grades for subject-based qualifications of G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) are in line with internationally recognized norms.

Core Area- GE 4: Learners and Learner Support, Learning Environment and Learners' Welfare

Policy Context

A constructivist definition for the learning environment is “a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities”. An essential feature of this definition is that the learning environment is seen not only as a physical or virtual place or space but also as a human community forming a supportive, interactive network.

In contrast to this definition, in reality, a marked feature of the school system in Sri Lanka is its polarization and unequal distribution of resources, with a few congested and overcrowded large schools and a large number of underutilized and neglected small schools. Of the 9,931 government schools over 3,000 schools have enrolment less than 100 pupils. While 200 schools have an enrolment of approximately 2,500 pupils or above. Although the Ministry of Education has proposed a set of norms for schools, based on student enrolment and subjects offered at the primary and secondary levels, the Ministry does not appear to have an accurate record of facilities available in schools and details of schools lacking in such facilities. In general, currently, most schools do not have a conducive internal and external learning environment, owing to a lack of essential items and components and also due to inadequacies of maintenance of even the existing facilities.

Although the teaching-learning process is expected to be activity-based, student-centered, and inclusive to facilitate the holistic development of students, in reality, this does not happen. The teaching-learning process mostly tends to be a passive one-way process. Further, in most school settings, the students do not make to feel that they are a

part of the school and that the school belongs to them. Further, many school authorities appear to have failed to create opportunities for students to participate in school activities and get them involved in the decision-making processes of the school. Some of these shortcomings appear to have been the root cause for some students in some instances to feel of alienation which has often led to non-compliance or aloofness.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Education should be provided in an environment with minimum requirements to facilitate learning.
- DP 2: Education shall pave the way for every individual to reach the full potential to be successful in the world of life including to make him/her productively employable in the 'world of work'.
- DP 3: Education must be aimed at fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development.
- DP 4: Education must be flexible, so that learners have the ability and guidance to choose their learning pathways and programmes, and thereby choose their own paths in life according to their talents and interests.
- DP 5: Education must equip the learners with the necessary abilities to learn on their own to suit the diverse personal and societal requirements, within a rapidly changing world, following the principles of reflective practice and lifelong learning.
- DP 6: Achievement of broader education goals at the primary and secondary levels should be promoted as a tri-patriate alliance among students, teachers, and parents.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 4.1: All schools should be provided with basic facilities, classroom space, and special spaces in keeping with the norms adopted by the Ministry of Education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC in executing its mandate shall prescribe norms for basic facilities of schools (*i.e. classrooms, teaching laboratories, library, ICT facility, play areas, restrooms, electricity, water, etc.*) at primary and secondary levels and they should be revised periodically in keeping with advances in technology.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments shall take steps to ensure all schools across the country are provided with minimum facilities (*i.e. physical, human and teaching-learning resources*) in accordance with the norms as defined by the NEC.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to modernize the design of school infrastructure to facilitate the adoption of student-centered teaching-learning approach and application of interactive teaching-learning methodologies.
- School Development Society with the help of the Zonal Education Office, in case of needy rural schools, shall undertake regular monitoring and upgrading of the basic facilities as required by the school, and in accordance with norms prescribed by the NEC.
- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to review the

infrastructure facilities, human resources, teaching-learning aids and resources as against the norms prescribed by NEC and take steps to address the identified deficiencies.

- The MoE shall issue circular instructions to limit the number of students in a class to 35 and the number of parallel classes per grade to not more than 6 to limit the school size to a manageable level.

Policy-GE 4.2:

Create a caring, vibrant, safe, and resourceful school environment conducive for the holistic development of children

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the NEC and NIE shall take steps to prescribe guidelines and standards on the psycho-social climate of the school and develop an oversight mechanism to check compliance with prescribed guidelines, and issue circular instructions for compliance by all schools.
- Zonal Education Office together with the School Development Committees shall assist the schools to take steps in accordance with the MoE circular instructions to create and provide a psycho-social climate that is caring, safe, and conducive to student participation in curricular and co-curricular activities.
- The MoE shall develop and issue a Codes of Ethics and Conduct for both the students and staff that would improve the conduct of students and staff, and help to adopt corrective strategies and measures to maintain discipline in schools and eliminate unruly conduct of students and degrading forms of punishments from schools.
- School Development Societies shall ensure that all students are provided with an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process on school matters concerning them.
- The MoE shall develop a grievance redress mechanism that could go beyond the school administration level, when necessary.

Policy-GE 4.3:

Promote parental involvement in children's education and development to ensure holistic development, better performance, and higher achievements

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall prescribe updated guidelines for the establishment and operation of School Development Societies (SDSs), and take steps to make it compulsory for each and every school to establish and operate SDSs.
- The MoE shall launch a national campaign emphasizing that the parents are partners of the school and their involvement is valued.
- The MOE shall issue guidelines to establish and foster productive parent-teacher interactions, in order to promote children's interest in learning and to develop good parenting skills to meet the basic obligations of family life.
- All schools together with SDSs shall take steps to offer opportunities for students to engage in core-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and also promote good health and personal hygiene habits, and etiquette among students.

Core Area- GE 5: Benchmarking and Quality Assurance

Policy context

Since 2001, the Ministry of Education has made continuous efforts in the quality enhancement of the school education system. The current Quality Assurance model in place is based on the U.K. and Scottish models and was introduced into schools in 2014 by the Ministry of Education Circular No. 31 of 2014. The details of the revised QA process are given in the Ministry of Education QA manual titled; “OUR SCHOOL: HOW GOOD IS IT? Process of Evaluation for Assuring the Quality in Education”. The Ministry of Education Administrative Circular specified the roles and responsibilities of Schools, Divisional and Zonal Education Offices, Provincial Departments of Education, and the Ministry of Education. At the Ministry of Education, the Management and Standards Unit undertakes the responsibility of administering the QA system.

Currently, the review process that includes both the internal and external assessment components is carried out annually in government schools. Schools are informed in advance of the intended visit of external reviewers and prepare the necessary documents for external assessment. The site visits usually last one day and the visiting team of reviewers examines the supportive evidence presented by the school and the self-evaluation report. The quality of education is determined based on a score assigned for each domain in terms of the status of the indicators in relation to national standards. The team of reviewers holds a meeting with the school staff to brief on the status of their assessment of the school with respect to each domain and to suggest ways of addressing deficiencies.

In general, there is wide acceptance of the positive aspects of the current QA system. Feedback from schools and principals on internal QA has been very positive, and internal QA too has been considered useful for monitoring school performance and improving quality. Further, the QA guidelines have helped to improve and formalize documentation of practices of the schools and also have persuaded school authorities to improve facilities in schools accordingly.

There are, however, some problems in the guidelines and the review procedures that remain to be rectified. It has been criticized as a process that has driven the schools to ‘prove’ themselves, as opposed to ‘improve’. Some of the reasons for this are; i) too many indicators, ii) too much emphasis on managerial aspects of school administration at the expense of academic matters, iii) existence of an episodic quality assurance process and the non-existence of an ongoing quality improvement process, iv) ambiguous standards and poorly written standards, v) poor participation of teachers in the quality assurance process, and vi) unavailability of a support mechanism to assist and improve the under-performers. Another issue is the need for tightening the link between internal and external QA.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The concepts of quality and quality culture should be instilled at all levels of the general education system through nationally prescribed best practices.
- DP 2: The quality culture must be institutionalized within the schools and internalized among the administrators, teachers, support staff, and students.
- DP 3: Quality assurance must consist of internal and external components and the outcome of the process must be followed up by the relevant authorities to address the identified deficiencies and gaps.
- DP 4: Quality assessment must cover a wide range of operations of schools ranging from management and operational systems, human and physical resources, learning environment and learner support services,

academic curriculum and content, teaching-learning and assessment processes, and learning outcomes with the assignment of differential weightages for core and auxiliary standards

- DP 5: Quality assurance domains, criteria and elements, and standards must be well designed to make it easy for stakeholders to understand and interpret, and value them.
- DP 6: Students and parents should be recognized as the most relevant source of feedback in assessing quality, and quality improvement of the teaching-learning process and student learning outcomes, and the overall functioning of the school.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 5.1: Quality assurance system and the process should be regularly reviewed and modified where necessary based on current and emerging needs and the feedback on the existing process

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to appoint a committee with representatives from the MoE, NEC, NIE, and Provincial Authorities to review and revise the current QA system. The revisions should include:
 - redefining of roles and functions of the Centre (*Ministry of Education*), Province (*Zonal Education Office*), and School in the QA system and process,
 - redefining the quality assurance framework (*Domains, criteria and elements standards, and indicators*) to adequately cover inputs, processes, and outputs,
 - rewording the criteria and elements, and standards to avoid ambiguities, and
 - adopting appropriate internal and external review process and cycles

Policy-GE 5.2: Quality Assurance System must be driven by a well-structured institutional mechanism with built-in procedures/mechanisms for post-review follow-ups

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Restructure the quality assurance management system in the following lines:
 - Establish a Quality Assurance Council for General Education (QACGE) under the purview of the Ministry of Education for which the Management and Standards Unit of the Ministry of Education shall function as the administrative unit of the QACGE. It shall be chaired by the Secretary of Education or DG/ Education and should consist of 7 members with expertise in QA in GE, HE, and TVET, appointed by the Minister of Education.
 - Establish Quality Assurance Units at Zonal Education Office level headed by a Director/Additional Director taking responsibility of implementing QA programmes at Zonal Level.
 - Establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQA Cell) in each school headed by the principal or deputy principal/senior teacher to promote institutionalization and internalization of best practices in all

aspects of school administration and academic activities.

- The IQA Cell should have the widest possible participation of teachers, administrative/clerical staff, students, members of the school development society, and support staff to ensure that the quality assurance process permeates beyond the teachers.
 - A Web-based dashboard carrying information on the quality assurance activities of each school should be maintained by the Zonal Education Office. This dashboard must be updated at least annually to reflect each school's progress in addressing the recommendations of each of the IQA and EQA cycles.
 - The MoE shall formulate a new circular with amendments introduced to the QA system to replace current Circular No. 31 of 2014
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education shall institutionalize a support system to assist those schools which perform poorly as well as for addressing the deficient areas of the average performing schools.
 - The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education shall introduce a reward system to recognize and reward high-performing schools.

Core Area- GE 6: Personality Development

Policy Context

Personality development is important because it enables people to succeed in all fields of their life. It improves the relationship between the persons, helps one to grow in their career, and improves the performance in every field they work. It will also help people to inculcate life skills which are essential for the success of one's life and hence, the success and happiness in professional as well as personal life.

It is the general belief that these aspects of students are not adequately addressed by the present education system, which solely addresses the development of cognitive skills while giving lesser importance to the personality development of students. Very rarely the students are groomed for positive personality traits, barring what they acquire from parents, peers, and Sunday schools. Further, the existing general education system and national examination process appear to promote rote learning, and in this heavy examination-oriented system, the students are pushed for grooming by the 'tuition culture' prevailing in the country. Such mechanical and superficial learning facilitated by a highly examination-oriented system fails to bring about a person with an integrated personality, who possesses thinking skills, social skills, and personal skills that are a must for a successful personal and work life.

Since the employers look for school-leavers with a wide array of positive personality traits and soft skills; positive outlook and initiative, communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, ability to work independently, willingness to learn, ability to work under pressure, etc., the schools will have to take an extra effort in promoting personality development.

However, it cannot be done only by offering a standalone course on personality development but must also be attempted through appropriately incorporating the 12 National Learning Competency Domains prescribed by the NEC (Part II of NEPF 2020-2030) into the school curriculum.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: School education must ensure the all-round personality development of students by promoting cognitive, physical, and psychosocial development of students while promoting behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual maturity and imbuing values, morals, and ethics.
- DP 2: School education ensure inculcation of life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, perseverance, and resilience.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 6.1: General education shall be aimed to train all students with level-specific competencies with cognitive, psychomotor, and psychosocial skills

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NIE shall ensure that curricula and Teachers' Guides of each level of general education adopt outcome-based, student-centered teaching-learning and promote the acquisition of level-appropriate competencies/outcomes prescribed by the National Learning Competency Framework (NEPF 2020-2030) that outline the level-specific cognitive, psycho-motor, and psychosocial competencies.
- The NIE shall take steps to introduce a new course module titled "Personality and Civic Consciousness" from the beginning of the next curriculum cycle (*i.e. from 2023/2024*) that runs as a strand from Grade 1 to Grade 10. The Personality component of this module shall provide age-appropriate teaching-learning components (*both curricular and co-curricular activities*) aimed at providing academic, intellectual, and practical training to imbue students with emotional, social, and spiritual maturity, and values, morals, and ethics. (*This is linked to the Policy-GE 7.1 as well*).
- The NIE shall further ensure that each student maintains a portfolio of learning that showcases both the work within the said "personality and civic consciousness" strand and the work within the core subject areas that promote emotional, social, and spiritual development.

Policy-GE 6.2: General education must facilitate students both through the curricular, and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities the acquisition of life skills that include adaptive and positive behaviour that enable them in their adult lives to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life.

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to ensure all senior secondary and upper senior secondary schools having classes from Grade 10 to Grade 13 set up fully functional School Guidance and Counselling Service (SGCS) that provides assistance and guidance to resolve students' problems and concerns, and career counselling and career information.
- The MoE in liaison with the NEC, NIE, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports and Provincial Ministries/ Departments of Education shall take steps to design and introduce a suitable physical fitness programme as a compulsory co-curricular activity that runs as a continuous strand from Grade 1 to Grade 13.

- All schools must promote the establishment of student societies/circles/clubs so as to promote students' engagements in organizing and conducting social, sports, and cultural events/programmes, student debate competitions, student excursions/expeditions, etc., that are focused on inculcating a whole range of life skills - leadership, initiative, teamwork, problem-solving, reasoning, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaborative sharing, and nurturing them to flourish rather than stifling their self-esteem.

Core Area- GE 7: Civic Consciousness and Patriotism

Policy Context

Schools are called upon to address the increasing polarization of the nation in ethnic and religious lines. Education is expected to foster civic consciousness and patriotism among the youth as they are crucial in maintaining overall social order and harmony and for the advancement of society.

Civic consciousness encompasses a wide spectrum of values such as empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, equality, and social cohesion and ethnic harmony. The creation of awareness on civic consciousness, and inculcating such values must happen through the learning from early childhood education to tertiary education.

Patriotism is an important tool promoting interethnic relations in a multi-ethnic country like Sri Lanka. First of all, it educates all ethnic groups to respect the land of their birthplace. Secondly, it encourages citizens to treat each other with respect. Thirdly, it urges all ethnic groups to respect Sri Lanka as a unified nation.

It is recommended that conscious effort in general education must be made to provide formal and informal learning opportunities in these two aspects. There is a need for incorporating such learning exercises into the curriculum coupled with complementary activities/engagements to encourage more student-centred activities, community engagement, and self-reflection among students that accentuates the importance of ethnic harmony and social cohesion.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Education must imbue civic consciousness among students - empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, equality, and justice.
- DP 2: Education must instil nationalism and patriotism to promote affection towards Sri Lanka as the place of birth, its history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions.
- DP 3: Education must act as a platform for students to learn and become aware of other religions, traditions, and beliefs, and foster ethnic harmony and social cohesion.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 7.1: Education must imbue civic consciousness among all students

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NIE shall take steps to introduce a new course module titled “Personality and Civic Consciousness” from the beginning of the next curriculum cycle (*i.e. from 2023/2024*) that runs as a strand from Grade 1 to Grade 10. The Civic Consciousness component of the module shall provide age-appropriate teaching-learning components (*both curricular and co-curricular activities*) aimed at imparting human and constitutional values like liberty, empathy, respect for others, personal etiquette, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, and equality (*This is also linked to the Policy-GE 6.1 as well*).
- The MoE shall ensure the school calendar of all levels of general education must include dedicated co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to facilitate student engagement in activities that promote civic consciousness such as engagement in school societies, community services, volunteer services, etc.

Policy-GE 7.2: Education shall function as a vehicle to promote affection of students towards their motherland, Sri Lanka - as their place of birth or residence, its history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NIE shall ensure that the curriculum fulfils the objectives of developing patriotism, respect for others, social harmony, moral values, sustainable living, good health, a spirit of inquiry, and the use of all senses.
- The MoE working together with the NIE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to issue curricular instructions and guidelines to all schools to take steps to design and introduce a wide variety of student-centered activities into the annual calendar of school that are aimed at imbuing human value such as allegiance to motherland, respect for other religions and ethnic groups, respect for diverse believe practices and cultures.

Core Area- GE 8: Financing of General Education

Policy Context

It is well-conceived that, to satisfy the three principles in terms of finances - the adequacy, efficiency, and equitability of investment in education, the following three fundamental conditions must be fulfilled: i) a sufficient amount must be allocated to education to provide the required minimum educational facilities; (ii) the resources invested must be used efficiently; and (iii) all citizens should have access to facilities with no discrimination. In addition, transparency of financial management must be ensured.

However, Sri Lanka is reported as being fallen short of fulfilling all these three fundamental conditions. As stated elsewhere, investment in education has been on the decline in the recent past. Sri Lanka’s public spending on

education as a share of GDP fluctuated substantially in recent years, and has decreased gradually from 1986 to 2018 period ending at 2.1% in 2018.

Despite the relatively low public investment, the private investment in education is also substantially meagre in Sri Lanka compared to those of most developing countries as well as those of developed countries. However, there has been a growing trend in the establishment of International Schools in the country as more and more households are willing to invest more in their children's education. Yet there is no regulatory framework and quality assurance mechanism in place for such schools to give legitimacy and provide the guarantee about the quality and standards of education provided by such schools to the parents who could afford such education for their children (*This aspect is also discussed under the volume 8 of Part IV of the NEPF 2020-2030*).

Besides that, despite the low level of public and private investments, even the allocated funds are not disbursed equitably; disparity in resource allocation among social, geographic, and demographic subgroups is also visible. Most striking among them is the disparity in allocation of resources between popular urban schools and underdeveloped and poor-resourced rural schools, in which, the latter segments get a lower priority. This certainly affects the provision of quality of education to every child equitable manner, and it is indeed a clear violation of constitutional rights.

Moreover, even the minimal funds allocated for education are not efficiently utilized. For example, a bulk of the State allocation on education goes towards the payment of teacher salaries. In absolute numbers, there is an oversupply of teachers, and the present teacher-pupil ratio in most schools, particularly in urban settings, is well over the average of 1:18. This situation emanates from the problems of deployment, resulting in overstaffing of urban schools and understaffing of rural schools.

Another issue is the excessive expenditure on welfare services such as textbooks, school uniforms, and mid-day meals. Though there is a need to supply these items to disadvantaged children, these welfare measures are also distributed among those who do not need such benefits.

Another considerable wastage that is happening in the general education sector has been the maintenance of a large number of schools with very few student enrolments (*As of recent data, there are 1,439 schools with less than 50 students*), and allocation of teachers in excess to some urban schools. As a result, the fund allocation across the school system, for maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of physical assets is minimal. Further, even the meagre funds allocated to schools for quality improvement (*for the acquisition of quality inputs for teaching*) are not properly utilized. Moreover, the allocated funds are not released in time in most instances for schools to acquire essential items, and even when the funds are released, they have to go through cumbersome procurement procedures.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Free education is guaranteed from kindergarten to university education.
- DP 2: Public expenditure on education is guaranteed to meet the increasing demand while improving the need based fund distribution and efficiency of utilization.
- DP 3: Financial assistance for needy students is guaranteed to ensure equity and inclusiveness.
- DP 4: Encouragement of true philanthropic private and community participation in education by providing financial incentives within a conducive regulatory framework to establish and operate education institutions on a not-for-profit basis.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 8.1:

Incremental increase of public expenditure over the next 10 years to reach the levels of comparable countries – that is up to 4.5% of the GDP or above 10% of the annual government expenditure while promoting private investment into school education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Fund allocation by the MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education to schools must be based on a rational formula. The system-wide school-funding formula, the Norm-Based Unit Cost Resource Allocation Mechanism (NBUCRAM) which was introduced in 2000 and which is currently in disuse must be reconsidered with required modifications for this purpose by emphasizing a mechanism to ensure that all schools receive allocated funds.
- The government grant allocated annually through the MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education should be increased and the allocations must be provided to schools in a phased-out manner over 12 months to ensure efficient utilization by schools.
- The MoE shall devise a suitable mechanism to recover at least part of the cost of textbooks and school uniforms from those who could afford them while giving the full subsidy for those who are in real need of such assistance.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education shall optimize the fund allocation, disbursement, and efficiency of utilization by rationalizing and restructuring the school types, from the current 4 Types (*Type IAB, IC, Type 2 and Type 3*) to a more rational 3 types – Primary (*1-5 Grades*), Secondary (*1-11 or 6-11 Grades*) and Senior Secondary (*1-13 or 6 to 13 Grades*), where the first two categories function as feeder schools for the Senior Secondary Schools located at least one per Education Division and with offering education in all four streams of G.C.E. (A/L) education (*i.e. science and mathematics, arts, commerce, and technology*) (*This aspect is also prescribed under policy 1.3*).
- The State shall continue to provide financial assistance for education in the form of subsidies and bursaries to needy children.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education, through the administrative circular instructions shall grant approval for schools to generate funds (*through the means as school fees, philanthropic contributions, fundraising campaigns, etc.*) at the school level to supplement government grants. The responsibility of managing such income-generating activities and funds disbursement should be granted to the School Development Societies.

Policy-GE 8.2:

Promote private investment in general education by providing financial incentives and creating a conducive regulatory framework to encourage the private sector to establish and operate education institution on not- for-profit basis

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall frame regulatory framework and guidelines to facilitate the private investors to establish and operate not-for-profit education institutions with multi-ethnic and multi-religious flavour.
- The NEC in liaison with the MoE shall prescribe standards and guidelines for private education institutions and undertake regular monitoring and certification of such schools for compliance with prescribed guidelines and standards.
- The State through the MoE shall offer matching grants for registered and certified private education institutions to encourage private sector investment in education.

Core Area- GE 9: Physical Resources – Teaching Facilities and Common Amenities**Policy Context**

Though the Ministry of Education has proposed a set of norms for physical infrastructure facilities, based on student enrolment and subjects offered at the primary and secondary level schools, it does not appear to have an accurate record of facilities available. Nevertheless, available information suggests that most of the secondary schools lack basic facilities such as safe drinking water, sanitary facilities, science laboratories, libraries, computer laboratories/rooms, etc. This situation indeed violates the government policy of providing free and equitable education facilities for every student.

Besides that, almost all schools do not get adequate funds for routine maintenance and repairs, emergency and unexpected repairs, and rehabilitation work. The reason appears to be the absence of a system of fund allocation for maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of physical assets of schools. Moreover, it appears that there is no formal system of regular inspection of facilities by zonal and provincial authorities.

In addition, most school buildings are inappropriate for the intended purpose. They are basically open halls with non-separated and unprotected classrooms. A few schools have screens to separate classes, but it does not solve the problem of noise penetrating among adjoining classes. Further, most schools do not have the recommended space area and classroom facilities to match the student numbers and to suit the teaching-learning process.

Besides that, most schools and classrooms lack the basic material inputs required for effective teaching-learning activities. This has happened, despite providing “Quality Improvement Grants” by the government. It appears that the funds provided under this grant were not fully utilized by the schools owing to excessive regulations and fear of taking heavy responsibilities placed on the principal. Further, there appear to be delays and restrictions on fund release by the Provincial Authorities. In addition, most primary school classrooms do not have basic facilities to make the learning exciting and promote activity-based learning. Furthermore, there appear to be gross inadequacies in facilities despite the Ministry of Education having stipulated the minimum standards under the Primary Education Reforms. Moreover, many schools do not have facilities to accommodate students with special needs such as ramps

for wheelchair access to classrooms, hearing aids, sanitary facilities fitted with railings, etc.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number, must be provided with minimum requirements of teaching facilities.
- DP 2: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with all required common amenities.
- DP 3: All education institutions which accommodate students with special educational needs must be equipped with the required infrastructure and teaching facilities to cater to such students.
- DP 4: Education institutions situated in rural locations must be provided with accommodation facilities for teachers.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 9.1: All schools, irrespective of geographical location and student number, must be provided with minimum infrastructure requirements for teaching-learning and common amenities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and in liaison with the Zonal Education Office network shall take steps to review the existing infrastructure facilities in school and prescribe norms and standards in alignment with the NEC-prescribed norms and standards for infrastructure facilities and allied resources – such as classrooms, teaching laboratories, ICT facilities, library, common rooms, restrooms, play areas, water, electricity, sanitary and security services, etc., including the provisions for accommodating the children with special educational needs, and formulate and issue circular instructions to promote greater compliance with the prescribe norms and standards.
- The principal of all schools in consultation with the School Development Societies under the guidance of the Divisional Education Office must develop an Infrastructure-Master Plan for the school by taking into consideration the guidelines given by the MoE through circular instructions.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to allocate funds based on the proposals and plans submitted by schools for the development of deficient infrastructure facilities and common amenities, including accommodation for teachers in rural areas and minimum requirements to accommodate students with special educational needs.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to provide repair and maintenance grants for all schools, based on the estimated annual requirement or as assessed by the Norm-Based Unit Cost Resource Allocation Mechanism.
- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and in liaison with the Zonal Education Office network shall take steps to conduct annual infrastructure and physical resources audits to check the compliance by the of schools with the prescribed norms and standards, and also to identify the infrastructure and physical resources gaps and deficiencies.

Core Area- GE 10: Physical Resources – Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity, Content, and Capacity

Policy Context

Sri Lanka is going through the initial phase of development in the process of transforming a conventional education system to a technology-enhanced education system. The value of digital infrastructure, connectivity, education material for online delivery, and online platforms/tools or apps for teaching-learning and assessment has been realized amply during the ongoing Covid19 pandemic. The unprecedented situation indeed has forced the authorities to look at critically the ICT capacity, connectivity, content, and capacity for online teaching and learning. As revealed by the Report of the Presidential Task Force on Education, the digital education in general, is severely hampered due to the limitations of several key areas and elements that are required to promote technology-enhanced education. These include the limitations in ICT infrastructure, connectivity, content, maintenance, capacity building, and innovations.

The same report has revealed the Zonal and Provincial Education Offices do not have the required ICT infrastructure. In addition, not all Zonal Education Offices have Zonal Information Communication Technology Education Centres (ZICTECs), and similarly, not all Provincial Education Offices have Provincial Information Communication Technology Education Centres (PICTECs). The functional linkage between ZICTECs with the school is hampered due to geographical and administrative limitations. Moreover, the connectivity among school ICT labs and teacher training centres, and ZICTECs and PICTECs are also limited due to inadequate internet connectivity. It appears that only about one-third of schools out of approximately 10,000 schools have internet connectivity, but not with adequate speed and data packages for all the users in the school to gain access. Besides that, there is no proper financial model for internet bill payment at the school level.

Furthermore, the capacity of schools' administration and teaching staff for the use of even the limited ICT infrastructure is also restricted, as many do not have the necessary skills to work in technology-enhanced settings. Hence, it appears that a considerable effort must be made to propel the existing education system towards the application of technology-enhanced education tools and applications.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with access to modern ICT facilities with adequate connectivity and data packages, manned by competent personnel.
- DP 2: Central and Provincial authorities must be equipped to handle all levels of ICT matters and foster the use of ICT for all levels of the General Education System.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 10.1: All schools irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with ICT - facilities with adequate connectivity and data packages, manned by competent personnel to facilitate the blended teaching-learning approach

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall develop and implement a National Level ICT Strategy and Action Plan for the general education system for building and maintenance of ICT infrastructure - installing hardware and software systems, providing new devices and components and replacements as well as maintenance. The Sri Lanka Education Learning Network (LEARN) operated by the UGC and Universities may provide a suitable model for setting up central and provincial and zonal networks.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to provide ICT infrastructure to all types of schools with adequate connectivity and data packages to promote the application of the technology-enhanced, blended teaching-learning approach for all levels of education from Grade 1 to Grade 13.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education together with the NIE shall take steps to build the capacity of all types of teaching staff (*i.e., teachers, ISAs, teacher educators, etc.*) and managerial and administrative staff (*i.e., principals and SLEAS officers*) through in-service and continuing professional development programmes on the adoption of technology-enhanced applications in general education.

Policy-GE 10.2: The Ministry of Education and Provincial level authorities must be equipped to handle all ICT related matters and foster the use of ICT for all levels of the General Education System

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE in liaison with the NIE shall design and adopt a policy and strategic development framework to promote the technology-enhanced teaching-learning approach in the General Education System.
- The MoE in liaison with the NIE shall establish National E-learning Content Development Centre under the preview of the Curriculum Development Centre of the NIE with appropriate linkages with Universities and NCoEs.
- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps in liaison with internet connectivity providers to provide high-speed connectivity to all schools, ZICTECs, PICTECs, Training Schools, Teacher Training Colleges and NCoEs, and all other training centres functioning under their preview. The mechanism adopted by LEARN could be considered with required modifications for this purpose.
- Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to establish PICTECs in Provincial Education Departments and ZICTECs in those Zonal Education Offices that lack such facilities.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall allocate a required number of Information Technology Programme Officers/Development Officers from the newly recruited graduates

through Graduate Employment Scheme to IT centres of Schools and ZICTES and PICTECs and provide them specialized in-service training on ICT infrastructure and service maintenance.

- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to establish hardware and network solution teams at the ZICTECs with the required mobility and financial model to provide services to all national schools and all provincial schools coming under the purview of the respective Zonal Education Offices.

Core Area- GE 11: Quality of Human Resources

Policy Context

Quality and efficiency of the human resources, particularly teachers are undermined by many issues in relation to pre-service/initial training, in-service training, teacher recruitment and deployment, and also by the issues related to service conditions and remunerations. These were extensively dealt with in the Status Review.

In general, it is common knowledge among the many educationists and researchers, the quality of teachers in the education sector is less than at the desired level. This appears to stem from many factors, deficiencies, and shortcomings. The deficiencies and gaps identified in this context are: i) absence of well-formulated national policy and framework on teacher education and development; ii) inadequacies of existing teacher development programmes that do not take into consideration of attributes such as annual attrition, future needs, student enrolment projections, teaching subjects at school levels and curricular changes introduced to the school system, etc.; iii) inability to upgrade the quality of the teacher cadre by creating an all graduate teaching profession; iv) absence of measures for quality assurance, standardization and programme accreditation of teacher education programmes; and vi) lack of an adequate mechanism for identification of professional development gaps and providing continuing professional development programmes while in service to fill those gaps.

In addition to teachers, there exist other important categories of human resources - principals, teacher educators, in-service advisors, education administrators, and support staff, and all of them play an important role in the general education system. The MoE has rendered support and services to the development of the above human resources through relevant divisions and branches. There are five Service Minutes established such as Sri Lanka Teachers' Service (1885/38 dated 2014-10-23), Sri Lanka Principals' Service (1086/26 dated 1999-07-02), Sri Lanka Teacher Educators Service (No. 1925/37 dated 2015-07-28) Teacher Advisors Service (No. 2182/36 dated 2020-07-01) and Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service (No. 1928/28 dated 2015-08-21). Reforms in management in all these categories are required to maintain the quality of their services. The foremost requirement in this regard is the urgent revision of Service Minutes to make the teaching profession more attractive. Salary scales given for all categories, particularly for teachers are inadequate in comparison with the scales applicable to other parallel comparable services. The salary scale for teachers is relatively low compared to many other employee categories, and moreover, the salary scale is compressed.

Furthermore, at present, there is no mechanism (*such as a regulatory professional body*) to promote professionalism in the teaching cadre. The teaching profession must be given the responsibility of regulating and managing their activities in a dignified manner as seen in other established professions such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc., and such professional body will be responsible for specifying, maintaining, and controlling academic and professional standards, and the ethics and discipline of its members.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of setting the National Policy and Framework on Teacher Education and Development.
- DP 2: The State assumes the responsibility for establishing and safeguarding standards of the teaching profession.
- DP 3: Teacher recruitment must be based on the human resource needs at the school level and according to the qualifications and specializations achieved by the prospective applicants.
- DP 4: Teacher deployment across the national and provincial schools must be done according to the needs of the schools and the national curriculum.
- DP 5: The State assumes the responsibility of ensuring the quality and standards of pre-service teacher training.
- DP 6: The State assumes the responsibility of providing in-service teacher training programmes to promote continuing professional development and professionalization of teachers.
- DP 7: The State assumes the responsibility of providing in-service training, preferably at the postgraduate level to key categories of human resources – SLEAS officers, Principals, ISAs, Teacher Educators, and Teachers for improving the quality and standards of respective services.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 11.1: Quality and standards of teaching profession must be upgraded by enacting required national policies and establishing institutional mechanisms

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC as mandated by NEC Act No. 9 of 1991 shall take steps to formulate a national policy on teacher education in consultation with relevant institutions and organizations and take steps to implement the policies and strategies through appropriate authorities.
- The MoE shall take steps to establish a regulatory body for the teaching profession, designated as the Sri Lanka Teacher Council (SLTC) through a new Act or as a part of the proposed Education Act.
 - The mandate of the SLTC should be to maintain the quality and standards of teaching professions and uphold and safeguard the rights of teachers and allied categories. This shall be achieved by prescribing Teacher Standards and Codes of Practice and by undertaking teacher registration, and also through maintaining the standards of teacher education programmes conducted by the teacher education Institutions.
 - The proposed SLTC shall consist of; (i) A chairperson who is an eminent educationist, (ii) Representatives of Sri Lanka Teachers' Service (SLTS), Sri Lanka Principals' Service (SLPS), Sri Lanka Teacher Educators' Service (SLTES), Sri Lanka Teacher Advisors Service (SLTAS) and Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service (SLEAS), (iii) Representatives of the Faculties and Departments of Education in the Universities, (iv) Representatives of education professionals in public and private educational institutes, and (v) Representatives of retired distinguished educationists.
- The MoE shall take steps to amend the Sri Lanka Teacher Service Minute to make registration with the SLTC mandatory. And the SLTC shall offer different levels of registration according to the levels of qualification:

- Full registration and full membership – for NCoE Diploma/Degree holders and graduates with PGDE Diploma; and
 - Provisional registration and associate membership – for those who lack the necessary educational and professional qualifications.
- The SLTC shall establish a mechanism in liaison with the relevant ministries, departments, and institutions to ensure that all those who aspire to become teachers are provided with pre-service teacher education programmes, leading to the award of National Diploma in Education or Bachelor’s Degree in Education, depending on the study programme followed.
 - The SLTC through appropriate quality assurance and accreditation mechanism must ensure all institutions engaged in teacher education (*pre-service and in-service*) work on a common qualification framework, necessary for entry into the teaching profession while matching the supply and demand for different categories of professionally qualified teachers graduating from all teacher education institutions.
 - The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education shall provide provisions for the following categories to earn the required educational and professional qualifications and upgrade their provisional registration and membership status from the SLTC:
 - All graduate teachers without any professional qualifications
 - Non-graduate teachers without required educational and professional qualifications.

Policy-GE 11.2:

Teacher education programmes should be formalized and linked to different categories of SLTC registration

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and the SLTC in liaison with respective teacher training institutions (*Universities, NIE, and NCoE*) shall rationalize and consolidate teacher education programmes provided by them in the following manner:
 - University Departments and Faculties of Education and the NIE should continue to offer Degree (B.Ed.) and Postgraduate Diploma in Education programmes to meet current and emerging needs and for pre-service/initial and in-service teacher education programmes.
 - NCoEs in liaison with NIE shall work towards upgrading their diploma level programmes to degree level programmes leading to the B.Ed. Degree qualification as per the provisions of Colleges of Education Act No. 30 of 1986.
 - MoE together with the teacher training institutions shall decide the entry qualifications and other personal attributes needed to enroll in pre-service/initial teacher education programmes.
 - SLTC shall prescribe standards and common qualification framework (*preferably the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework-SLQF*) to teacher training institutions on qualification levels and qualification descriptors, level descriptors/programme learning outcomes, curriculum layouts, course learning outcomes and content, teaching-learning process and assessment for pre-service/initial teacher training programmes.
 - SLTC shall regularly conduct quality audits to monitor the quality and effectiveness of the curricula of teacher education and development programmes for ensuring the teacher education is relevant to the

current and future human resource needs of the general education system and the country.

- MoE shall take steps to ensure that all teacher education institutions coming under its purview will have an appropriately governed and managed academic environment – academic staff with postgraduate qualifications and experience, physical resources, teaching/learning resources including, internet connectivity and ICT-based tools and aids, common amenities, etc.
- All national-level teacher training institutions shall prepare and implement a staff development plan including human resource succession plans that will ensure the availability of the required number of qualified staff for all disciplines.
- MoE shall take steps in liaison with a donor-assisted project to provide a scheme of fellowships, scholarships, and overseas attachments for teacher educators.

Policy-GE 11.3:

Continuing professional development programmes should be provided to all teachers in service to update their professional competencies and fulfil their professional aspirations

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Universities, NIE, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), and Teacher Centres (TCs) shall take the responsibility for providing continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for teachers and allied categories of staff. All these institutions must ensure that the curricula of such programmes should focus more on advanced training to cater to the emerging needs of teachers in service who have received pre-service/initial teacher education training.
- The MoE and Provincial Authorities shall ensure in-service, continuing professional development are compulsory for all teachers, and satisfactory completion of a minimum number of CPD programmes are compulsory for their annual increments.
- The MoE and Provincial Authorities shall take steps to strengthen the school-based teacher professional development system managed and administered by the Zonal and Divisional Education Authorities together with the principals of respective schools.
- The MoE and Provincial Authorities shall make sure the schools provide continuing peer feedback among teachers and suitably gathered student feedback to teachers, on their effectiveness and correctable defects, and monitor their improvement.
- Universities, NIE, and other Teacher Training Institutions shall provide opportunities for teachers and other categories of human resources who are interested in broadening their knowledge to follow higher education programmes leading to diplomas and higher degrees.

Core Area- GE 12: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy Context

General education is presently governed by the provision of the Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939 as well as by the provisions prescribed by certain other laws enacted thereafter such as Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (*Special Provisions*) Act No. 5 of 1961, Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (*Supplementary Provisions*) Act No. 9 of 1961, Public Examination Act No. 25 of 1968, Assisted Schools (*Special Provisions*) Act No. 65 of 1981, etc.). Many of the provisions in the Education Ordinance which are promulgated more than 75 years ago and also the provisions given in other subsequent Acts are outdated and not appropriate in the current context.

In this context of the weak legal framework of general education, the NEC (2003) recommended the formulation and enactment of a development-oriented simple and broad-based new Education Act incorporating all relevant aspects of existing Ordinances, Acts, Laws, and Regulations relating to general education and introducing new features where necessary. Though the formulation of new Education Act was attempted in 2009 by appointing a National Committee for Formulating a New Education Act for General Education, and the Committee producing a promising report titled “New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka”, this effort has not brought to a successful conclusion, and therefore, this deficiency still prevails and hinders the progressive advancement of general education in Sri Lanka.

Matters became even further affected with the enactment of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1987, and the concurrent establishment of Provincial Councils. Since then, the governance structure of general education has become very complex. It has elements of decentralization, delegation, and devolution of functions and powers between the central government and the nine provincial councils. Despite the existence of a devolved system, there is still some degree of ambiguity as regards the delineation of powers and functions between the Centre and Provinces as some of the devolved subjects are still handled by the Ministry of Education.

The central structure comprises the Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Examinations, (DoE), Educational Publications Department (EPD), and National Institute of Education (NIE). Immediately external to these three agencies, is the National Education Commission, coming under the purview of the President that has policy formulation and monitoring and reporting roles. Though many functions are devolved to Provincial Councils, many major functions are still performed by the Ministry of Education. However, the structure, particularly at the Ministry of Education level appears to be ill-suited for undertaking myriad functions and responsibilities and this appears to be the root cause of inefficiencies of Central Administration.

At present, the Secretary of Education holds two portfolios, namely Secretary to the Ministry and the Director General of Education. This has led to a work overload for the person holding the dual portfolios. As the Secretary, he is responsible for overall policy-making, planning, and monitoring as well the general administration of the Ministry and as the Chief Accounting Officer responsible for financial management. As the Director General, he is the Chief Operation Manager who takes decisions on educational matters with respect to implementing the centrally agreed-upon plans and monitoring. As most Secretaries are appointed from the Sri Lanka Administrative Services, his expertise, and memory, as the Director General is limited to the duration of services in the post.

The Provincial Education structure comprises of Provincial Ministry of Education, Provincial Department of Education, Zonal Education Offices, Divisional Education Offices, and Schools. Many reports have highlighted the need to demarcate district and divisional education officers in place of current Zonal and Divisional offices or demarcations.

The school which is the education delivery unit of the provincial chain most often lacks the required leadership,

and adequate resources to function effectively and appear to be saddled with many issues. The existing school classification (*i.e. Type 1AB, Type 1C, Type 2, and Type 3*) has also created many issues. In appointing principals, this classification creates a problem as principals are appointed on the basis of this classification, and also allowance attached to the principal position is based on the type/category of school. Hence, many try to upgrade the schools to a higher level/category without having adequate human resources and facilities. On the other hand, this classification prevents opportunities for principals with a higher grade in the service to serve the primary school on a need basis.

Moreover, most principals lack the confidence to play the role of chief executive officer and take the responsibility for the successful running of the school. To make this situation worse, the delays in filling vacancies in the top management level in schools result in making acting appointments. Thus, a large number of schools are headed by “Acting Principals” appointed on consideration other than competencies. Further, there is no regular scheme to provide resources to schools, and the school authorities could not make meaningful annual action plans for improvement as they are not certain about the fund availability. Also, schools are not provided with support staff to attend to administrative work. Further, the community involvement in the management of the school is minimal.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility for setting the policy and regulatory framework for all State and non-State education institutions from early childhood education through primary to tertiary level education.
- DP 2: Accountability and efficiency of governance and management of all educational institutions at all levels must be promoted by institutionalizing proper organizational structure with clear demarcation and definition of their powers and functions, and promoting greater inter-agency and inter-institutional coordination and cooperation.
- DP 3: Quality and standards of education must be improved by enhancing the capacity of all categories of staff and monitoring their performance through appropriate internal and external auditing/monitoring mechanisms.
- DP 4: Management of schools must be at an optimal level and this has to be realized through a tri-patriate alliance among principals and teachers, students, and parents/communities.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-GE 12.1: Review, define and elaborate the regulatory framework that defines the roles and functions of the central and provincial authorities, agencies, and institutions, the governance and management structures, and the rules and regulations pertaining to general education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to enact a new Education Act incorporating relevant aspects of existing Ordinances, Acts, Laws, and Regulations relating to general education and introducing new features where necessary. The draft document prepared by a National Committee appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2009, the “New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka” could provide the basis for formulating the new Act.
- The NEC shall take steps to amend National Education Commission Act No. 19 of 1991 to define its mandate explicitly so as to empower the Commission to undertake mandatory functions – apex policy formulation, setting standards, and monitoring and certification functions.
- The NIE shall take steps to amend the National Institute of Education Act No. 28 of 1985 to strengthen its role

in curriculum development, teacher education, and education research.

- The MoE shall take steps to restructure and redefine the powers and functions of the Ministry and the departments coming under its purview in the following manner;
 - Re-establish the Department of Education and bring all the divisions presently coming under the purview of the Ministry under the administrative control of this Department.
 - Department of Education must be headed by a Director General drawn from the SLEAS cadre
 - MoE shall redefine the powers and functions of the Ministry, Department of Education, Department of Examinations, Educational Publications Department, and National Institute of Education according to the proposed structure.
 - MoE shall ensure the Heads of the Department of Education, Department of Examinations, and Educational Publications Department are appointed from the SLEAS, and not from SLAS.
 - MoE shall set up a Performance Review and Coordinating Committee (PRCC), chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry with membership consisting of DG/ Education, DG/Examinations, DG/Educational Publications, and DG/NIE to improve inter-agency communication and coordination, and address system-wide issues.

Policy-GE 12.2:

Improve the competency profiles and professionalism, and remunerations of all categories of staff

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to establish an independent Sri Lanka Teacher Council (SLTC) for issuing a license for practicing for the education personnel (*i.e., Teachers, Principals, Inservice Advisors, Teacher Educators, and Education Administrators*), and also for promoting and maintaining professionalism among the education personnel/professional (*This is also dealt under the Policy-GE 11.1*).
- The MoE shall take steps to improve the teacher remuneration system by converting all four staff cadre services of the general education system (*i.e. SLEAS, SLPS, SLTES, and SLTS*) into one closed/combined service and adjusting their salary scales appropriately to reflect the services rendered.
- The MoE shall take steps to create greater synergy between the NIE and the NCoEs through appropriate enactments/amendments to existing Acts – National Institute of Education Act No. 28 of 1985 and Colleges of Education Act No. 30 1986 or bringing both the NIE and NCoEs under one university coming under the purview of the Ministry in-charge of the subject of General Education by enacting a new act.

Policy - GE 12.3:

Review, rationalize and restructure the provincial education system with the concurrent improvement of governance, management, and resource base

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education together with the Ministry of Public Administration shall take steps to review the geographical area of jurisdiction of the provincial educational office network (*zonal and divisional education offices*) and demarcate it in line with the country's general administrative system; *i.e*

Educational Offices in parallel with administrative districts and divisions.

- The MoE and Provincial Ministries of Education together with the Ministry of Public Administration shall take steps to review and redefine the powers and functions of District and Divisional Education Offices and provide them with adequate human, physical and financial resources to undertake the assigned functions.
- The State shall take steps to appoint Directors of Provincial Departments of Education in concurrence with the Ministry of Education with a clear line of command and the respective responsibilities in order to strengthen the line of command and communication between the Central Ministry and Provincial Authorities in executing national policy, strategies, and programmes of general education.
- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries of Education shall ensure the Provincial Directors of Education report to both the Ministry of Education and respective Provincial Ministries of Education.

Policy-GE 12.4:

Review, rationalize and restructure the school system with the concurrent improvement of governance and management while empowering them to develop as distinct entities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The State shall take steps to categorize all schools into 3 types – Primary (1-5 Grades), Secondary (1-11 or 6-11 Grades), and Senior Secondary (1-13 or 6 to 13 Grades), where the first two categories function as feeder schools for the Senior Secondary Schools located at least one per Education Division offering all streams of G.C.E. (A/L) education (i.e. science and mathematics, arts, commerce, and technology) and the senior secondary /collegiate level vocational education stream (*This aspect is also detailed under the Policy-GE 1.3 and Policy-GE 8.1*).
- The MoE shall take steps to introduce a School-based Management System (SBM) in stepwise manner to the school system and train all principals and teachers on the application of SBM.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education through the Zonal Education Offices shall take steps to establish School Management and Development Boards (SMDBs) according to the Constitutional Provisions, thereby ensuring assistance and guidance to the school principals in improving quality, standards, and also promoting transparency and accountability in school management.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education through the Zonal Education Offices shall take steps to strengthen the School Development Committees (SDCs) of the Schools Development Societies (SDSs) with special provisions to assist small schools with less resource capacity to promote a tripartite alliance between school teachers and administrators, parents and students, and community in the management and progressive development of such schools.

PART IV - VOLUME III

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON HIGHER EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Sri Lankan higher education sector has been faced with two formidable challenges; catering for an ever-increasing demand for access, while reforming the higher education system with the concurrent improvement of quality and relevance of education, and research and innovations.

The general structure or topography in the existing Higher Education (HE) is broadly categorized as a conventional binary system consisting of; i) State-run universities, and ii) relatively underdeveloped and underutilized alternative State Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), with a slowly emerging sub-sector, non-State higher education¹⁸⁴. Though, there is a dire need for expanding opportunities for higher education, consolidating the private sector as a key player has not been achieved due to the absence of a conducive legislative and regulatory framework for them to operate along with the State universities, ATIs, and TVET institutions. Thus, it is imperative that ground-breaking changes must be infused into the higher education and alternative higher education sectors to expedite the transformation of the binary system into a more globally proven tri-partite system consisting of three key types of HEIs, namely; i) 'world class' research universities, ii) State universities and State and non-State HEIs, and iii) technical and professional State and non-State institutions. This would help to increase access to tertiary education, provide more flexibility and mobility within and among the sectors, offer well-delineated diverse education, training and career paths, and enhance standards, quality and relevance of the training offered, and thereby the higher education sector to produce human resources equipped with higher-order cognitive and psycho-social skills required to fuel the socio-economic development of the country.

The lingering issues that hinder the transformation of the higher education sector into a tripartite structure will be discussed under 5 sub-headings: (i) Participation, Access, and Types of Educational Offerings; ii) Higher Education Financing and Private Sector Participation; iii) Performance of Higher Education Sector - Inputs, Processes, Outputs, and Outcomes; iv) Learning Environment, Student Support Services, and Student Conduct and Discipline; and v) Regulation, Governance, and Accountability.

1.2. Participation, Access, and Types of Educational Offerings

1.2.1. Participation in Higher Education

Though Sri Lanka has achieved high literacy rates and human development indices, the participation of youth in higher education is exceptionally low¹⁸⁵. Participation in tertiary education by the 18-23-year age cohort, as measured by Gross-Enrolment Rate (GER) in Sri Lanka is exceptionally low for a middle-income country. In the global context, as assessed using 2012 and 2013 data, the higher education GER in Sri Lanka was 18.8 per cent. Sri Lanka was 86th out of 127 countries in 2012 and 71st out of 97 in 2013. The Philippines, Vietnam, and India—which all have significantly lower GDP per capita than Sri Lanka—had GERs of 25 to 34 per cent. In 2012, the GER for Indonesia, with the same GDP per capita, was almost double that of Sri Lanka. Of the ASEAN countries with which Sri Lanka aims to compete, Malaysia's GER was 20 points higher, and Thailand's GER was 35 points higher than Sri Lanka's. Basically, Sri Lanka's higher education GER is lower than it should be, given its GDP per capita¹⁸⁶.

184. Aturupane, H., Millot, B., Wang, L., Allak, M., Chandrasiri, S., Fielden, J., ... Sonnadara, U. (2009). *The towers of learning: Performance, peril and promise of higher education in Sri Lanka*. World Bank.

185. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

186. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

As of recent World Bank Data¹⁸⁷, there has been a slow improvement of GER of Sri Lanka over the past few years. In the year 2019, the higher education GER in Sri Lanka was 21.1% which showed some improvement compared to the year 2012 /2013. Yet it is well below the comparator countries in the region such as the Philippines, Vietnam, India, and Indonesia, which had lower GDP per capita compared to Sri Lanka, had higher GERs of 25 - 35% (Table 1).

Table 1: Tertiary Education Gross Enrolment Rate (%) and GDP per capita (US\$) of Few Countries from 2012-2019

Indicator	Year	Country						
		Sri Lanka	Philippines	Vietnam	India	Indonesia	Malaysia	Thailand
Tertiary Education Gross Enrolment Rate (%)	2012	17.1	31.2	25.2	24.3	30.4	37.6	50.7
	2013	18.9	33.5	25.2	23.8	31.1	39.1	49.9
	2014	19.2	35.6	30.7	25.4	30.9	39.5	50.2
	2015	19.8	*	29.1	26.8	33.3	45.6	*
	2016	18.8	*	28.5	26.8	35.4	46.8	49.3
	2017	19.0	35.5	*	27.4	36.4	43.7	*
	2018	19.6	*	*	28.1	36.3	45.1	*
	2019	21.1	*	28.6	28.6	*	43.1	*
GDP per capita, current US\$ ('000)	2012	10.3	6.3	5.0	4.9	9.7	23.0	14.9
	2013	10.9	6.6	5.4	5.1	10.1	23.5	15.4
	2014	11.3	7.0	5.7	5.2	10.3	24.6	15.5
	2015	11.6	7.2	6.1	5.5	10.2	24.8	15.8
	2016	12.2	7.7	6.6	5.8	10.5	25.5	16.6
	2017	12.6	8.1	7.2	6.2	10.9	26.7	17.4
	2018	13.2	8.7	7.8	6.7	11.6	28.2	18.5
	2019	13.7	9.3	8.4	7.0	12.3	29.6	19.3

*Not given indicator

Source: World Bank Data: Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/>

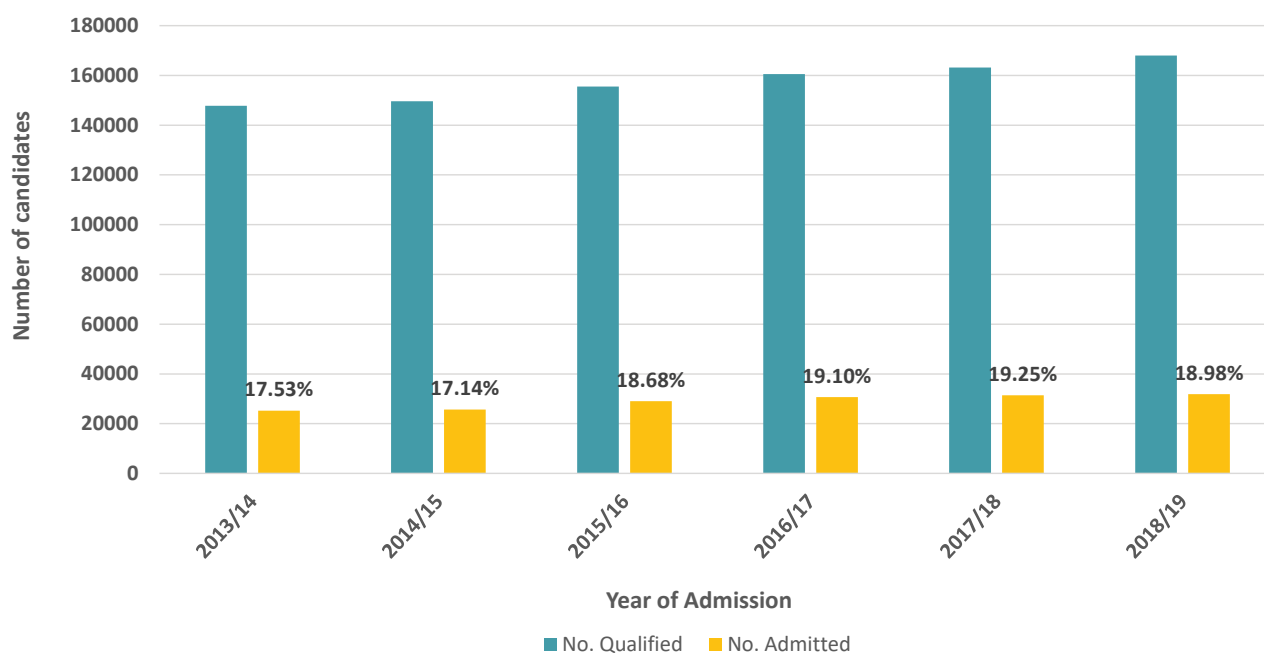
1.2.1.1. Access to State universities

One of the major reasons for low participation is the inability of the State, which is the primary provider of higher education, to provide opportunities for higher education for those who qualify from general education. The number of State universities has remained at 17 (including the last 2 additions in 2021/2022) over the last two decades. As of UGC Statistics¹⁸⁸, in 2018/2019, 167,992 students obtained minimum qualifications to enter university education. As shown in Figure 1, out of this, only 31,881 of them, a mere 18.98%, were admitted to these 15 conventional State universities. The percentages for 2015/2016, 2016/2017, 2017/18, and 2018/19 were 18.68, 19.10, 19.25 and 18.98, respectively. The State-run universities, in spite of limited financial resources, staff, and physical facilities, continue to increase the intake on average by 5% per annum, but the increase does not match with the increasing demand. Thus, higher education opportunities provided by the State universities have continued to remain a scarce public resource.

187. World Bank Data. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/>

188. University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka University Statistics.

Figure 1: Number of Candidates Qualifying and Selected to Undergraduate Courses of the State Universities



Source: Sri Lanka University Statistics (2019, p. 19)

1.2.1.2. Access to non-State higher education institutions

As of MoHE data¹⁸⁹, there are 23 non-State Higher Education Institutions (NSHEIs) registered under the MoHE/UGC as degree-awarding private higher education institutions, offering 184 study programmes. Besides that, there is an unknown but larger number of other institutions (*claimed as cross-border NSHEIs*) operating in Sri Lanka. These institutions are operating without MoHE/UGC recognition or supervision and prepare students for overseas degree programmes. Though the data is incomplete, it is estimated that, on an annual basis, approximately about 25,500 students (*including those who complete the G.C.E. O/L examination*) enrol in NSHEIs. However, this accounts for only less than 5% of the students who completed G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) studies, and it is dismally low when compared to those of countries that record a higher GER. For example, NSHEIs enrol 79% of students in Japan, 80% in the Republic of Korea, 85% in Chile, and 86% in Israel. The low enrolment in NSHEIs is due to multiple factors: the inability of most students to meet the financial cost, low acceptance by the public due to uncertainty of the quality of training, low recognition given for qualifications obtained from NSHEIs by the public sector employers, etc. Nonetheless, with these statistics, Sri Lanka falls into the group of countries that combine low private participation and a low higher education GER¹⁹⁰.

1.2.2. Student Admission to State Universities

1.2.2.1. Admission policy and practice

Prior to the 1970s university admission was purely based on merit as practised all over the world at that time. After the adoption of a short-lived ethnicity-based admission for a while, a district quota system of admission with a relatively low all island merit component was introduced in 1972 for university admissions¹⁹¹. Since then, this policy

189. Ministry of Education. Retrieved May 5, 2021, from <https://www.mohe.gov.lk/>.

190. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

191. De Silva, C.R. (1974). *Weightage in university admission: Standardization and district quotas in Sri Lanka*. *Modern Ceylon Studies*, 5(2), 151-186.

remained almost unchanged except for minor adjustments to the different quotas. There were some additional changes that took place during the period 2000-2002. From the year 2000, all students applying to universities were required to take 3 subjects instead of 4 subjects at the G.C.E. (A/L). This change was combined with the introduction of an additional Common General Test for university admission. It was expected that this test is an aptitude test like the SAT in the USA, but it was far from it. Furthermore, it is only a qualifying test and the pass mark is 30%, making this test very ineffective in the selection process. The other more significant change introduced in the year 2002 was to rank students for admission on the basis of standardized marks, the Z-score values, instead of aggregate raw marks. This method is considered an effective method of removing inconsistencies arising out of the level of difficulty in scoring marks in different subjects.

Currently, the District Quota System (DQS) is applicable to all streams (*Commerce, Biological Science, Physical science, and Technology streams*) other than the Arts stream where all island merit-based admission operates. Even in the Arts stream, some categories such as music, dance, drama and theatre, visual arts, etc. are excluded, and for these disciplines, the district quota system operates. In the present district quota system, 40% of the available places are filled on an all-island merit basis while 55% of the places in each course of study are allocated to the students from 25 districts in proportion to the population ratio. In addition, 5% of the places in each course of study are allocated to the students from 16 educationally disadvantaged districts.

Both the DQS and Z-score methods of standardization have drawn many criticisms lately. The use of the district quota system in addition to merit has drawn some criticism from the public as it discriminates against students with high merit as they happen to be from urban and peri-urban areas. Amidst all these criticisms, the district quota system has continued for well over 4 decades and it is indeed in need of a critical review in the light of the development across the provinces and districts that have taken place over the past 4 decades¹⁹². In addition, the Z-score system that is adopted for the standardization of G.C.E. (A/L) marks has also been drawn much criticism¹⁹³.

1.2.2.2. Delays in admission and commencement of academic programmes

The enrolment of G.C.E. (A/L) qualifiers into universities and study programmes are usually subjected to delays¹⁹⁴. This delay is primarily due to delays in marking answer scripts which take about 4 months. The said delay with another delay occurring due to re-corrections, altogether causes a total delay of about 8 months from the completion G.C.E. (A/L) examination. Delays are also common in the release of Z-scores and cut-off marks for different study programmes. Even after commencement of enrolment, there is again a long lag period before the commencement of academic programmes due to non-enrolment of selected students to study programmes other than for a few study programmes such as Medicine and Engineering. As a result, the UGC has to go through a very tedious and time-consuming process to fill vacancies¹⁹⁵. In addition, lately, another issue has arisen due to the existence of two populations of students sitting G.C.E. (A/L) at a given year under two syllabi. This too has delayed university admission significantly due to students' grievances, many of which have ended in extended litigations. All these factors delay the commencement of academic programmes for new entrants, and also disrupt the synchrony of academic calendars among faculties within universities, and also among universities.

192. Gunawardena, R.P. (2021, February 23). *Towards realistic university admission scheme for Sri Lanka*. *The Island News Paper*. <https://island.lk/towards-a-realistic-university-admission-scheme-for-sri-lanka/>

193. Warnapala, Y. & Silva, K. (2011). *Z-Score demystified: A critical analysis of the Sri Lankan university admission policy*. *Journal of Case Studies in Education*, 2. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1057208.pdf>

194. *Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs*. (2020). *Re-imaging education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports*.

195. *National Education Commission*. (2019). *National policy proposals on higher education*.

1.2.3. Types of Educational Offerings

Universities in Sri Lanka historically admit more students into Arts, Management, and Commerce study programmes than for Science-based and professional study programmes. UGC data (2019) suggested that, enrolment into Arts, Management and Commerce study programmes accounted for 48.2% intake, while the rest of the disciplines, mostly science-based study programmes – Science, Engineering, Medicine, Dental Science, Veterinary Science, Agriculture, Allied Health Sciences, Computer Sciences, Technology and Architecture and allied fields which have high to medium employability accounting only for 51.8% of the total undergraduate enrolment¹⁹⁶. This pattern is not different in NSHEIs either as the fields such as management, business, and ICT are the most offered, affordable, and widely enrolled study programmes.

According to the World Bank reports^{197,198} Sri Lanka fares badly in terms of the proportion of higher education students enrolled in subjects of vital importance for economic development, such as the Sciences (*including medicine, dental, and veterinary science*), Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) stream of study programmes. The proportion of students enrolled in STEM subjects is just 17%, causing Sri Lanka to be ranked only 79 of 99 countries. For Engineering alone, with an enrolment share of 8% the country fares even worse at 92 of 103 countries. Sri Lanka needs to urgently increase higher education enrolment with a special focus on degree programmes, such as STEM stream of study programmes, that are important to drive future economic growth through higher value-added industries and services.

This pattern of university admission is not surprising, given the distribution of the pool of students who become qualified from the G.C.E. (A/L) examination and become eligible to enter a university. The type of streams of education offered in the general education system historically has been skewed towards Arts and Commerce or soft disciplines because of the structural deformity of existing school categorization and distribution, and resource allocation in terms of human and physical resources. This structural and resource allocation anomaly coupled with the type of subject streams offered in schools is one of the major issues for having more students in Arts and Commerce fields becoming eligible and looking for university admissions. According to the basic statistics given in the Annual School Census Report in 2019¹⁹⁹, there are 2911 schools (*which accounts for only 28.7% of the total schools*) offering classes for students beyond Grade 11 (*with A-Level streams*), and out of this number, only 1012 schools {34.7% of the G.C.E. (A/L) schools} which are categorized as Type 1AB schools, offer all 4 streams of education (*Science and Maths, Arts, Commerce, Technology*), while 1899 {65.3% of G.C.E. (A/L) level} schools (*1C Schools*) offer only Arts and Commerce streams. In other words, 65.3% of schools in Sri Lanka, which offer Grade 1-13 or 6-13 do not offer the full spectrum of choices for students, thus pushing a majority of senior secondary students by default into Arts and Commerce streams.

In addition to this structural deformity in distribution schools and unavailability of Science and Mathematics stream in the majority of senior secondary education schools, the shortage of teachers for science and mathematics, in most of the schools, particularly in under economically backward and underdeveloped regions of the country, compels the majority of senior secondary grade students to enrol into the Arts and Commerce streams. Besides that, there may be a small percentage of students who may opt for Arts and Commerce streams because of their perception of science and mathematics as difficult subjects, and hence their fear to follow science and mathematics. There may be another fraction of students opting for Arts and Commerce despite having opportunities to follow STEM stream, purely for boosting their chances of entering university. As a result of all these reasons, the Arts and Commerce stream students account for the highest percentage of students becoming eligible, and thus seeking entry into universities (62.8%) while science and technology accounts only for 27.4 % and 8.5%, respectively²⁰⁰.

196. University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka university statistics.

197. AHEAD. <https://ahead.lk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/AHEAD-DOR-Guidelines.pdf>

198. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options. World Bank.

199. Ministry of Education. (2019). Annual school census of Sri Lanka, final report.

200. University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka university statistics.

In addition, skewed distribution in favour of soft disciplines is a characteristic of low-income countries. Sri Lanka occupies a special and unenviable position; it is ranked 1st out of 106 countries for the proportion of its students in humanities and social sciences but is in the 79th position out of 99 countries for the proportion of students in science and engineering. For engineering alone, it fares even worse, at 92nd out of 103 countries²⁰¹. The highly skewed distribution towards humanities and social sciences in public institutions by field of study has also created adverse consequences. In general, these graduates historically face high unemployment rates compared to those of science, engineering, ICT, and other professional graduates²⁰². Add to this burden, every government has been under political pressure to accommodate the unemployed 'Arts' graduates' into the public sector.

1.2.4. Academic Year of Sri Lankan Universities

Typically, one active academic year in a Sri Lankan university consists of two semesters having 15 weeks of study time and 2 to 3 weeks of examination time per semester, and 1 to 2 weeks of semester break. In most countries, the break between two semesters is very short (1-2 weeks). This enables universities to have a short-term or semester, in addition to the two main semesters within one academic year of 12 months. However, in Sri Lanka, one academic year with 2 semesters runs throughout the 12 months (*and sometimes even longer*).

Therefore, it is seemingly rational and logical to introduce an efficient annual academic calendar to our universities that would be comparable with other countries. There are several benefits to all stakeholders in securing a 12-week short-term/semester within the annual academic calendar. For students: they can work in industrial attachments to acquire work experience and engage in community or volunteer services and in other organized activities which would facilitate the development of soft skills. For academics: they get quality time to focus on research. For universities: this window of 12 weeks allows universities to focus on short courses on fee-levying basis for the general public including for its undergraduates. This will be more meaningful than confining the academic work only through the 2-semester academic year. Also, if the national examinations {G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L)} coincide during this period (*like in other countries*) then academics could benefit from uninterrupted involvement in the paper-marking process during the short semester, thus improving the quality of G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examination processes and reducing the time gap between examination (*including paper marking*) and releasing of results.

1.3. Higher Education Financing and Private Sector Participation

1.3.1. Public Investment

At an aggregate level, weighted against either the GDP or total public spending, Sri Lanka devotes a relatively small share of its wealth and total government spending to higher education²⁰³. The data given in Table 2 below, confirm that Sri Lanka is dangerously underinvesting in the HE sector, which is most crucial to propelling the country to become a knowledge-based economy. Whether in aggregate or per-student terms, Sri Lanka's public funding for higher education is far less than that is invested by the middle-income countries with which Sri Lanka aspires to compete. It is very conceivable that access to higher education and the quality of higher educational offerings cannot be enhanced without adequate financial investment, particularly by the State. Nonetheless, there was some upward movement in public investment in real terms, particularly in the last decade in the higher education sector, faster than in general education. However, most of the increase went to investments in physical resources, particularly for infrastructure. However, the increase in recurrent expenditures in those areas that matter the most for delivery of quality services was modest.

201. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

202. Gunaratne, P. S. M., Ramanayake, A., Panagoda, D. (2018). *Tracer study of graduates, Universities in Sri Lanka*. University Grants Commission.

203. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

Table 2: Government Spending on Tertiary Education of Selected Economies

World Rank	Country	Tertiary education spending as a % of GDP	World Rank	Country	Expenditures on tertiary education as % of total government expenditures
5	Tunisia	1.75	2	Singapore	7.95
15	India	1.28	4	Hong Kong	6.16
18	Singapore	1.19	5	Tunisia	5.98
19	Hong Kong	1.16	14	Chile	4.07
24	Vietnam	1.05	21	Vietnam	3.57
46	Korea, Rep	0.72	31	Indonesia	3.11
48	Thailand	0.71	34	Thailand	2.99
52	Indonesia	0.61	60	Japan	1.91
61	Sri Lanka	0.32	64	Sri Lanka	1.64

Source: Dundar et al. (2017, p. 183)

1.3.2. Cost Recovery

In contrast to most of the middle-income countries, the universities and HEIs in Sri Lanka depend on government grants for almost all of their resources. There is very limited cost recovery, and fees from external and foreign students subsidize to a very minute extent the cost of national and internal students who pay nothing to attend courses. Though the higher education sector is under constant pressure to expand and boost its quality and standards, under-funding coupled with resistance from students and the public, and low-cost recovery have made these efforts unrealistic and unattainable. To achieve this goal, as shown in other countries, private financing has become a necessity; conceivably, it has to come from users, combined with student aid schemes to ensure equity, and from investments by private providers²⁰⁴. Another option is the public universities to engage in income-generating activities to compensate for the low-cost recovery. Unfortunately, not many universities adopt this approach despite provisions are provided to do so.

1.3.3. Private Investment

The absence of significant investment by the private sector in higher education in Sri Lanka is very notable, and it is considered as one of the major reasons for failure to meet the unprecedented demand for higher education. Until a few years ago, private sector participation in higher education was restricted. Even at present, because of the ambiguity of regulations, many prospective investors are reluctant to move in. To aggravate matters, the public perception of NSHEIs is still not positive as the sector is yet to get legitimacy, mainly due to the lack of government regulation and oversight. Evidence from other countries shows that it is important to set clear, objective, and streamlined criteria and processes regulating NSHEIs, which should also include incentives for private providers to invest, regulations for registration and oversight, and independent mechanisms to ensure the quality of educational offering and outcomes for both private and public higher education. In the absence of such government regulations, incentives, and oversight, the sector is yet to receive legitimacy and acceptance by the public as an alternative

204. Aturupane, H., Millot, B., Wang, L., Allak, M., Chandrasiri, S., Fielden, J., ... Sonnadara, U. (2009). *The towers of learning: Performance, peril and promise of higher education in Sri Lanka*. World Bank.

higher education avenue²⁰⁵.

1.3.4. Private Sector Participation in Higher Education

In addition to offering study programmes, the private sector can also greatly contribute to enhancing the relevance of the higher education sector as a whole, and the public HEIs in particular, through many other channels. Some of these may include, i) involvement of expertise from the private sector in updating the curricula by making them more relevant to the rapidly changing needs of the economy, ii) accommodating expertise from the industry as visiting academics to share their expertise in the teaching-learning process, iii) establishing public-private partnerships for research and research commercialization, and iv) arranging internships and externships in private companies for introducing students to the 'world of work', which may often create opportunities for their employment. Unfortunately, these types of collaboration are still very rare, and many factors such as administrative rigidities, negative attitudes of staff and students towards the private sector, the reluctance of the private sector to extend the cooperation, etc., appear to have contributed to it.

1.4. Performance of HE Sector: Inputs, Processes, and Outputs and Outcomes

1.4.1. Inputs

1.4.1.1. Students

Almost all students coming into undergraduate training programmes in the State universities are those who have excelled in the G.C.E. (A/L) examination which is very competitive. Nonetheless, general education teaching has been very teacher-centric and examination-oriented with very little adoption of learner-centered, teaching-learning approaches. Heavy examination orientation and inadequate testing through public examination have adversely affected the holistic development of the child. In this system, rote learning, that is learning by memorizing rather than understanding is the norm and the most prevalent practice. Further, they have been groomed by the "tuition culture" prevailing in the country. Such students when they enter university education, perform very poorly; most of them are not enthusiastic about learning, their learning habits are poorly attuned to higher learning, their language competencies, particularly English knowledge, is low, and the ICT competencies are less than the level desired. Moreover, their psychosocial skills are poorly developed.

The postgraduate students who enrol at higher degrees also show similar shortcomings. They seek postgraduate education as a fallback option when they cannot find gainful employment. As such their intrinsic motivation for a higher level of training is rather low.

1.4.1.2. Human resources

The State universities, as of 2019, employed about 9,428 full-time faculty, of whom 8,957 were in the 15 public universities²⁰⁶. On average, the Student:Teacher Ratio (STR) was 17.5. In comparison with the norms approved by the UGC for different streams of study programmes (i.e. *Medicine 7:1; Allied Health Sciences 10:1; Science 10:1; Agriculture 10:1; Engineering 10:1; Humanities 15:1 and Social Sciences 18:1*)²⁰⁷, the overall average of STR across all universities is higher than the expected average of approved norms, and it is certainly not compatible with the requirements to adopt more student-centered teaching-learning approaches.

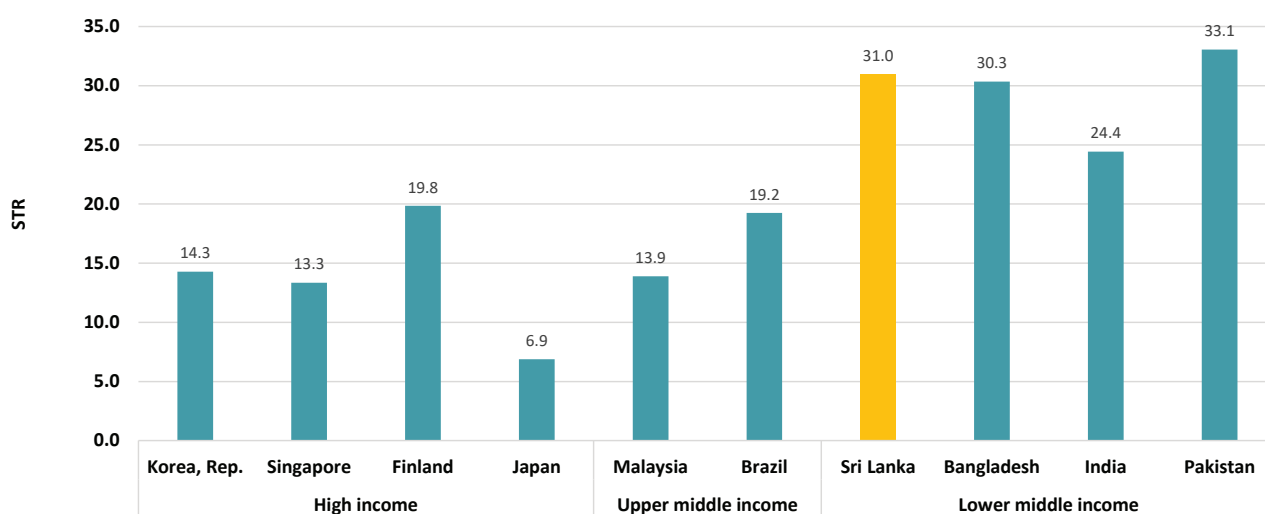
205. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

206. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Sri Lanka University Statistics*.

207. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Commission Circular No. 04/2019: cadre norms for fixing the cadre of the higher educational institutions*.

This is more worrying when a comparison is made for the entire tertiary education sector which includes other post-secondary education institutions in addition to the State universities, such as Advanced Technical Institutes (ATIs) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. As of World Bank statistics²⁰⁸ in 2017 (Figure 2), the tertiary education STR in Sri Lanka was estimated as 30.0, and it was one of the highest in the world; in Malaysia, it was 13.9; and in Korea, it was 14.2. With these statistics, it appears that Sri Lanka belongs to a small group of countries with both extremely high STRs and very low GERs in the tertiary education sector. This serious deficit in the number of teaching staff members available is more perturbing in view of the need to increase enrolment. If the situation is to improve, the rate of increase of teaching staff will have to occur at a faster rate than the rate of student enrolment.

Figure 2: Student-Teacher Ratio, Tertiary Education (2017)



Source: World Bank Data. Retrieved May 9 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/>

1.4.1.3. Human resource competencies

The quality of academic staff appears to have deteriorated over time, due to the archaic practice of recruiting academic cadres at the probationary lecturer level, where the assessment of candidates is purely based on first-degree qualifications and performance. This is certainly an unhealthy practice, which favours inbreeding and nepotism that has not helped the universities to attract and sustain a cadre with high achievements in postgraduate training. Further, many teachers, mostly in arts, humanities, and management faculties tend to stagnate at the level of master's qualifications with no strong commitment or opportunities to seek doctoral qualifications. Even with limited scope in research, and relying on the publication of low-quality papers, mostly in non-refereed journals, many of these academics have been able to secure promotion to professorship. This has led to severe erosion of quality, standards, and professionalism among the academic staff in the State universities. Further, these academic staff have not been given adequate training in education technologies such as curriculum design and evaluation, and teaching and learning and assessments methods. In the absence of such training, many of them continue to remain as poor teachers and role models for students. With this attitude, most academics continue to consider that university education is meant primarily for providing undergraduate education.

This erosion, too, has been noted among the non-academic administrative, and technical staff categories. Compulsory post-recruitment training at the postgraduate level has not been the norm for this category of employees, except a few seeking such qualifications on their own for promotional prospects.

208. World Bank Data. Retrieved May 9, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.TER.ENRL.TC.ZS>

1.4.1.4. Competencies of university staff in ICT-based applications

The survey conducted by Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN)²⁰⁹ on ICT usage in State universities has revealed that the competencies of academic, academic support and non-academic staff vary considerably among universities and faculties, and in general, the level of competencies of academic staff in non-science faculties is extremely poor. The level of adoption of ICT tools in university administration, particularly the level of adoption of electronic management information systems, electronic modes and applications to connect with staff and students, paperless document management using e-signatures with digital certification, etc., is extremely low. Further, the maintenance of ICT infrastructure, particularly the Learning Management System (LMS) and the technical backup services available for troubleshooting too have been very weak. This is primarily due to inadequacies of the cadre and a lack of updating the competencies of existing staff.

1.4.1.5. Physical and technical resources

It is well recognized that a good learning environment, in which students can excel, plays an important part in higher education. For most universities, the pace of facility expansion has always lagged behind the student intake. Despite a considerable expansion of facilities over the past two decades, particularly in terms of lecture halls, auditoriums, laboratories, student hostels, accommodation, etc., still, there are many universities, particularly located in provinces, which face shortages of many essential facilities, particularly staff and student accommodation, and welfare, sports and recreational facilities. Even many of the lecture halls lack modern teaching equipment, and most laboratories are short of up-to-date laboratory equipment and material. In many universities, internet connections and free wireless connections are limited. Most of the dormitories, cafeterias, libraries, and meeting areas are short of space and upkeep, and hence do not appear to provide a conducive academic environment²¹⁰.

1.4.1.6. ICT infrastructure and technologies for online/distance mode of course delivery and conduct of examinations

Availability of ICT infrastructure, applications, internet connectivity, and technical support services are of paramount importance for adopting and promoting a blended teaching-learning approach in universities/HEIs. As revealed by the survey conducted in 2019 by LEARN²¹¹, the widely adopted LMS platform is Moodle, and this together with the other common ICT tools such as those offered by the G-suite, are the available resources to facilitate technology-enhanced teaching-learning. Nonetheless, the use of available facilities has been not encouraging, especially during the pre-COVID phase.

The same survey by LEARN revealed that the availability of required ICT infrastructure, technologies, and technical know-how for online delivery and conducting examinations varied across the universities and HEIs. Though almost all universities have LMS facilities installed, the ICT facilities available within the institutes are grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the current student population. Many are in need of upgrading the existing ICT infrastructure to meet the increasing demand for online teaching-learning. Many universities do not have sufficient server facilities to accommodate the increasing volumes of course material, indicating the urgent need for significant expansion of server capacities. Only about 50% of the universities/HEIs have e-library facilities to provide remote access to library facilities by staff and students, indicating a need for significant expansion of online facilities in the libraries. Wi-Fi coverage is also too limited; only about one-third of universities have more than 60% of Wi-Fi coverage on their campuses. Further, institutional policies, regulations and guidelines, and sufficient technical expertise are not in place in many universities to regulate, guide, and train teachers to use LMS effectively when delivering courses and conducting examinations. Availability and use of plagiarism detection software are also not widespread. As most of the academic and academic support staff lack adequate knowledge and experience in the use of ICT applications

209. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-imaging education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports.*

210. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education.*

211. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-imaging education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports.*

in teaching-learning and assessments, and thus, even the existing limited ICT facilities have not been used in full capacity.

1.4.2. Processes

1.4.2.1. Curriculum design and evaluation

The conventional curricula of most study programmes have been evolved through an empirical approach where the periodical expansion of contents has been developed to match with the expansion of knowledge in respective disciplines. However, the inputs into curricula are largely determined by the teachers as they see fit (*input-based curricula design and development*) rather than on what the outcome of the study programme should be. The latter should be determined based on employment market needs (*outcome-based curricula design and development*). This is the thinking behind Outcome-Based Education and Student-Centered Learning (OBE-SCL)²¹² which is aimed at aligning education with the demands of the workplace, and at the same time developing a whole array of cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Further, in designing and evaluating programme and course curricula maps, national guidelines such as Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF), Subject Benchmark Statements (SBSs), OBE-SCL pedagogical techniques, and learning taxonomies for facilitating the hierarchical development of cognitive skills are not fully complied with. Though this approach has been prescribed by the UGC and QAC since early 2000, as the recommended methods of curricula design, delivery and evaluation, it appears that many study programmes, particularly arts, humanities, management, science, etc., are yet to adopt it fully. To facilitate such adoption, the SLQF has been updated, and the SLQF generic qualification descriptors and level descriptors have also been prescribed. Despite providing extensive training and technical inputs on the design and development of undergraduate curricula, adopting the OBE-SCL approach through three World Bank projects (*IRQUE, HETC, and AHEAD Projects*), the uptake of new educational technologies by the academic staff has not been very encouraging.

1.4.2.2. Curriculum flexibility

Traditionally, almost all curricula of study programmes in universities, both in professional and non-professional fields of study, are very rigid and loaded with face-to-face teaching-learning exercises that run from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm, Monday through Friday, on a 15-week per semester basis. Moreover, the curricula layouts have been designed without giving any consideration to allow inter-faculty collaboration in academic offerings. In this system, very few options are given for interfaculty teaching, and hence hardly any opportunity is given for students while reading for the major, to choose courses from a wide spectrum of minor or optional/complementary subjects, based on their preferences. Many studies have demonstrated that students' experiences in BA and BSc degree programmes found that the flexibility of curriculum structure can play a crucial role in students' progression and success at the workplace²¹³.

1.4.2.3. Curriculum content

It is widely accepted that young school children passionately aspire and fiercely compete for university education to secure a marketable qualification and seek upward social mobility. Unfortunately, in Sri Lanka, as is the case with many other developing countries, though the enrolment is rather limited, the unemployment among graduates has historically been high, and this is more visible among graduates of arts, humanities, and management, and to some extent in science graduates²¹⁴. It is also widely acknowledged that the graduates face this problem not because of

212. Ponnampereuma, G., Nawaratne, S. & Nanayakkara, V. (2014). *A handbook on 'Outcome-based education using student-centred learning'*. HETC Project, Ministry of Higher Education.

213. Case, J. M., Marshall, D., McKenna, S. & Mogashana, D. (2018). *Going to University: The influence of higher education on the lives of young South Africans (Vol 3)*. African Minds.

214. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

their making but because of the mismatch of what they have been taught and acquired during undergraduate studies with what the prospective employers expect. As stated elsewhere, the curricula of most of the study programmes, particularly arts, humanities, and science streams overemphasize the knowledge component with less emphasis on employability skills²¹⁵. They are offered rigid curricula which are overloaded with advanced knowledge of traditional subjects that they have had the foundation at senior secondary and collegiate levels. Further, the student training is being compartmentalized within their respective faculties/departments, and no flexibility is offered to move across faculties/departments to choose from courses/modules from other departments/faculties to complement their undergraduate studies.

1.4.2.4. Employability and entrepreneurial skills

Employers look for graduates with core competencies of a chosen discipline along with a wide array of psychosocial skills or soft skills including entrepreneurial skills, communication skills, positive outlook and initiative, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, ability to work independently, willingness to learn, ability to work under pressure, etc. This situation is still worse with external degree programmes offered by conventional universities where the majority of study programmes are in arts, humanities, and management²¹⁶. These employability and entrepreneurial skills cannot be inculcated only by giving a standalone course on soft skills but through the core and supplementary courses which have built-in teaching-learning contents that facilitate the acquisition of soft skills. Unfortunately, many study programmes continuously show resistance to incorporating employability and entrepreneurial skill components into their programme and course curricula, despite the promotion of these skills through government-arranged three World Bank-funded projects (*IRQUE, HETC & AHEAD Projects*). Although the learning opportunities to acquire ‘non-cognitive skills’ have been significantly increased, the availability of built-in courses to promote such skills – for example, English, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), career guidance, etc. – is still limited²¹⁷.

1.4.2.5. Teaching-learning

Most study programmes and many academics still are heavily relying on conventional pedagogical approach; top-down approach where the teacher controls teaching-learning with heavy reliance on very conventional, face-to-face, classroom instructions, coupled with practical classes and occasional tutorials. These sessions are aimed at imparting all that the student ought to “know” (*as opposed to “do”*), and students are treated as passive learners. This teacher-centric approach is the most prevalent practice in most universities despite being advocated to treat undergraduates as adult learners who like to be independent in learning and like to apply their learning experience to the practice. The students are task-oriented and like to be involved actively in problem-solving activities. They also show an interest in learning what is useful in their life. Therefore, as emphasized by NEC Policy on Higher Education (2019), the university teaching-learning methods should be more aligned with adult-focused teaching approaches (andragogy) that rely more on independent, self-directed, and/or cooperative learning than child-like teaching-learning approaches (pedagogy).

1.4.2.6. Application of ICT-based tools and techniques for teaching-learning

Despite promoting blended teaching-learning over the past two decades with heavy investment through World Bank-funded IRQUE, HETC, and AHEAD Projects, the diffusion of modern, technology-enhanced teaching-learning modalities to the academic community and students has been extremely low up until the emergence of the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic. In response to this crisis, all universities and HEIs have attempted to

215. Aturupane, H., Millot, B., Wang, L., Allak, M., Chandrasiri, S., Fielden, J., ... Sonnadara, U. (2009). *The towers of learning: Performance, peril and promise of higher education in Sri Lanka*. World Bank.

216. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

217. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education*.

commence activities online using the respective Learning Management Systems (LMS), which have been installed in the individual universities²¹⁸. As a result, the use of LMS platforms, such as Moodle together with real-time online platforms, has become widespread. However, the extent of the use of online platforms has significantly varied among universities, faculties, academic programmes, and subjects due to various reasons. According to a survey conducted by LEARN²¹⁹, covering all HEIs including universities, all universities except two have used LMS to impart learning through online modes to varying extents; about 34% of HEIs have 80% or more courses in LMS, 40% of HEIs have 40-60% courses online on LMS, and the balance 20% have less than 40% courses online. Many teachers despite restricted ICT infrastructure facilities have taken up the challenge to deliver face-to-face teaching-learning activities using online technologies. There have been instances where some conventional universities delivered the entire planned teaching load through the online mode except the essential practical work. However, some teachers, even with the availability of adequate facilities, have not integrated online teaching-learning practices due to various reasons, including the belief that online delivery of courses is less effective than physical face-to-face teaching. Many teachers have difficulties in starting online teaching since they had not integrated ICT-based teaching-learning activities into their course syllabi and lesson plans. Hence, significant efforts in course content restructuring and teaching material development have to be made to make them suitable for online delivery and to avoid copyright issues. However, it was heartening to note that most students, irrespective of the language of delivery, and the type of academic programme, including the students in Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities, have shown great enthusiasm and interest to engage in online learning.

Nonetheless, the LEARN survey has reported many of the shortcomings that hinder the widespread application of modern educational technologies. The online platforms incur some additional costs to universities/HEIs and students. Many teachers have found, that synchronized online teaching, as an alternative approach to face-to-face is difficult to be implemented due to a multitude of problems such as frequent disruption of internet connection and congestions in the network, limitations of institutional ICT infrastructure and bandwidth, lack of technical support, etc.

This survey has also found that nearly 50% of the students do not have access to a device (*laptops or desktops*) to log in to LMS or other platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Although the number of students having smartphones is much higher (*almost 90%*), getting access and following a course on LMS through a smartphone, is challenging and tiresome, and moreover, it does not provide the same learning experience as with a personal computer. Further, a considerable number of students have complained about the lack of good connectivity, lack of data, electricity failures, and safety issues during heavy rains, lightning, and thunder.

1.4.2.7. Assessments

The assessment system in universities is one of the least modernized areas in higher education in Sri Lanka. Though there has been some improvement of assessments with the introduction of credit-based, course unit, and GPA grading system and semester-based academic programmes where both formative and summative assessments have been built into each course unit, many programmes are yet to internalize best practices to ensure the alignment of assessment tasks of formative and summative assessment with the course learning outcomes (CLOs) and programme learning outcomes (PLOs). Measures for ensuring validity and reliability of assessments such as assessment blueprinting, assessment rubrics, and post-exam item analysis are almost non-existent within the Sri Lankan higher education system. Further, the most commonly used assessment tools employed in these assessments are quizzes, multiple-choice questions, short-essay and long-essay type questions that are suitable to assess lower-order competencies. In framing assessment questions and tasks, Bloom's Taxonomy is rarely employed. Moreover, very few courses/programmes employ performance-based or authentic assessments in which the students are tested on their ability to perform real-world tasks and apply higher-order thinking and skills.

218. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-imaging education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports*.

219. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-imaging education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports*.

1.4.2.8. Use of ICT platform for assessments

As stated elsewhere, despite promoting the use of the LMS platform for teaching-learning and assessments, the application of online assessments by the academic community has been extremely low²²⁰. Though it has been adopted by some faculties/ departments/ academic staff for continuous assessments where LMS is well established, many appear to be having less faith in the online administration of examinations. Also, few attempts have been made to conduct summative or end-semester examinations online due to several constraints including its validity and acceptance according to university examination by-laws. The issues stated previously under online teaching-learning such as frequent disruption of internet connection, congestions in the network, limitations of institutional ICT infrastructure and bandwidth, lack of technical support, etc., are equally applicable in the conduct of online assessments as well.

1.4.2.9. External degree programmes

The external degree programmes (EDPs) are one of the major challenges for the universities and the Government. Though this avenue is essential to provide access to those who could not enter the internal compartment of universities, it is widely recognized that the quality EDPs has continued to remain substandard. EDP students are formally enrolled in public universities, of which three (*Peradeniya, Sri Jayewardenepura, and Kelaniya*) are responsible for 82% of the enrolment²²¹ and 75% of the graduates²²³. Further, most of these programmes are in arts and humanities. According to the UGC, in the year 2019, a total of 14,761 were registered for external degrees programmes, and of them, 8,542 were for arts and humanities, 1,704 for management, 3,053 for IT, 1,063 for Commerce, 227 for agriculture, and 122 for science²²³. However, the universities give little support or academic guidance to these students, and therefore, they are compelled to rely heavily on self-studies or external training institutions (ETIs). Tutorial classes are either non-existent or of poor quality. The degree-awarding universities render only administrative services, which consist mainly of the registration and conduct of examinations. Revenue from examination fees seems to be the main reason for universities to accept, and for a few of them, even to welcome the EDP students.

As an attempt to reform the EDPs, the UGC in 2010 has set up a standing committee and issued a very comprehensive administrative circular²²² through which it initiated wide-ranging reforms such as, (a) limiting the number of enrolments to twice the number of internal enrolments, (b) reorganizing the structure and functions of EDP units/divisions as Centres for Open and Distance Learning, (c) introducing a QA system for EDPs, and (d) promoting greater collaboration between degree-awarding university and ETIs which provide training for EDPs. Further, World Bank/HETC Project in liaison with the UGC has developed two QA manuals –one for Quality Assurance of External Degree Programmes and Extension Courses offered by the State Universities²²³ and the Manual of Best Practices, Standards and Guidelines for External Training Institutions²²⁴. However, the envisaged reforms by the UGC Circular No, 932 of 2010 have not been fully implemented; for example, the limit imposed on the intake was relaxed subsequently, the formal partnership between the degree-awarding university and ETIs has not been sought, and the QA system has never been implemented by the UGC. As such, the lingering issues mentioned earlier are still prevalent in EDPs²²⁵.

220. Presidential Taskforce on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-imagining education in Sri Lanka, Vol II- Core group reports, Appendix 4.*

221. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Sri Lanka University Statistics.*

222. University Grants Commission. (2010). *Commission Circular No. 932: Policy framework and guidelines for offering external degrees and extension programmes by universities/ higher educational institutions/institutes.*

223. University Grants Commission. (2014). *Manual for quality assurance of external degree programmes and extension courses offered by universities.*

224. University Grants Commission. (2014). *Manual of best practices, standards and guidelines for external training institutions (State and Non-State).*

225. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options.* World Bank.

1.4.2.10. Postgraduate education, research and innovations

Postgraduate(PG) education, research and innovations go in hand in hand. As of 2020, all 15 State universities and 23 NSHEIs offer PG training, and the total output of postgraduate degrees in 2019 was estimated as 9,991²²⁶. However, most of these PG programmes, culminating in PG diplomas or master's level qualifications are offered through taught courses, on part-time basis, and mostly offered during weekends. Very few research degrees leading to MSc, MPhil, and PhD are offered at present. In addition, the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine offers a range of medical qualifications where the training consists of taught, clinical work, and research with a compulsory residency programme locally as well as in overseas clinical settings.

Postgraduate training through course work has become the most preferred and widespread mode with the establishment of Postgraduate Faculties and Postgraduate Institutes since the late 1970s. Most of the students entering these programmes are from the student pool who could not secure gainful employment. They resort to PG training as a fallback option and attend programmes on a part-time basis, usually during weekends. This system is also the most convenient operational mode for those who are already employed as they usually do not get study leave for such engagement. The other reason is that university academics in the State universities are not formally authorized to engage in postgraduate teaching during weekdays, as their primary mandate is to attend undergraduate training during weekdays. Nonetheless, the taught PG programmes are faced with many issues; most notably, it lacks the rigour of postgraduate training, and most programmes are oriented towards imparting knowledge with little or no attention to building scholarship, proficiency in academic and professional writing, and other professional skills.

Because of the popularity of taught PG programmes, research-based PG programmes have become less prevalent over the years. As of the UGC data, in 2019²²⁷, Sri Lankan universities had awarded only 359 PG research degrees (MPhils and PhDs), and this accounts only for 3.6% of total PG degrees offered. As such, there is a widespread concern over the failure of Sri Lankan universities to internalize a rich and self-sustaining research culture and scholarship. Several historical, structural, and institutional factors have been cited as reasons for this situation. Historically, Sri Lankan universities have not been fully research-oriented since the establishment of the University of Ceylon in 1942. Heavy emphasis placed on undergraduate education is considered as another reason. Some academics claim that they lack time to devote to research and supervision of graduate students. Another reason highlighted frequently is the scarcity of full-time PG students as the present-day MPhil and PhD candidates tend to behave as part-time candidates with limited time and opportunities to engage in research and knowledge generation on a regular basis. The scarcity of research funds and excessive bureaucracy in research fund management are also highlighted as other reasons for low research and innovation and low PG research degree output.

Thus, unlike in many countries where universities have become centres of excellence in research and scholarship, Sri Lankan universities with part-time postgraduate education continue to forsake their role in producing high-quality science and technology personnel and scholars, and in the generation of new knowledge and innovations. This is manifested even in the five older and more resourceful universities, namely, the Universities of Peradeniya, Colombo, Moratuwa, Kelaniya, and Jayewardenepura. They continue to preoccupy themselves with undergraduate education, without making inroads into becoming postgraduate research universities. Many factors appear to have contributed to this situation; the relative paucity of research funding, dearth of well qualified, research savvy academics, scarcity of modern laboratory facilities and equipment, absence of significant national and international collaboration, bureaucratic red tapes, and rigid financial regulations and auditing procedures, scarcity of access to research journals and research forums, low weightage is given for research and innovation in career promotion, etc. These factors could be considered both as causes and consequences of the prevalence of weak research and scholarship culture in Sri Lankan Universities.

226. University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka University Statistics.

227. University Grants Commission. (2019). Sri Lanka University Statistics.

1.4.2.11. Staff development

Recruitment of academic staff is made on the basis of the academic credentials of the prospective applicants and post-recruitment training too is focused on specialization on the assigned subjects/disciplines. Yet these academics' core function is teaching for which they have hardly received any formal training. Therefore, having recognized the value of continuing professional development of academics, the UGC since 2003²²⁸ has taken steps to establish Staff Development Centres (SDCs) in all universities. In addition, a major boost to strengthen the capacities of SDCs have been made in 2010 with the issue of UGC circular instructions²²⁹ and provision of additional funding coupled with technical assistance from the World Bank/HETC project.

However, the major focus of the staff development programmes offered by SDCs is offering the induction programme to newly recruited academics. This programme too has been designed to introduce academics into the university system, its rules and regulations, norms, and practices with some focus on lesson planning, teaching-learning, and assessment. In addition, these centres also offer in an ad-hoc manner short training programmes on topics of importance to academics. However, the extent of training provided at present is hardly sufficient to train academics to become proficient in application of modern educational technologies. Compared to academics, the non-academic executive staff hardly receive any formal induction programmes or continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. As a result, these officers have to depend on informal means such as learning from peers to learn about the job. Lack of orientation to the 'world of work' and absence of induction training to all university staff on rules, regulations, procedures, best practices, etc., have been identified as causes of sluggish and ineffective work cultures observed among administrative, managerial, and support staff.

The gradual decline of technical competencies and professionalism among the academic and non-academic staff including administrative staff of universities is an issue, which deserves urgent attention. The key feature in this crisis is the erosion of the traditional culture of intellectual integrity among academics and the lack of technical competency, professionalism, and integrity among non-academic staff. It appears that the task of inculcating professionalism and technical competencies into university academic, non-academic, executive, and technical staff cannot be achieved only through the SDCs of respective universities, where such centres are managed by part-time directors and resourced by trainers primarily drawn within their institutions. Most of them lack the competencies and experience to function as trainers. Therefore, the need for having a national-level institute for university staff development, in line with the Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration has long been felt.

1.4.2.12. Quality assurance in the State universities

It is widely perceived globally that quality assurance/management has a positive impact, particularly on the higher education institutions' attempts to become more efficient, effective, and client-oriented. In Sri Lanka, the quality assurance (QA) system in higher education was first introduced in early 2000, and an institutional mechanism for external quality assurance was established at the UGC by formally establishing the Quality Assurance Council of the UGC (UGC/QAC). Though there was heavy resistance in the early phase, the QA has now been well received by academia. The quality assurance system has been strengthened and streamlined with the introduction of the 2nd generation of Quality Assurance Manuals with WB-HETC project assistance in 2015. Two separate manuals have been introduced, one for Institutional review²³⁰ and the other for study programme review²³¹, where both manuals have given explicitly, the criteria, best practices, standards, and a scoring system with extensive guidelines on self-evaluation report preparation and also instructions for reviewers. With the introduction of new manuals, the external

228. University Grants Commission. (2003). *Commission Circular No. 820: Establishment of staff development units in universities.*

229. University Grants Commission. (2010). *Commission Circular No. 937: Strengthening of staff development programmes in universities and higher educational institutes.*

230.230 University Grants Commission. (2015). *Manual for institutional review of Sri Lankan universities and higher educational institutions.*

231. University Grants Commission. (2015). *Manual for review of undergraduate study programmes of Sri Lankan universities and higher educational institutions.*

quality assurance system has progressed steadily but internal quality assurance system within the HEIs is yet to take off in many universities despite the UGC issuing circular instructions with respect to establishing and operating an institutional framework for implementation of internal quality procedures²³². Therefore, determined and committed efforts are needed to consolidate and strengthen an internal quality assurance system and to internalize a “quality culture” in all spheres of university activities. Further, the QA system needs to be strengthened to proceed towards the accreditation of institutions/faculties and study programmes.

At present, the UGC/QA mechanism is concentrating exclusively on public universities/HEIs as it has no mandate to extend to NSHEIs. Nonetheless, there is a growing need to expand quality assurance and accreditation services to all Sri Lankan universities/HEIs, including NSHEIs, as has been done in most countries. Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia.

1.4.2.13. Quality of education in NSHEIs

The proliferation of NSHEIs has also been a key feature in the Sri Lankan higher education landscape that has taken place over the past two decades. These are operated as fee-levying, for-profit, business ventures, with the registration under the Registrar of Companies. According to the MoHE data²³³, there are 23 such NSHEIs that have obtained MoHE/UGC approval to offer 184 study programmes. Though the MoHE is required to review these NSHEIs, and the study programmes offered regularly, it is yet to establish an oversight mechanism to supervise the institutes and a quality assurance mechanism to assess the quality of their educational offerings. In addition to these, there exists a large number of NSHEIs, operating through cross-border arrangements, preparing students for degrees offered by overseas counterparts. As of current practice, they do not come under the purview of any local regulatory mechanism except their registration with BOI and Registrar of Companies.

Almost all these MoHE/UGC-approved NSHEIs do not have in-house academic staff. Most of them draw lecturers from the State universities to work for them on a visiting or part-time basis, mostly in the evenings and on the weekends as well as on holidays. The majority of other staff belong to temporary, advisory, visiting, and part-time categories, with a very small number belonging to the permanent staff category. Since these institutions are profit-oriented business ventures, they seem to be reluctant to recruit academic, administrative, and technical staff on a permanent basis.

There is also a concern about the quality of education provided by the NSHEIs. The government in 2019 attempted to introduce new legislation under the Bill on Quality Assurance, Equalization, and Qualification Framework to improve the quality of educational offerings by the State universities/HEIs, and NSHEIs. However, it was withdrawn subsequently owing to the protests from student groups and academics on various grounds. This ambivalent policy towards formalizing the quality assurance process for NSHEIs has led to uncertainty among the public about the quality and standards of educational programmes offered by these institutions.

There is also a lack of clarity about the processes and mechanisms for governance and management in NSHEIs. This is in contrast to what is operated in the State universities where there are strict rules and regulations, and guidelines with respect to governance and management, staff recruitment and promotions, admission process, academic development and planning (*such as SLQF framework, Subject Benchmark Statements, OBE-SCL approach, etc.*), approval of study programmes, teaching-learning and assessment processes and procedures, award of degrees, etc. As such, there is a need for greater regulation of NSHEIs with respect to governance and management, human and physical resources, and quality and standards of educational offerings.

232. University Grants Commission. (2015). Commission Circular No. 4/2015: Strengthening of internal quality assurance systems in universities and higher educational institutions through establishment of internal quality assurance units.

233. Ministry of Education. Retrieved May 9th 2021 from <https://www.mohe.gov.lk/>

1.4.3. Outputs and Outcomes of Higher Education

1.4.3.1. Graduation rates and delays

As of the UGC data²³⁴, in 2019, the State universities and HEIs had recorded a graduate output of 34,881, of whom 24,890 earned bachelor's degrees and 9991 earned postgraduate qualifications – diplomas, master's, or higher-level qualifications. Empirical evidence shows that most undergraduate study programmes extend over more than the stipulated time period. The main reasons for these long delays are the delays occurring in transition from one level of education to the next and disruptions in academic programmes due to frequent university closures, mostly resulting from student agitations, and also due to internal inefficiencies related to the conduct of examinations, marking of answer scripts, and processing of results. Together with the delays occurring at senior secondary school level – that is about half a year time lag between completion of G.C.E. (O/L) examination and commencement of G.C.E. (A/L) level programme and another about one-year time lag between the completion of G.C.E. (A/L) examination and commencement of university academic sessions for newcomers – the average age of graduates when they receive their first-degree is around 24 of years. Finally, a significant time also elapses between graduation results and convocation, adding another damaging delay, often of several months. These wastages are costly for students.

1.4.3.2. Learning outcomes

Learning assessments measure the extent to which universities/HEIs succeed in equipping students with the knowledge and skills they expect to receive. The deficiencies that are often flagged by the employers and authorities are the deficiencies in non-cognitive skills among graduates, including, (a) language proficiency and ICT-literacy, (b) desire and ability to learn, (c) interpersonal skills and other soft skills, and (d) initiative and a positive mindset. Though these deficiencies occur partly due to the shortcomings in general education, equipping the graduates with required cognitive and psychosocial skills is clearly a responsibility of universities. As such, universities are required to make determined efforts to reform the curricula along with their teaching-learning and assessment methods, so as to give more weight to imparting these skills. Also, it is very conceivable, in these efforts the ability of faculty members to transmit these skills matters enormously, and this is why pre-service and in-service training for academics is crucial to respond to the concerns of employers and better prepare university graduates for the labour market.

1.4.3.3. Labour market outcomes

Labour market outcomes as measured by employability studies and employers' feedback usually provide a proxy measure on how successful the university education is in meeting the labour market's needs. Sri Lanka, in global comparison²³⁵, has the highest proportion of graduates in humanities and social sciences (*ranking 1st*) while having one of the lowest proportions of graduates in science, engineering, and allied fields (*ranking 92nd*). It has been factually shown, graduates from the crowded humanities and social sciences fields have difficulties in finding gainful employment, and when they do, often end up in sectors only peripherally related to their fields of study, whereas the science, engineering and IT graduates, who are relatively few, have little difficulty in finding a job, and it usually corresponds to their discipline^{236,237}.

Graduate Employment Study conducted in Sri Lanka by the World Bank-HETC project in 2014, covering the graduating students when they turn up for their convocations (*usually after 3-9 months after the graduation*), revealed that 56%

234. University Grants Commission. (2019). *Sri Lanka University Statistics*.

235. Dunder, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shoji, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

236. IRQUE project report:

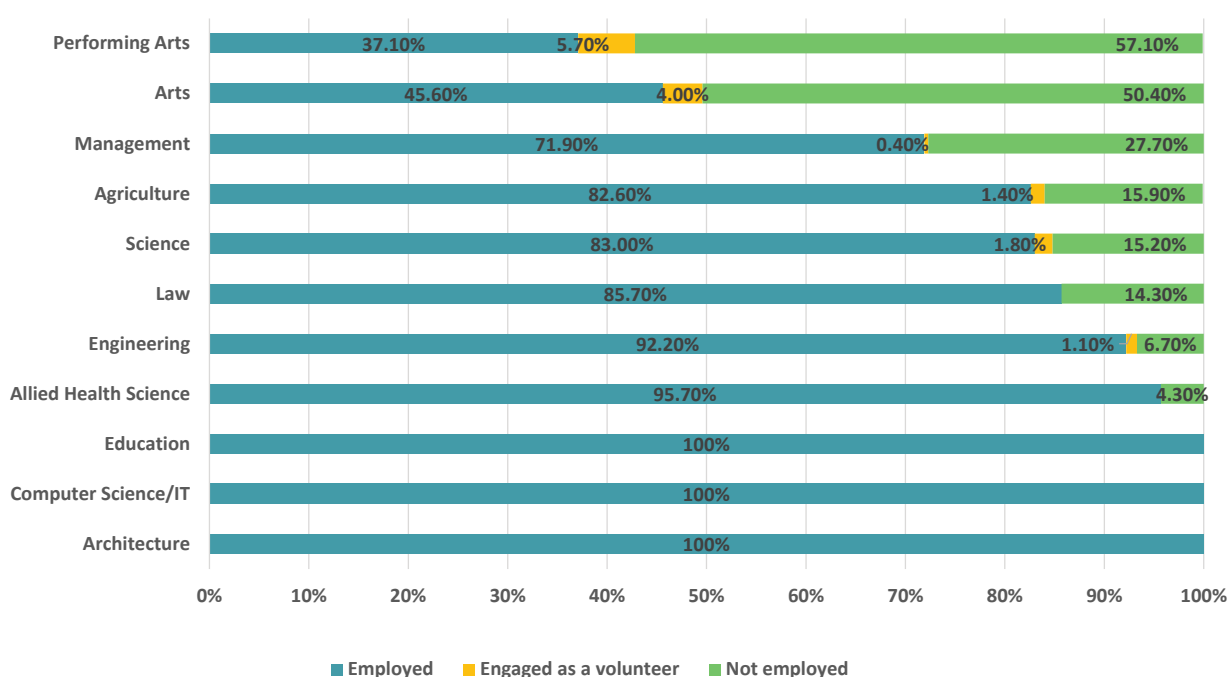
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/491051468113652573/pdf/ICR16590P0507416B01PUBLIC0317120111.pdf>

237. Gunaratne, P. S. M., Ramanayake, A., Panagoda, D. (2018). *Tracer Study of Graduates, Universities in Sri Lanka*. University Grants Commission.

of university graduates after their graduation were employed. However, the percentages varied widely by discipline – from 35% for arts to 97% for IT. The same study showed the outcome when the data were disaggregated into 3 months and 6 months after graduation. Three months after graduation, 58% of the IT graduates and 65% of the engineering graduates were employed, while only 13% of the arts and 20% of the management graduates were employed. Another three months (*i.e., six months after graduation*), the overall pattern was not changed, though the arts and management graduates improved their employment rates, it was only up to 20% for the former and 28% for the latter, while 62% of IT and 68% of engineering graduates had found jobs. In all cases, employment rates plateau after six months, which indicates that the chances of finding a job then begin to shrink and that the risk of long-term unemployment is real for many arts and management graduates.

Another study conducted by the UGC of Sri Lanka in the year 2017/18 (Figure 3) revealed a similar pattern with high unemployment rates among graduates of Arts, Performing Arts, and Management streams²³⁸. In contrast, moderately high employment rates were reported for graduates in Law, Agriculture, Science, Engineering, and Allied Health sciences streams, with full employment rates reported for graduates from IT, Architecture and Education fields.

Figure 3: Employment Status by the Academic Stream – the State Universities



Source: *Tracer Study of Graduates, Universities in Sri Lanka (2018, p. 16)*

1.4.3.4. Research and innovations

Research is essentially limited to State universities as State HEIs and NSHEIs concentrate their resources on teaching with hardly any investment in research. The high proportion of academic staff with doctoral-level training in State universities suggests that, in terms of human resources, at least in principle there is a solid research base in most universities. However, the intensity, quality, and applicability of research in State universities are uneven. The general impression is that except for some outstanding but isolated cases, not much research is being conducted in universities and HEIs. The most direct and obvious output of research is the publication of results, and the most reliable measure is the number of articles published in national and international, peer-reviewed scholarly journals. In 2014, Sri Lanka had 6 journals in the worldwide SCI database; while the Philippines had 22, Thailand 26, and Malaysia 50. The same database shows that between 2000 and 2013, Sri Lanka quadrupled the number of citable

²³⁸ Gunaratne, P. S. M., Ramanayake, A., Panagoda, D. (2018). *Tracer Study of Graduates, Universities in Sri Lanka*, University Grants Commission.

documents it produced. Yet during the same period, the country's rank regressed slightly, from 79th to 85th. More worrying is the number of citations plunged over the two years from 2014 to 2016, although the period is too short to allow definitive conclusions about the reason for this²³⁹.

However, in the South Asian context, as per the report published by Elsevier and the World Bank (2019)²⁴⁰, during the period of 2012 to 2016, South Asia's share in global scholarly output rose by 8% annually, reflecting a broad increase in publications among South Asian countries. In India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and the South Asia region as a whole, the number of scholarly publications relative to GDP exceeds the global average. Both Pakistan and Sri Lanka produce a large number of scholarly papers relative to their level of Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD), with Sri Lanka leading the region. Further, India, Sri Lanka, and the South Asia region publish more papers per researcher than the world average.

Though the research output in Sri Lanka, in terms of the number of publications, is relatively high in the South Asian context, the relevance of most of the research done continues to remain obscure; in most cases, research is exclusively academic; its results are rarely publicized outside the Sri Lankan university arena. Among the reasons for this non-alignment of research with real needs are, (a) lack of staff interest in applying research to the "real world", (b) dearth of information about possibilities for commercializing results, (c) failure to align research efforts with national and regional research priorities, (d) weak university-industry linkages, and (e) lack of interest and enthusiasm of government ministries and departments/institutions to disseminate the outcomes of university research. It appears that these factors operate in combination.

The number of patents submitted is often used to demonstrate how innovative the research is, and how its findings are brought to the outside world. The database of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) makes it possible to assess this number and compare Sri Lanka's performance with other economies. In 2013, Sri Lanka submitted about the same number of international patents as Vietnam and twice as many as Pakistan, but only a fifth as many as Malaysia. It ranked 56 out of 160 economies, the bottom of the first worldwide tier. Even though the number of Sri Lanka's patents received has increased six-fold since 2000, that is a slower pace than India (*7 fold*), Malaysia (*10 fold*), or Vietnam (*15 fold*). In relation to the size of the population, Sri Lanka's rank drops to 85th, with 22 patents per million inhabitants—well above Vietnam or Pakistan, but far behind Malaysia, Hong Kong or China²⁴¹.

1.4.3.5. Industry collaboration

Empirical evidence suggests that the link between industry and academia is almost at a very minimal level. Many reasons and explanations have often been presented in many forums. There is considerable debate on the causes and remedies; academics feel that the rigid university administrative and financial procedures, fear of audit queries, lack of time, etc., dampen their interest to embark on university-industry partnerships. On the other hand, employers perceive academics as lacking entrepreneurial spirit.

1.4.3.6. International ranking

Sri Lankan universities do not show up yet in any of the three most popular international rankings, namely, Times Higher Education (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). Reasons for the lower performances of Sri Lankan universities in international rankings are mainly due to the low output in research and innovations, the fewer number of articles published in high-ranking international journals (*such as*

239. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

240. Elsevier and World Bank (2019). *South Asia: Challenges and benefits of research collaboration in a diverse region*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/735021553593295199/pdf/South-Asia-Challenges-and-Benefits-of-Research-Collaboration-in-a-Diverse-Region.pdf>

241. Dundar, H., Millot, B., Riboud, M., Shojo, M., Aturupane, H., Goyal, S. & Raju, D. (2017). *Sri Lanka education sector assessment: Achievements, challenges, and policy options*. World Bank.

Nature and Science, or at least journals indexed with Science Citation Index-expanded, Social Science Citation Index, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index), and low international visibility because of the relative absence of international collaborations, staff, and student exchanges.

However, several Sri Lankan Universities are listed in Webometrics Ranking System²⁴², a ranking system for the world universities based on a composite indicator that takes into account both the volume of the Web content and the visibility, and the impact of these web publications according to the number of external views they received. It covers more than 30,000 HEIs, and Sri Lanka has 10 universities in the “top” 5,000, and within the “top” 500 of the South Asian Region, again trailing behind comparators in South and South-East Asia. Outcomes of these rankings, nonetheless, reveal that Sri Lankan universities have to go a long way to reach the ‘world-class’ university or ‘acclaimed’ university status.

1.5. Learning Environment, Student Support Services and Student Conduct and Discipline

1.5.1. Learning Environment

An inclusive learning environment in a university encompasses several elements: learning resource centres; academic/student counselling and mentoring services; career guidance and career counselling services; needy student support services; gender equity centres; student accommodation and cafeteria services; recreational facilities; health care services; etc. Most universities in Sri Lanka have indeed offer minimal level services in all these aspects. Nonetheless, all such services need further improvement in their efficacy and efficiency in service provisions.

Unlike in many other countries, education in public institutions cost students only minimally in terms of tuition fees. Most of the students receive financial assistance in the form of bursaries and “Mahapola” scholarships. Students also have access to highly subsidized hostel facilities and food at university canteens, although their atmosphere, quality and hygienic conditions have continuously remained very poor and substandard.

However, this minimalist welfare framework has been in crisis too, since it has not been able to ensure an environment with adequate quality of student life within all universities. This is mainly because the funding has not been in parallel with the rapid and continuous increase in the number of student enrolments as well as the expansion of the academic and non-academic staff. This has placed a severe burden on universities to provide physical and human resources to maintain a conducive learning environment expected from national universities. The existing infrastructure such as learning resource centres, housing, hostels, classrooms, lecture halls, laboratories, canteens, health care, cleaning facilities, and transport is indeed in need of refurbishment and expansion.

1.5.2. Counselling and Mentoring

Student counselling is an institutional service, as a part of learner support system in operation in universities to help, guide, and assist the students, particularly, the freshmen students to overcome their anxieties in an unfamiliar environment and adjust to a new life in the university, and assist those who are in need of assistance to overcome any difficulty, whether financial, psychological or educational, by working in concert with student welfare, health care, and career guidance services in operation within the university.

On the other hand, student mentoring is a one-to-one long-term relationship, informally established between a teacher and student, based on mutual trust, respect, openness, and willingness to share and learn. The mentor is expected to be a role model, a motivator, and a counsellor to the student. The mentor’s responsibilities include: helping the student to set long-term career goals and short-term learning objectives; helping the student understand the organizational culture; recommending and/or creating learning opportunities; transferring knowledge in areas such as communication, critical thinking, responsibility, flexibility, and teamwork; pointing out strengths and areas

242. *Ranking Web of Universities*. Retrieved May 9th 2021 from https://webometrics.info/en/current_edition

for further improvement; answering any questions; providing guidance on personal matters such as accommodation hunting for out-of-town students; and being available to support the student in an employment search after their studies are completed.

Though both services appear to be in operation in most universities, the two services lack consistency, continuity, and professionalism. In the absence of any directive from the regulatory agency, the UGC, there is so much variation in the organizational arrangements, resources, and practices, and in most instances, in the efficacy and efficiency of such services. One obvious deficiency is that the academics in Sri Lanka have not been given much training on both of these aspects except the introductory training session by the SDCs under the Induction Training Programme offered to newly recruited academic staff²⁴³.

1.5.3. Career Guidance and Career Counselling

Career guidance and career counselling services are two elements that came into effect in Sri Lankan universities since the late-1990s in response to growing unemployment among graduates and as a means of easing the mismatch of conventional university education and employment market. Career guidance refers to providing guidance to help students choose a job based on information on the job market, skills and preferences. On the other hand, career counselling is a long process of engagement with students that enables students to make informed decisions on future career expectations and chosen educational paths.

Though the importance of career guidance and career counselling services in university education was recognized as early as the late 1990s, the system is yet to get institutionalized and formalized across all universities, faculties, and study programmes. The first initiative came from the Presidential Task Force on University Education Reforms (1997), and universities were requested to initiate supplementary programmes to develop skills in undergraduates relevant to the employment market. New measures so designed included setting up career guidance units at universities, developing supplementary courses in areas such as English, computing and communication for appropriate skills development, making computer facilities accessible, and establishing student services centres at each university. Subsequently, the UGC took steps to further institutionalize the career guidance programme through two circulars: UGC Circular No. 819 of 2003 and UGC Circular No. 934 of 2010. The Circular No. 819 of 2003 instructed universities to establish Career Guidance Units to undertake activities in the relevant areas of career guidance, career counselling, career information, networking, work experience, graduate placement, etc., while the UGC Circular No. 934 of 2010 has further strengthened the career guidance services in universities. Along with this circular, UGC also established a Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling to coordinate and monitor the career guidance activities in all universities and advised the universities to initiate and implement a series of activities that includes, a) career counselling, b) career information services, c) networking, d) work experience through industrial placement programmes, e) graduate placement through internships programmes and f) integration of career guidance into undergraduate curricula. Unfortunately, these aspects have not been fully institutionalized yet, and the UGC Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling which is expected to drive these reforms has been inactive for several years now.

Despite the steps taken by the UGC to strengthen Career Guidance and Career Counselling Service in universities, except a very few universities and faculties, many are yet to institutionalize these two services. In general, except the professional-oriented study programmes such as medicine, engineering, dental science, veterinary science, agriculture, business management, etc., which have integrated industrial placement and /or internships within and after graduation as a part of the undergraduate curricula, many other faculties which accommodate the largest percentage of undergraduates such as Faculties of Science and Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences have given the least importance to establish and operate effective career guidance and counselling services. Most academics and students of these faculties lack interest and enthusiasm for career guidance and career counselling services. The absence of a clearly identifiable 'industry' for the programmes offered by these faculties is another major obstacle for

243. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education*.

introducing industrial placements and/or internship programmes. Another reason is the lack of access to ‘industry’ for career training opportunities as most universities are located outside the metropolis between the majority of undergraduates in faculties of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the urban private sector companies continues to be a barrier to operationalizing effective industrial placement and/or internship programme for undergraduate of such faculties²⁴⁴.

1.5.4. Student Life, Conduct and Discipline

The quality of student life in universities has deteriorated over the past few decades. While there has been a decline in the standards of physical facilities, the major cause of the erosion of overall conditions of learning environment, and quality of student life in Sri Lankan universities is the students’ indiscipline. It is manifested in many forms: aloofness; distancing from teachers; non-compliance with university rules and regulations; student politics covertly linked to national politics; and inhumane ‘ragging’ of freshmen students done under the disguise of ‘freshmen orientation’ for newcomers to campus sub-culture. This gradual erosion of student discipline and conduct has also dampened to some extent the enthusiasm of teaching staff in academic engagement. Despite continuous intervention by university authorities, the MoHE, and the UGC, the culture of violence seems to remain embedded into undergraduate life so strongly. This menace has to be eliminated by any means to restore the learning environment in universities conducive for academic pursuits, research and innovations, critical thinking, intellectual discourses on socio-political-economic issues, and nurturing art, culture, and aesthetic pursuits.

1.6. Regulations, Governance, and Accountability

1.6.1. State University System

1.6.1.1. National level

Higher education is a central government function. In Sri Lanka the central government is responsible for national policy; financing for public HEIs; allocation of students and some categories of staff to universities; and quality assurance. The strongly centralized organization of the sector is ensured by the fact that, in addition to being monitored by a line ministry, it is *de facto* run by the UGC, whose chairman, vice chairman, and five other members are appointed by the President under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978.

Higher education in Sri Lanka is governed by the 40-year-old Act mentioned above, which was enacted when there were fewer than 20,000 students enrolled. University administration at the national level is characterized both by strong institutional autonomy and tight central control, and this arrangement promotes neither accountability nor performance. Central control exists on finances, admissions, recruitment of academic and administrative staff (*through administrative circulars*), and to some extent over academic and administrative matters. The coexistence of the Ministry and the UGC sometimes results in role confusion and a lack of clear lines of responsibility. Finally, the ill-defined way the private sector is treated from regulatory, financial, and QA perspectives has constrained its development, though its contribution to the expansion of higher education has been well recognized.

1.6.1.2. Systemwide level

Higher education in Sri Lanka is a mosaic of institutions that differ in status, mission, age, quality, size, and student body. The Ministry in-charge of Higher Education “manages” 17 State universities, 20 institutes, and 18 Advanced Technical Institutes (that come under the SLIATE). Other ministries control a few other public degree-awarding institutions (such as Kothalawala Defence University, Ocean University, University of Vocational Technology, National Institute of Education, etc.).

244. National Education Commission. (2019). *National Policy Proposals on Higher Education*.

Sri Lanka's higher education system follows the traditional Commonwealth Model; regulated by a buffer body placed between the Ministry in-charge of Higher Education and Universities. In South Asia, for instance, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, and Bangladesh all have a Higher Education Commission or a UGC. These commissions, which allocate funds to universities/HEIs, are largely responsible for prescribing regulations covering most aspects of universities - governance and management, academic matters, and student welfare.

1.6.1.3. Institution level

Sri Lankan universities have adopted the classic British Commonwealth Governance Structure, consisting of a University Council, a Senate (*Academic Syndicate*), and Faculty Boards. The Vice-Chancellor (VC) who is accountable to the University Council is the chief executive officer responsible for overall administrative and academic management. The Registrar is responsible for general administration, under the direction of the VC. The Council, which is the governing authority of the university, varies in size depending on the number of Faculties. The President of Sri Lanka appoints the Vice-Chancellor from three nominees recommended by the Council. The UGC appoints a majority of Council members and all categories of executive staff (*except the Registrar, Bursar and a few other posts*). Besides that, the UGC exerts control over most of the establishments and developmental matters related to staff, academic and academic-related matters such as the creation of new staff cadre, the establishment of new faculties/ departments/ centres/ units, commencement of new study programmes, and even revisions of curricula of existing study programmes require the approval of the UGC.

The administration and management of the university are primarily vested with the Vice-Chancellor under the purview of the Council. Most universities adopt a very conventional *laissez-faire* approach and very few have resorted to the strategic management approach. Nonetheless, most universities, on annual basis prepare their own business plans, but these often lack operational plans and are rarely costed and implemented as planned, and most instances not monitored. Though, in theory, as noted, Sri Lankan public universities have a high degree of autonomy, the regulatory controls, and various encroachments seriously limit this autonomy. On the other hand, many Universities appear to be reluctant to take decisions, and unnecessarily refer many matters to the UGC for clarifications and rulings, thus making the granted autonomy redundant.

Although the above-mentioned limitations infringe on their managerial freedom, it is also true that some universities do not make full use of the autonomy granted to them, particularly in the financial area. It has been reported, for instance, that universities do not always exercise the right to earn funds through income-generating activities and use the generated funds for their development. Apparently, excessive bureaucracy including auditing issues sometimes reduces the appetite of universities to fully embrace autonomy. Therefore, it is very conceivable that substantial efforts are needed to ramp up university management capacity that is needed to allow autonomy to be utilized fully.

Besides the above-mentioned limitations, the radicalization of students influenced by external politics, trade union actions, and political interference in some instances, have also strained the internal governance and management of universities. In addition, within universities themselves, there is often an unhealthy divide between administrative and academic staff and also among faculties that limit the synergy between the key players required for the smooth functioning of universities. In addition, internal governance and management have also been undermined by administrators who lack management experience, coupled with archaic, inefficient and bureaucratic procedures, and poor information systems.

1.6.2. Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE)

The Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) was formed in 1995, under the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education Act No. 29 of 1995. In 2001, the name of the institution was amended as Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE). SLIATE is currently governed by a Council, chaired

by the Secretary of the Ministry in-charge of Higher education, which oversees the function of ATIs, and determines their admissions policies, programme offerings, programme content and course structure, academic staff workload, and other academic management matters. As ATIs are overseen by the Ministry in-charge of Higher Education, they clearly have less autonomy than universities overseen by UGC. Besides that, this arrangement does not favour the expansion of the sub-sector and the improvement of academic standards of its offerings.

1.6.3. Non-State Higher Education Institutions

There exists an ambiguity about the legal framework of registration and oversight for non-State higher education institutions (NSHEIs) for the provision of educational opportunities on a fee-levying basis. As a result, there is a great variation in legal forms in which the NSHEIs have been registered and/or operated.

Besides that, there is also a lack of clarity about the processes and mechanisms for governance and management of the institution and managing the quality of education in NSHEIs. This is in contrast to what is operated in the State universities and HEIs where there are strict rules and regulations, guidelines with respect to governance and management of such institutions. There is also a general tendency among NSHEIs which make exaggerated and even misleading claims about the quality and standards of the study programmes, facilities and learner support services offered, and even about student achievements. Making such claims is a widespread practice in marketing campaigns and advertising for student recruitment. Such advertising campaigns also make higher education a commodity on offer to be purchased.

1.7. Conclusion

It is well conceived that Sri Lanka lags behind the group of upper-middle-income countries that she aspires to join, in terms of financing, access, and quality and relevance of higher educational offerings. Addressing these three key issues to reach the desired objectives requires a series of synchronized actions and reforms in all aspects of higher education: financial support, accessibility to diverse study programmes, human and physical resources, types of academic programmes, curricula, contents, teaching-learning and assessment methods, learner support services, quality assurance and accreditation, regulations, and governance and management. Moreover, to advance as a middle-income country, Sri Lanka is also required to acquire and use advanced technologies to enhance its productivity and efficiency, and also to generate a continuous stream of research and innovations. Furthermore, to reap the full benefit of universities, frequent disruptions occurring in universities resulting from disruptive activities of students and trade unions need to be curtailed.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

As stated with other sections, the policy proposal and recommended strategies are formulated in accordance with higher education sector-specific 11 core areas and accompanying directive principles as elaborated in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030).

These 11 core areas include: i) Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness; ii) Academic Calendar, Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes; iii) Teaching-Learning Process and Assessments; iv) Learners and Learning Environment and Learners' Welfare; v) Benchmarking and Quality Assurance; vi) Research and Innovations, Technology Transfer, and Nurturing of Art and Culture; vii) Personality Development, Civic Consciousness, Patriotism, Employability and Entrepreneurial Skills; viii) Financing Higher Education; ix) Quality of Human Resources; x) Quality of Physical Resources, and xi) Regulation, and Governance and Management.

This approach is taken, as stated previously, to ensure the policy planning process gives comprehensive coverage across all core areas and elements while giving due consideration to issues and gaps highlighted in the Status Review that impede the progressive developments of the higher education sector.

Core Area – HE 1: Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness

Policy Context

Though Sri Lanka has achieved high literacy rates and human development indices, the youth participation in tertiary education is exceptionally low and it has stagnated in the range of 17.1% to 21.1% from 2012 to 2019. Participation in tertiary education by the 18-23-year age cohort, as measured by gross-enrolment rate (GER) in Sri Lanka is exceptionally low compared with the middle-income country standards. One of the major reasons for low participation is the failure of the State, the primary provider of higher education, to provide opportunities for higher education for those who leave the general education. As of UGC Statistics over the past 5 years, only around 20% of eligible students were admitted to these 15 conventional State universities. Another major reason is the low investment by the private sector in higher education coupled with the low public perception about the quality of private higher education, the inability of many families to bear the cost of private higher education, and uncertainties regarding employment prospects, particularly in the state sector following graduation. As a result, and as shown by the statistics, only about 5% of the eligible students appear to seek admission to NSHEIs. This is much lower than the figures reported by comparator countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Chile, etc. With these statistics, Sri Lanka falls into the group of countries, which combine low private participation and a low higher education GER.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The state assumes the responsibility of creating opportunities for those who are eligible to have access to higher education.
- DP 2: The State promotes the non-State education sector to operate in parallel with the state sector of education.
- DP 3: The State assures equity and inclusion in education where need-based support is made available to all students to thrive within the education system, regardless of gender, race, religion, social status, geographical location, or disabilities.
- DP 4: The State assures the opportunities for all eligible students, regardless of any challenges they may have, to pursue higher education and receive instructions, and provides interventions, and assistance that enables them to meet success in higher education.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 1.1: Broaden and expand access to higher education in national universities while ensuring equity and inclusiveness

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC together with universities shall take steps to increase intake of students into the State universities annually at the rate of 5%, particularly for those programmes which show high employability.
- The UGC shall encourage and facilitate the established universities – Universities of Colombo, Peradeniya,

Sri Jayawardenapura, and Kelaniya - to establish campuses in respective catchment areas (in main cities of districts closer to the main campus) devoted primarily for undergraduate education.

- The UGC and the Open University of Sri Lanka shall take steps to expand the coverage and services of open and distance modes of learning with further strengthening of physical and human resources and the capacity of regional centres and study centres, along with the adoption of modern teaching-learning and assessment tools and techniques.
- The UGC and universities shall take steps to expedite ongoing reforms to streamline External Degree Programmes (EDPs) – that include the improvement of operational aspects of Centres of Open and Distance Learning, limiting the intake to twice the number of internal intakes, revising and updating study programme curricula in a regular manner, application of ICT-based tools and adopting on-line delivery, initiating a quality assurance system and formalizing partnerships with external training institutions that provide instruction classes for students of EDPs offered by the State universities.
- The NEC together with the UGC shall take steps to review the current university admission policy and amend the policy to ensure meritocracy is the prime criteria while giving due consideration to equity, and inclusiveness.
- The NEC together with the UGC shall take steps to review and revise the university admission process and practices to implement appropriate measures to reduce the time gaps between G.C.E. (A/L) examinations and the release of results and Z scores, and the release of cut-off marks and selection of students and commencement academic programmes for new entrants.
- The UGC together with universities shall take steps to fully implement the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) to facilitate horizontal and vertical mobility of students between programmes within as well as among the State universities and HEIs.

Policy-HE 1.2:

Strengthen and expand access to job-oriented advanced technical education and training programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to reform the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) and upgrade the SLIATE to a Degree-Awarding Institute (DAI) status, thus providing opportunities for SLIATE entrants to read for the higher national diploma with the option to read for a top-up degree.
- The SLIATE shall take steps to improve the quality and relevance of study programmes through curricula reforms by adopting SLQF and outcome-based, student-centered teaching-learning approach with a concurrent increase in student admission on an annual basis into technical and job-oriented education programmes.
- The MoE shall seek international donor assistance to upgrade the competencies of academic staff and physical resources of SLIATE and its ATI network.
- The MoE together with the State Ministry of Skills Development to take steps to promote vocational and technical education as an attractive socially recognized alternative tertiary educational pathway by expanding the scope, relevance, and depth of training provisions and providing opportunities to earn degrees through UNIVOTEC and its network of University Colleges (*this will also be addressed under the*

Volume IV: Policy Proposal and Recommended Strategic Activities on TVET).

- The MoE together with the State Ministry of Skills Development to take steps to upgrade selected Colleges of Technology functioning under the Department of Technical Education to Polytechnic Institutes (*under the City University concept*) with emphasis on providing upward mobility for NVQ qualifiers in the vocational education system (*this is also addressed under the Volume IV: Policy Proposal and Recommended Strategic Activities on TVET*).

Policy-HE 1.3:

Expand Bachelor's degree level training opportunities in disciplines with high employability so as to produce a professional workforce for emerging local and international job markets

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the UGC shall make a policy decision that future expansion of enrolment in the State and non-State HEIs shall be focused mainly on the STEM (*science, technology, engineering and mathematics*) study programmes.
- The MoE together with the UGC and relevant Ministries shall take steps through legislative enactments to establish special purpose universities for emerging areas of importance that are experiencing growing demand in national and international job-markets: e.g. indigenous medicine, paramedical sciences, sports sciences and teacher education with a special admission scheme that provides the provision for lateral entry and exists.
- The MoE together with the UGC and special-purpose universities shall take steps to establish and operate public-public and public-private partnerships for arranging apprenticeship training opportunities for undergraduates of special-purpose universities.

Policy-HE 1.4:

Promote and regulate private sector participation in higher education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the UGC shall take steps to amend the existing Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to establish regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms operated under the purview of UGC to regulate and monitor non-State higher education institutions (*This aspect is comprehensively dealt with under the Core Area 11: Regulation, and Governance and Management*).
- The State shall continue the provision of financial assistance as concessionary loans for qualified students to seek higher education in MoHE/UGC recognized State and non-State Degree-Awarding Institutes.

Core Area – HE 2: Academic Calendar, Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes

Policy Context

Though the Sri Lankan higher education system has adopted a 15-week, 2-semester academic year, any given academic year runs throughout a 12-month period, or even longer. Though technically there is an additional 12-15 weeks period available for supplementary teaching-learning activities, it is not meaningfully and productively used by universities. This additional period of 12-15 weeks, could certainly be used by universities to have a short semester of 12 weeks within the annual academic calendar which could be used by students to engage in student research projects, internships/apprentice training in the 'world of work' to acquire work experience, and/or engage in community/volunteer services and other organized activities. Academics could use this extra space to focus on research and consultancy work. This window of 12 weeks would also allow universities to focus on short courses for the general public including for their own undergraduates. Moreover, the academic calendars of study programmes in faculties of a given university, and also among universities are not synchronized causing hardships for students, academic and non-academic staff, and also for university administration and facility management as well.

As highlighted by many national and international reviews, quality and relevance of study programmes offered by the State universities and HEIs need greater improvements. This is more urgent for degree programmes in arts, humanities, and management, and to some extent in science as well. It is also widely acknowledged that the graduates of these programmes face this problem not because of their making but because of the mismatch of what they have been taught and acquired during undergraduate studies with what the prospective employers expect. As stated elsewhere, the curricula of most of the study programmes, particularly arts, humanities, and science streams overemphasize the knowledge component with less emphasis on employability skills. They are offered stereotype and traditional study programmes with rigid curricula that are focused more on advanced learning of traditional subjects. Further, they are being compartmentalized within their respective faculties/departments, and no flexibility is offered to move across faculties/departments to choose from courses/modules from other departments/faculties to complement their core undergraduate studies. Besides that, it is claimed that almost all types of graduates lack psycho-social or soft skills which are of paramount importance in securing gainful employment and also to succeed at the workplace.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: University education must pave the way for every individual to reach the full potential to make him/her productively employable in the 'world of work'.
- DP 2: Curricula of undergraduate level education must offer outcome-based, constructively aligned, multidisciplinary, integrated, and holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, humanities, management, and sports and health sciences, in order to impart a wide range of competencies in undergraduates those that are required for them to succeed in the dynamic and competitive world.
- DP 3: Undergraduate curriculum design must allow sufficient choice for students to customize their study programmes by offering cross-disciplinary and cross-faculty courses according to their preferences and employment market trends.
- DP 4: Flexibility in higher learning must be ensured by offering multiple entry and exit pathways so as to promote lifelong learning and continuing professional advancement.

DP 5: All undergraduate curricula should undergo continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation, and based on the results of these monitoring and evaluation processes, the curricula should undergo modification to suit the intended purposes and national requirements.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 2.1: Academic calendar, and programme and course curricula must be aimed at facilitating the acquisition of higher-order cognitive and non-cognitive skills that are aligned with the needs of the 'world of work'

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC and universities shall take steps to re-structure and synchronize the academic year in the following manner: Semester I = 15 weeks of classes + 4 weeks of study leave and examination, Semester break = 2 weeks, Semester II = 15 weeks of classes + 4 weeks of study leave and examination, a short semester of 12 weeks duration ($52 - (19 + 2 + 19) = 12$) within the annual calendar that could be used for student-centered learning activities such as 'industrial training', student research projects, and community/volunteer services.
- The UGC and universities shall take steps to expedite the ongoing curricular reforms of all study programmes by adopting outcome-based education and student-centered teaching-learning and assessment approach and integrating non-cognitive skills development into curricula of all disciplines and specialities.
- The UGC through circular instructions shall ensure that all universities/faculties adopt curricula that consist of a core programme and supplementary/optional programme/courses in order to encourage the students to sign up for cross-faculty and cross-disciplinary course offerings of their choice.
- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue circular instructions and guidelines for all universities/faculties to include compulsory student research project of at least 6 credits and an externship/industrial training component with a minimum of 15 credits into the curricula of all study programmes, so as to facilitate undergraduates to engage in inquiry or problem-based learning in the 'world of work' in a practical way.
- The UGC and all universities shall take steps to allocate required funds to faculties/departments to facilitate the implementation of student research projects and compulsory externship/industrial training components.

Policy-HE 2.2: Curricula of all study programmes must allow sufficient flexibility for students to customize a study programme by selecting supplementary/optional courses from a "multidisciplinary basket of non-core courses" to suit his/her choice for promoting employability in the "world of work"

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue circular instructions and guidelines for all universities/faculties to offer foundation and advanced courses in disciplines/subjects as supplementary programmes/courses that would widen the competency profile of undergraduates and allow students of any discipline/faculty to sign up and follow such courses.

- The UGC through circular instructions shall take steps to ensure all universities establish a central mechanism for fixing and coordinating synchronized academic calendar across faculties/study programmes, timetable setting, allocation of lecture/practical venues, and an inter-faculty credit transfer system.

Policy-HE 2.3:

All curricula must be reviewed and reformed at periodic intervals

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to issue circular instructions and guidelines to all universities to establish Curriculum Development Committees in each Faculty and Senate Curriculum Development/Academic Development and Planning Committee with representations from Faculty-level Curriculum Development Committees to facilitate the periodic review and monitoring, and updating of study programme curricula at periodic intervals.
- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue circular instructions and guidelines on curriculum development and revision, and strictly monitor the implementation of the prescribed guidelines across all universities and faculties through the respective UGC Standing Committees and the quality assurance system.
- The UGC through its Standing Committee on Staff Development to review and expand the scope and duration of the current Induction Training Programme offered to new recruits into the academic staff so as to ensure all academic staff members are provided with an extended in-service training programme on curriculum development along with modern teaching and training and assessment methods.

Policy-HE 2.4:

Undergraduate students must be given opportunities to acquire supplementary qualifications at a nominal fee while reading for their core study programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC through circular instructions shall take steps to ensure all universities offer opportunities at a concessionary fee for all undergraduates to acquire a supplementary qualification at Certificate or Diploma level in a chosen speciality such as IT, English, Business Management, etc. while reading for their respective undergraduate study programmes.
- All universities shall take steps to strengthen the existing Centres of Open and Distance Education to coordinate the above-mentioned activity.

Core Area – HE 3: Teaching-learning process and assessments

Policy Context

Most study programmes and many academics continue to rely heavily on conventional pedagogical approach; top-down approach where the teacher controls teaching-learning with heavy reliance on very conventional, face-to-face, classroom instructions, coupled with practical classes and occasional tutorials. This outdated practice has to be changed to align more with adult-focused teaching approaches (andragogy) that rely more on independent, self-directed, and/or cooperative learning. Further, the ICT platform and online Learning Management System (LMS), which have been installed in the individual universities and HEIs must be fully utilized to promote blended learning.

Though almost all universities and study programmes have adopted the credit-based, course unit system and GPA grading system with semester-based academic programmes and the academic calendar, the assessment system in universities is still one of the least modernized areas in higher education in Sri Lanka. The assessments, including both formative and summative assessments, in many programmes are yet to internalize best practices to ensure the constructive alignment of assessment tasks with the course/module and programme ILOs. Further, the most commonly used assessment tools employed in these assessments are quizzes, multiple-choice questions, short-essay and long-essay type questions that are suitable to assess lower-order competencies. In framing assessment questions and tasks, Bloom's Taxonomy is rarely employed. Moreover, very few programmes/courses employ performance-based or authentic assessments in which the students are tested on their ability to perform real-world tasks and apply higher-order thinking and skills to create a product or complete a task/process.

Up until the eruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, the use of online platforms (*via LMS*) by the academic community in universities for teaching-learning and assessments, in general, has been relatively low. Though LMS has been adopted by some faculties, departments, and academic staff for continuous assessments, many academics appear to still have less faith in the online administration of examinations. Moreover, not much attempt has been taken to conduct summative or end-semester examinations online due to several constraints including those impediments posed by the current examination by-laws. Further, the application of online teaching-learning and assessments has been hampered due to frequent disruptions of internet connection, congestions in the network, limitations of ICT infrastructure and bandwidth, lack of technical support, mobile data limitations, etc.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Teaching-learning process must emphasize conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-examinations.
- DP 2: Teaching-learning process shall embrace as much as possible learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods so as to promote experiential/authentic learning that enables the learner to construct her/his knowledge and skills through active participation in the learning process.
- DP 3: Curriculum delivery should adopt blended modes of teaching-learning with the extensive use of technology, along with the provision of adequate opportunities for hands-on learning and open-ended exploration using ICT applications.
- DP 4: Assessment and certification of students' achievement should be based on both formative and summative assessments that are designed to ensure validity and reliability.
- DP 5: All study programmes must adopt ICT-based, technology-enhanced teaching-learning and assessment

methods so as to promote the blended approach for teaching-learning-assessments as well as to build resilience to cope with unexpected disruptions such as what has been experienced with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 3.1: All universities and faculties must promote the adoption of learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods so as to promote experiential/ authentic learning that enables the learner to construct her/his knowledge and skills through active participation in the learning process

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC in liaison with the MoE and WB-AHEAD project (or with future project) shall take steps to establish a centralized human resource development facility called “National Institute of Staff Development for Higher Education” and take steps to train a core group of academics and executive staff officers drawn from universities as master trainers through local and overseas trainings.
- The UGC working in liaison with the Standing Committee on Staff Development shall conduct a rapid appraisal of SDC network and take steps to revamp the focus and strengthen its resource base and capacities.
- The UGC through circular instructions shall give directives and guidelines to all universities and faculties to take steps through respective Staff Development Centres to improve the knowledge and skills of academics on applications of modern educational technologies.
- The UGC through circular instructions shall issue directives and guidelines to all universities and faculties to adopt learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning and assessment methods for undergraduate training.

Policy-HE 3.2: Curriculum delivery should adopt the blended mode of teaching-learning with the extensive use of ICT-based technologies and applications

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities shall take steps to improve the knowledge and skills of academics on the application of ICT-based tools and application for delivery of lectures and conducting discussion classes and assessments
- All universities shall take steps to amend the existing examination by-laws and rules and regulations to allow the application of ICT-based tools for all forms of assessments and examinations.
- All universities shall take steps to improve ICT infrastructure and online learning platform/learning management system with the provision of technical backup services.
- The UGC shall take steps to allocate the required financial provisions to Lanka Education Research Network (LEARN), which is hosting the e-learning network, to upgrade its network capacity and functionality (*more specific recommendations are given under the Core Area - HE 10: Quality of Physical Resources*).

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities shall take steps to promote the adoption of both continuous/formative and summative assessments in student evaluations in accordance with the prescribed best practices.
- All universities shall take steps through appropriate staff development programmes to improve the competencies of the academic staff in the application of modern assessment principles, methods and tools, and techniques.
- All universities shall take steps to promote the adoption of modern psychometric practices such as test blueprinting, standard-setting, and post-exam item analysis into the assessment system.

Core Area – HE 4: Learners and Learner Support, Learning Environment, and Learners' Welfare

Policy Context

Most universities in Sri Lanka offer a modest learning environment with services in relation to learner support and welfare services. Nonetheless, all such services need further improvements in their capacity, efficacy, and efficiency in service provisions to ensure an inclusive learning environment that encompasses several elements: learning resource centres; academic/student counselling and mentoring services; career guidance and career counselling services; needy student support services; gender equity centres; student accommodation and cafeteria services; recreational facilities; health care services, etc.

The deficiencies in the learning environment and learner-support services have often been implicated as one of the major causes of the erosion of the quality of student life. Another reason for this wearing down of the quality of student life is the gradual escalation of students' indiscipline. As reported, it is manifested in many forms: aloofness; distancing from teachers; non-compliance with university rules and regulations; student politics covertly linked to national politics; and inhumane 'ragging' of freshmen students done under the disguise of 'freshmen orientation'.

This gradual erosion of student discipline and conduct, to some extent has also dampened the enthusiasm of teaching staff in academic engagement. Despite continuous intervention by university authorities, and the MoHE and UGC, the culture of non-compliance and violence seems to remain entrenched into undergraduate lives so strongly. This menace has to be eliminated by all means to restore the learning environment in universities conducive for academic pursuits, research and innovations, critical thinking, intellectual discourses on socio-political-economic issues, and nurturing art, culture, and aesthetic pursuits.

Directive Principles:

DP 1: Learners must be guided throughout the learning process.

DP 2: Learners must be educated about the options available in learning pathways and career opportunities.

- DP 3: Facilities and living conditions provided to students must be optimized so as to improve the quality of the life of students.
- DP 4: Student life in educational institutions must be made exciting and rewarding.
- DP 5: Students must be educated to become partners of institutional quality culture and empower them as a responsible stakeholder group in the internal quality assurance process.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 4.1: Guide the students through the academic and student counselling process to facilitate their smooth transition from school to university education and foster their academic, intellectual, and cultural pursuits

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC working through the relevant Standing Committees shall take steps to issue circular instructions and guidelines to ensure all universities have well established Student Welfare Unit, headed by a Director/ Welfare under the direct purview of the Vice-Chancellor/ Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- The UGC working through the relevant Standing Committees shall take steps to design and issue circular instructions and guidelines to ensure all universities have well established and resourceful academic counselling and mentoring services operating at the faculty level, and make the engagement in academic counselling and mentoring a part of academic service functions that every academic has to perform.
- All universities shall take steps to train academic staff on academic and student counselling, and mentoring through continuing professional development programmes offered by Staff Development Centres, and also through the National Institute of Staff Development (*to be established under the purview of the UGC; refer Core Area HE - 3: Teaching Learning Process Assessment; Policy HE-3.1 and Core Area HE-11: Regulation, Governance and Management; Policy HE- 11.1*).

Policy-HE 4.2: Empower students through career guidance and career counselling to make well-informed decisions concerning their education, prospective careers, and their future lives

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to reactivate the Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling to guide, foster, and monitor the career guidance and counselling services provided by universities and HEIs.
- The UGC, working through the Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling shall take steps to review the current status of career guidance and career counselling services offered in all universities and HEIs, and take decisive measures, through circular instructions to reform and upgrade the existing career guidance and counselling service as an academic support service in the following lines;
 - Allocate an adequate cadre with appropriate promotional prospects for those who are employed as career guidance instructors and counsellors, and

- Establish/strengthen the “Central Facility” in each university with a network of career guidance instructors and counsellors assigned to faculties.
- The UGC, in liaison with a suitable postgraduate institute or faculty shall take steps to introduce postgraduate level training programmes for the staff of the career guidance and counselling services to improve their competencies and career promotions.

Policy-HE 4.3:

Student harassment, gender violence, and inhuman ‘ragging’ must be condemned and eradicated from all universities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC through its Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Student Counselling shall take steps to broaden the scope of the induction programme/orientation programme offered to incoming freshmen students to include appropriate instructional and practical learning sessions to instil human values, mannerism, etiquette, ethics, and moral values and practices, and issue guidelines to all universities and HEIs for compliance.
- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue circular instructions and guidelines to all universities and HEIs to reorganize and strengthen the Student Welfare System, Marshal System, and Proctorial System in all universities and HEIs so as to eliminate any room and space for student harassment, gender violence, intimidation, or ragging.
- The UGC, together with all universities and HEIs shall take steps to prosecute the perpetrators through internal disciplinary procedures as well as through Courts of Law under the Ragging Act, No. 20 of 1998.

Core Area – HE 5: Benchmarking and Quality Assurance

Policy Context

Recognizing the positive impact of quality assurance in spheres of university activities, Sri Lankan universities coming under the purview of the UGC have embraced and taken steps to institutionalize the concept of quality and quality assurance system, commencing from early 2000. Over the past two decades, the quality assurance system covering the State universities coming under the UGC has made commendable progress. The external quality assurance mechanism manned by the UGC Quality Assurance Council (*UGC/QAC*) has been well established, and it is formally linked to the internal quality assurance mechanism of universities that is expected to be spearheaded by the internal quality assurance centres/units/cells at both the university and faculty/institute levels. Though the external quality assurance system has progressed steadily, the internal quality assurance system within universities is still in need of further improvements, and therefore, more determined and committed efforts are needed at university and faculty levels to internalize quality culture in all spheres of their activities. This system needs to be strengthened further to enhance the quality of all aspects of governance and management and academic provision thus bolstering the quality and standards of all universities/ faculties and study programmes to the extent that they could seek accreditations from local and global accrediting systems.

However, the UGC/ QAC mechanism has so far been primarily concentrating on the State universities coming under

the purview of the UGC as it has no mandate to extend its activities to other State universities that function outside the purview of the UGC, and State and non-State HEIs that have obtained the Degree-Awarding Institute (DAI) status from the MoE/UGC. Nonetheless, there is a growing need to expand the quality assurance to cover all these three categories of institutions as being done in more and more countries.

To address the above issue two broad policy options could be considered. The first option is to amend the existing Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to bring the State and non-State HEIs with DAI status under the regulatory control of the UGC. If this option is considered, through an appropriate amendment, establish a Regulatory Council for State and non-State HEIs with DAI status, and a Quality Assurance Council with the mandate to cover all three categories of universities and HEIs, namely, the i) the State universities that are coming under the purview of the UGC, ii) other State universities that are operating outside the purview of the UGC, and iii) the State and non-State HEIs with DAI status under the purview of UGC. The alternative approach is to establish an independent Quality Assurance Council to cover all these three categories of universities and HEIs. However, this approach is costlier and more time-consuming than the first option. Further, the State universities (*currently coming under the purview of the UGC*) would be rather happy to come under the purview of one single regulatory agency (*for governance and administration, and quality assurance*) than to deal with multiple agencies. Moreover, by convention, most State and non-State HEIs that have upgraded themselves to DAI status are fancying to get the UGC approval for their operations as it has established a wider recognition as the most recognized regulatory body of university education in Sri Lanka. If the first option is considered, then the accreditation functions could be vested with the National Education Commission (NEC) which is currently functioning as the apex body for policy formulation, and setting standards for education. These functions could be undertaken by a Council that would come under the purview of the NEC, and such a Council could be established by making an appropriate amendment to the existing NEC Act No. 19 of 1991.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: National Quality Assurance system must cover all State and non-State higher education institutions.
- DP 2: The concepts of quality and quality culture must be institutionalized in all types of higher education institutions by internalizing the nationally prescribed best practices, standards, guidelines for all aspects of higher education.
- DP 3: National accreditation systems benchmarked against international criteria and standards must be in place for accrediting programmes of study offered by all types of higher education institutions so as to promote the mobility of graduates within and across borders.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 5.1: Mandate of the UGC must be broadened to assign the responsibility of regulating and quality assurance of both the State universities and State and non-State HEIs with Degree-awarding Status

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry of Education and the UGC shall take steps to introduce appropriate amendments to the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to expand the role of UGC by establishing two Councils within its purview;
 - Regulatory Council to regulate State and non-State Degree-awarding HEIs, and

- Quality Assurance Council (QAC) to cover both the State universities and State and non-State Degree-awarding HEIs.
- The UGC/QAC shall review at periodic intervals all State universities and State and non-State HEIs with DAI status, and the study programmes offered by them.
- The UGC/QAC shall take steps to review and update the existing QA Manuals (*QA Manual for Institutional Review and QA Manual for Study Programme Review*) in 5-year cycles so as to promote progressive advancement of quality and standards of the State universities and State and non-State HEIs with DAI status, and their study programmes.
- The UGC/QAC shall take steps to continue to build the capacity of a core group of the senior academic staff of the State universities and State and non-State HEIs with DAI status in quality assurance to lead internal quality assurance systems in their respective institutions and also to function as external QA reviewers.

Policy-HE 5.2:

All Universities and the State and non-State HEIs with DAI status must seek accreditation for their institutions and study programmes by the National Accreditation Council for Education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC in liaison with the Ministry of Education and the UGC shall take steps to establish a National Accreditation Council for Education through the appropriate legal enactments.
- The UGC shall issue circular instructions requiring all State universities and State and non-State HEIs with DAI status that are coming under their purview to seek accreditation for their institutions as well as for all study programmes offered by them from the designated National Accreditation Council for Education.

Core Area – HE 6: Research and Innovations, Technology Transfer, and Nurturing of Art and Culture

Policy Context

Research and innovations, and dissemination including commercialization of research outputs through industry collaboration are mandatory functions of universities. With a high proportion of academic staff with doctorate-level training in public universities, it is presumed that, at least in terms of human resources in principle, they have one of the prerequisites to establish a solid research base. However, the intensity, quality, and applicability of research are not evenly observable across all universities. Most of the research carried out in the State universities and HEIs is sub-standard as it lacks the required rigour and intensity. Reflection of this is the insignificant output and outcomes of university research in terms of the number of research articles published in national and international, peer-reviewed scholarly journals, number of patents filed, the extent of commercialization of research, and international standings of universities.

As regards the relevance of research, most of the research conducted is exclusively academic in nature and the results are rarely presented outside the university circle. Among the reasons for this are, (a) resorting to topics or themes based on the researcher's own perspective which is often not aligned with national or regional priorities, (b)

lack of staff interest and also facilities or linkages for applying research to the “real world”, (c) dearth of opportunities because of tenuous university-industry links for commercializing research results, and d) lack of willingness of the government ministries and departments to integrate university research outcomes into national programmes.

As regards the international ranking, which is considered as an aggregate measure of quality and standards of higher education institutions, Sri Lankan Universities do not show up prominently in any of the three most popular international rankings namely–Times Higher Education (THE), Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), and Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU). The only ranking system that lists Sri Lankan universities is Webometric Ranking System, and it is primarily based HEIs’ Internet visibility. It covers more than 30,000 HEIs, and Sri Lanka has only 6 in the “top” 5,000, again trailing comparators in East Asia.

Besides functioning as centres of excellence in research and innovation, the universities are also expected to function as catalytic centres in art and culture. They are expected to nurture the scholarly advancement of art and culture and promote the aptitude for aesthetic pursuits of the general public. Unfortunately, except few universities, many appear to have not given much emphasis on this important aspect.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Universities and HEIs must function as centres of excellence in producing higher-order intellectuals, science and technology professionals, and high-quality research and innovations.
- DP 2: University system must be supported with appropriate legal and regulatory procedures, institutional support, and funding to create a conducive environment and intellectual freedom to engage in research and innovations, and technology transfer.
- DP 3: University academics must be provided with an institutional environment and freedom to explore culture, art, science, and environment.
- DP 4: Sri Lankan Universities must function as catalytic centres in nurturing all forms of visual and performing arts, and culture.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 6.1: Promote mission differentiation among universities in line with global developments thus enabling the established and resourceful universities that have already earned international recognition to become postgraduate and research universities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to adopt the following policies and strategies to promote mission differentiation among universities for fostering postgraduate education, and quality and standards in research and innovation;
 - Adopt a suitable mechanism and procedure (*such as a scorecard system*) for assessing resource profiles of universities in terms of both physical and human resources, research and innovation outputs, and academic performance in terms of outcomes of external QA reviews, employability of graduates, international collaborations, income generation, etc., and promote those universities who perform well

above the threshold to progress as postgraduate research universities,

- Once a university is declared as a postgraduate research university, it shall maintain the intake into undergraduate programmes at the existing level while expanding their postgraduate study programmes, particularly in research-based degrees,
- Adopt performance-based funding to support those universities identified as postgraduate research universities over and above its regular recurrent and capital cost,
- Encourage and facilitate those universities that are considered as postgraduate research universities to establish campuses focusing on undergraduate study programmes with the option given to high performing undergraduate students to seek transfers to the mother university,
- Encourage postgraduate research universities to explore possibilities of establishing off-shore campuses, and
- Review and amend the existing guidelines for granting research allowance for academics with the view to incentivize high-performing academics, and thereby to improve quality and standards of research and research outputs and outcomes.

Policy-HE 6.2:

Foster institutional environment for international collaboration in research and innovations and create a rewarding environment conducive for exploring science and technology

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC through circular instruction shall direct all universities to establish an institutional mechanism to promote research and innovation, and international collaboration (*e.g. Centre for Research and International Affairs, Research Councils, International Liaison Office, etc.*).
- All universities shall take steps to secure funding through Treasury allocations and also by engaging in income-generating activities to foster research and innovations, research information dissemination, commercialization of research, and international liaison.
- All universities shall take steps to establish and operate research awards and rewards systems for academics to recognize and reward those who perform exceptionally well in research and innovation.

Policy-HE 6.3:

Sri Lankan University system must function as catalytic centres for the promotion of Sri Lankan culture and all forms of visual and performing arts

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC through circular instructions shall take steps to promote all universities to establish an institutional mechanism to promote Sri Lankan culture and all forms of visual and performing arts (*e.g. establishment of Multicultural Centre, Arts Council, Drama Society, etc.*).
- All universities shall take steps to promote staff and student engagements in organizing annual cultural events (*e.g. Annual Drama Festival, Annual Film Festival, Annual Art Exhibition, etc.*).

- All universities shall allocate sufficient funds and establish required physical facilities to promote student and staff engagement in art and culture, and aesthetic pursuits.

Core Area – HE 7: Personality Development, Civic Consciousness, Patriotism, and Employability and Entrepreneurial Skills

Policy Context

The role of education in instilling positive personality traits, civic consciousness, patriotism, and employability and entrepreneurial skills among the youth has been well recognized. These attributes and skills are crucial for the advancement of society, maintaining social order and harmony in general, and achieving success in individual lives.

Personality development, defined as the process through which one could improve positive or progressive traits of his/her personality throughout the life as it enables people to succeed in all fields of their lives; it improves the relationship among the peers and others; it helps individuals to improve their performance in every field they work and succeed in their careers; and it helps people to inculcate life skills which are essential for the success of their lives and hence, success and happiness in their professional as well as personal lives.

Civic consciousness encompasses a wide spectrum of values such as empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, equality, and social cohesion and ethnic harmony. The creation of awareness on civic consciousness and inculcating such values must happen through learning from early childhood education to university education.

Patriotism refers to love for or devotion to the land of one's birthplace or country, and promoting patriotism is an important tool in promoting ethnic harmony and social cohesion, and inter-ethnic relations in a multi-ethnic country like Sri Lanka. First of all, it educates students of all ethnic groups to respect the land of their birthplace. Secondly, it encourages citizens to treat each other with respect. Thirdly, it urges all ethnic groups to respect Sri Lanka as a unified nation.

In addition to the above elements, another aspect with respect to education is the imparting of employability skills and the provision of career guidance and counselling. This refers to the provision of educational opportunities and counselling to individuals to help them acquire the right knowledge, skills, and information necessary to identify a better-fit career.

It is generally believed that those above mentioned four aspects are not adequately emphasized by the present-day education system, which solely addresses the development of cognitive skills. Very rarely are the students groomed for positive personality traits and civic consciousness, except what they acquire from parents, peers, and Sunday schools. Further, the existing general education system and examination process appear to promote rote learning, and it is further fostered by the 'tuition culture' prevailing in the country. When students, prepared through such a system, enter university education platforms, they perform very poorly; most of them are not enthusiastic in learning, their learning habits are poorly attuned to higher learning, and their language competencies, particularly the English language skills, are low. As such, their motivation for a higher level of training is rather low.

Thus, the universities must take an extra effort in promoting personality development, civic consciousness, and patriotism in conjunction with imparting a wide array of life skills or employability skills, including entrepreneurial skills. However, it cannot be done only by offering a standalone course on personality development and civic consciousness. Rather, a multipronged approach should be attempted with the provision of core and supplementary

courses that have built-in learning opportunities to promote the development of positive personality traits, civic consciousness, and patriotism while imparting a wide array of employability and entrepreneurial skills.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Higher education shall facilitate all-round personality development of students by promoting cognitive, physical, and psychosocial development of students while promoting behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual maturity, and instilling values, morals and ethics.
- DP 2: Education shall instil nationalism in students so as to promote affection towards Sri Lanka as the place of birth, its history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions.
- DP 3: Education must imbue civic consciousness in students – empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, equality, and justice.
- DP 4: Higher education shall impart life skills/employability skills to students such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and resilience.
- DP 5: All forms of education shall guide the students to acquire the right knowledge and skills and information necessary to identify and choose a better-fit career.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 7.1: Education shall function as a vehicle to foster personality development and inculcate civic consciousness, patriotism, and multiculturalism among undergraduates

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to issue circular instructions to all universities and faculties prescribing essential components that should be included in the formal induction programme/orientation programme provided to incoming freshman students. These must include the following specific activities, in addition to other university-specific components;
 - Components that aim to promote civic consciousness – to inculcate human and constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, logical and rational thinking, liberty, responsibility, accountability, pluralism, and equality in students, and
 - Components that aim to promote patriotism – to educate all students to respect the land of their birth, respect others irrespective of ethnicity, and respect Sri Lanka as a unified nation.
- The UGC shall take steps to issue circular instructions and guidelines to all universities to include a personal development programme in the curricula of all study programmes in the following lines;
 - Introduce a dedicated programme for personality development that runs as a strand from the first year to the final year (*such as General Studies Strand Courses*), aimed at providing academic, intellectual, and practical training to imbue students with emotional, social, and spiritual maturity, and instil values,

morals and ethics in students.

- Ensure the academic calendar of all study programmes include dedicated activities to facilitate student engagement in activities that promote civic consciousness and multiculturalism (*such as student societies, explorers' clubs, drama and film societies, multi-cultural events/festivals, etc.*),
 - The students must be guided to maintain a Portfolio of Learning that showcases both the work carried out within the said strand and the activities that they have got involved in while pursuing the core subject areas that promote emotional, social, and spiritual development, and
 - Both components (*course modules of the programme and portfolio*) of learning must be assessed, and marks must be counted for calculating the final aggregate marks of students in any given study programme.
- The UGC shall issue circular instructions and guidelines to all universities to establish a Multicultural Centre with required physical and human resources and finances to promote cross-cultural and social activities and aesthetic and spiritual pursuits.

Policy-HE 7.2:

University education must guide the undergraduates to make informed decisions on education and career choices, and instil employability and entrepreneurial skills

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities working through the Senate, Curriculum Development and Review Committee/Academic Development and Planning Committee shall promote the adoption of outcome-based, student-centered teaching-learning while giving adequate emphasis on the development of soft skills such as communication, interpersonal skills, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, resilience and perseverance.
- The UGC through the Standing Committee on Career Guidance and Counselling Services shall take steps to review the human resource availability and capacity of the existing Career Guidance and Counselling Services of universities and introduce appropriate reforms in all aspects – roles and functions of Career Guidance and Counselling Units (CGCUs), institutional structure, physical and financial resources, and scheme of recruitment and career progression of staff – to make CGCU as an important service unit in all universities.
- All universities must take steps to strengthen Career Guidance and Career Counselling Services with adequate human and physical resources and finances to provide career information and career counselling services – such as soft skills development programmes, guidance and counselling, university outreach/extension programmes, job fairs, etc.

Core Area – HE 8: Financing of Higher Education

Policy Context

Historically, Sri Lanka spends less of its national income on education. This is more so for higher education. At an aggregate level, weighted against either GDP or total public spending, Sri Lanka devotes a relatively small share of its wealth and total government spending to higher education. Recent WB and ADB sector review reports highlighted this and alerted Sri Lanka for not investing enough in the education sector, particularly in higher education which is most crucial for propelling the country to become a knowledge-based economy. In general, whether in the aggregate or per-student terms, Sri Lanka's public funding for higher education is far less than what is invested by the middle-income countries with which Sri Lanka aspires to compete.

It is very conceivable that access to higher education and the quality and relevance of higher educational offerings cannot be enhanced without adequate financial investment, particularly by the State. Though there was some upward movement in public investment in the recent past, most of the increase went to investments in physical facilities; rather than investing in areas, which matter the most for the delivery of quality education provisions.

To add to this deficiency, in contrast to most middle-income countries, the universities and HEIs in Sri Lanka depend on government grants for almost all of their requirements. There is very limited cost recovery, and the minute amount of fees charged from external and foreign students subsidize to some extent the internal students who pay nothing to attend courses. As there is an urgent need to expand higher education and improve quality, the provision of higher education without recovery of at least a part of its cost will become unsustainable.

Another notable deficiency in the education system, particularly in higher education is the absence of significant investment by the private sector, which is considered as one of the major reasons for failure to meet the unprecedented demand for higher education. Until a few years ago, private sector participation in higher education was restricted, and even at present, because of ambiguous regulations, many prospective investors are reluctant to move in. Further, the public perception is still not positive as the sector is yet to get legitimacy as it lacks the government regulatory and oversight mechanisms. Evidence from other countries shows that it is important to set clear, objective, and streamlined criteria and procedures for establishing and operating NSHEIs. These include clear regulatory and oversight mechanisms, incentives for private providers to invest, and independent mechanisms to ensure the quality of the study programmes in both private and public higher education.

In addition, private investments could also come through many other channels: for instance, assisting universities to conduct externship programmes for undergraduates and also accommodating graduates under internship or apprenticeship programmes in private establishments for facilitating the introduction of students to the 'world of work'. Unfortunately, these types of collaboration are still rare.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State is committed to guaranteeing free education from early childhood education to tertiary education.
- DP 2: The State is committed to making an incremental increase of public expenditure over the next 10 years on education from the current level of 2.1% to 4.5 % of GDP while improving the need-based fund distribution and efficiency of utilization.
- DP 3: The State is committed to providing student aid for education as grants and concessionary loans for eligible students.

DP 4: The State encourages philanthropic private and community participation in education by providing financial/tax incentives within a conducive regulatory framework to encourage private sector to establish and operate higher education institutes on not-for-profit basis.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 8.1: Promote the adoption of strategic planning and management approach by universities and HEIs for improving the efficiency of fund distribution and utilization

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC through appropriate circular instructions shall facilitate all universities and HEIs to establish a dedicated institutional mechanism for Strategic Planning and Monitoring such as the Office of Strategic Planning and Monitoring, headed by the Vice-Chancellor or Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- All universities shall prepare a strategic plan and annual action plans coupled with financial plans on regular basis, and all annual budgeting that must be coupled with the strategic plan and financial plans approved by the Council.
- As empowered by the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, the UGC shall resume its responsibility of annual budget preparation for the entire university sector based on submissions from individual universities prepared in accordance with the respective strategic plans and annual action plans and accompanied financial plans, and negotiating with the Treasury to secure the required funds.
- The Councils of all universities shall undertake regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plans and annual action plans with accompanied financial plans of universities.

Policy-HE 8.2: All the State universities must engage in income-generating activities to supplement the government grant

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC, through circular instructions shall issue guidelines to all universities and HEIs in calculating the rates applicable to user fees for registration, accommodation, sports facilities, and library services, and allow the income accrued through such fees to be accumulated in the University Development Fund.
- All Universities shall take steps to embark on income-generating activities through the provision of fee-levying certificate, diploma, and degree (*both undergraduate and post graduate*) courses/programmes to external candidates, and the income accrued from such activities must be channelled to Faculty and University Development Funds.
- All Universities shall take steps to establish a University Consultancy Services Unit to facilitate the bidding for consultancy, advisory and technical services to the public and the income accrued from such activities must be apportioned to staff members, Unit Development Fund, and University Development Fund.
- The UGC together with all universities shall take steps to promote Sri Lanka as an attractive destination for

foreign students through advertising and by increasing the quota allocated for students while taking steps to strengthen facilities provided for them.

- The UGC shall take steps to issue circular instructions and guidelines to all universities and HEIs to establish and operate of Public-Private Partnerships for academic, research, and research commercialization activities, and to allow the proceeds from such activities to be proportionally apportioned to relevant staff members and channelled to development funds of the university and respective faculties and departments.

Policy-HE 8.3:

Promote private investments in higher education by providing financial incentives within a conducive regulatory framework to prospective investors to establish and operate higher education institutions on not-for-profit basis

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and the UGC shall take urgent steps to establish a quality assurance and an accreditation mechanism that covers both the State Universities, and State and non-State Degree Awarding HEIs (*as proposed in Core Area - HE 5: Benchmarking and Quality Assurance; Policy 5.1 and 5.2 and Core Area - HE 11: Regulation, Governance, and Management; Policy 11.1*).
- The State shall provide fiscal incentives to encourage private investment in higher education.
- The State shall continue to provide grants and concessionary loans for eligible students to follow study programmes leading to degrees in non-State HEIs operating with the approval of the MoHE/UGC.

Core Area – HE 9: Quality of Human Resources

Policy Context

As of UGC (2019) data, the State universities employ about 9,428 full-time faculty, of whom 8,957 are in the 15 public universities. On average, the student-teacher ratio (STR) is 17.5, and it is relatively high and not compatible with the requirement for quality student-centered teaching. In global comparison, as reported by WB Report (2017), Sri Lanka belongs to a small group of countries with both extremely high STRs and very low GERs in tertiary education. This serious deficit in the number of faculty members available is more perturbing, particularly in universities, given the need to increase student enrolment to meet the increasing demand. It is very conceivable that, if the situation is to improve, faculty numbers will have to go up faster than enrolment.

While having high STR, almost all recruitment into university academic cadre is affected at the lecturer level and they are assessed purely on the basis of the first-degree qualifications. This has been an archaic practice and has not helped the universities to sustain a cadre with high achievement in postgraduate training. Many teachers, mostly in arts, humanities, and management faculties stagnate at the level of Masters' qualifications with no strong commitment or opportunities to seek doctoral qualifications. Even with limited scope in research, and relying on publication of low-quality papers, mostly in non-referred journals, many of them have also been able to secure promotion to professorship. This has led to severe erosion of quality, standards, and professionalism among the academic staff in the state universities.

Further, the academic staff have not been given adequate training in education technologies such as curricular

design and development, and teaching and learning and assessment methods, particularly the application of ICT-based teaching-learning tools and techniques. In the absence of such training, a significant proportion of them continue to remain as poor teachers and role models for students. This erosion too has been noted among university, non-academic, administrative, and technical staff categories. Post-recruitment training at the postgraduate level has not been the norm in this category, except few seeking such qualifications for promotional prospects.

Besides that, it is alarming to note that the competencies of university staff in the application of ICT-based applications for academic and general administration purposes have been found to be very poor, particularly among the academic staff of non-science faculties. The level of adoption of ICT tools in university administration, particularly the use of electronic management information systems, electronic mode of communication to connect with staff and students, and paperless document management is extremely low. Further, the maintenance of ICT infrastructure, particularly the LMS and the technical backup services available for troubleshooting, too has been very weak, and this is primarily due to inadequacies of staff cadres and lack of updating the competencies of existing staff, in addition to chronic underfunding for ICT infrastructure.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Recruitment and promotion of all categories of staff must be made purely on merit and free of any undue influence.
- DP 2: Academic and academic support staff must be provided with adequate opportunities for post-recruitment training and continuing professional development.
- DP 3: Academic and academic support staff and non-academic staff must be provided with a conducive working environment and service conditions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 9.1: All categories of staff recruitment and promotion must be based exclusively on merit and on-the-job performance

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to review and update all staff recruitment procedures prescribed through a multitude of UGC Administrative Circulars to suit the current context to ensure recruitment is primarily based on academic and professional qualifications, merit, and proven performance.
- The UGC shall take steps to revisit the current promotion scheme including the procedure for granting annual increments and promotions for all categories of staff – academic, executive, academic support, technical, and support staff- and issue new circular instructions to ensure increments and promotions are granted on the basis of performance-based assessments.

Policy-HE 9.2:

All categories of staff must be provided with in-service, continuing professional development programmes aimed at imparting new knowledge and skills to promote the enhancement of professional standards

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities shall take steps to obtain enhanced annual allocations for human resource development and also take steps to generate sufficient funds to facilitate the post-recruitment training for academic staff, executive staff, academic support staff, and technical staff.
- The UGC shall take steps, through appropriate amendments to the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, to establish a dedicated institute for staff development designated as the National Institute of Staff Development for Higher Education, and to improve its technical capacity through the ongoing WB/AHEAD Project or through a future WB-funded Higher Education project (*This is also emphasized in Core Area HE 3:Teaching -learning process and assessments; Policy HE-3.1*).
- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue an administrative circular instruction to ensure new recruits into all non-academic cadre (*i.e. executive, academic support, non-academic administrative, technical, etc.*) are subjected to a compulsory post-recruitment induction training programme and to make successful completion of the induction programme as a pre-requisite for conformation in their respective posts.
- The UGC shall take steps to design and issue an administrative circular instruction to make it compulsory for all staff (*excluding skilled and unskilled labour categories*) to engage in continuing professional development programmes and to make the completion of a minimum number of CPD training programmes as a requirement for annual increments.

Policy-HE 9.3:

All categories of staff must be provided with conducive working conditions to maximize employee satisfaction and outputs

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities shall take steps to make determined efforts to provide optimal working conditions for the staff – such as facilities for housing, recreation, welfare, etc., to create positive working environments and service conditions.
- All universities shall take steps to facilitate staff welfare activities – such as staff associations, workers' unions, welfare associations, etc., and annual financial allocation (*through earned funds*) must be made to such entities to encourage holding social-cultural activities on annual basis.

Core Area 10: Quality of Physical Resources

Policy Context

The importance of a conducive learning environment for higher learning pursuits rich in physical and technical resources within which students can excel cannot be underestimated. Over the past few decades, a considerable number of facilities have been built, particularly for lecture halls, auditoriums, laboratories, student hostels, accommodation, etc. However, there are many universities, particularly located in provinces, which face shortages of teaching facilities, staff and student accommodations, and welfare facilities. Even many of the available lecture halls lack modern teaching equipment and laboratories are short of up-to-date laboratory equipment and material. In many campuses, internet connections and free wireless connections are limited. Environment and facilities provided in dormitories, cafeteria, and study and meeting areas often do not encourage the blossoming of academic pursuits. Facility maintenance is also often deficient.

In addition, the importance of ICT infrastructure, internet connectivity, IT applications, and technical support services for universities and HEIs has been amply recognized over the past few decades. Its importance was heavily felt during the current Covid-19 pandemic and the demand for ICT infrastructure, internet connectivity, and online platforms such as LMS/Moodle, in addition to other common ICT tools and Apps such as WhatsApp, Zoom, MS Teams, etc., will continue to remain high and even may grow further.

The inadequacies of the existing ICT infrastructure have been well highlighted by the survey conducted recently by Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN). It has been reported that though almost all universities have LMS facilities installed, the ICT facilities available within the universities and campuses are grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the current student population. Many are in need of upgrading the existing ICT infrastructure to meet the increasing demand for online teaching-learning. Many universities do not have sufficient server facilities to accommodate the increasing volumes of course material, and this indicates the urgent need for significant expansion of server capacities. Only about 50% of the universities have e-library facilities for remote access to library facilities by staff and students indicating a need for significant expansion of online facilities in the libraries. Wi-Fi coverage is also too limited; only about one-third of universities have more than 60% of Wi-Fi coverage on their premises.

Further, no formal policies are in place in many universities to guide and train teachers to use LMS effectively when delivering courses and conducting examinations. Most of the academic and academic support staff lack adequate knowledge and experience in conducting assessments on online mode, and as such even the existing limited ICT facilities have not been used in full capacity.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All higher education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number, must be provided with minimum requirements of teaching facilities.
- DP 2: All higher education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with all required common amenities.
- DP 3: All higher education institutions, irrespective of geographical location and student number must be provided with ICT facilities including internet connectivity manned by technically competent personnel.
- DP 4: All higher education institutions which accommodate students with special needs must be equipped with the required infrastructure and teaching facilities required to cater for such students.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 10.1: All the State universities must be resourced with minimum requirements of teaching facilities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC in liaison with the UGC shall take steps to develop and issue standards and norms for physical resources for universities and HEIs and to continue to revise them regularly to accommodate recent developments.
- All universities shall take steps to establish Capital Project Planning and Facility Management Units in respective universities manned by qualified engineering hands to undertake facility maintenance work, regularly access physical resource requirement in liaison with all faculties, institutes, centres, etc., and facilitate the development of physical resource development master plan to secure funding from the Treasury to acquire all required facilities on a priority basis.
- All universities shall take steps to provide well-resourced and well-maintained teaching-learning facilities (*i.e. classrooms, lecture halls, auditoriums, etc., fitted with required audio-visual aids and internet connectivity, teaching laboratories, libraries, IT centres, etc.*).
- The State shall seek external donor assistance at concessionary terms and conditions to address the immediate physical and technical resource gaps and deficiencies.

Policy-HE 10.2: All Universities irrespective of geographical location and student number must be resourced with all required common amenities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All universities shall take steps to establish a Council Standing Committee for Lands and Facility Development and Management with appropriate Terms of Reference to guide, supervise and monitor matters related to lands, buildings, capital development, and facility maintenance work.
- All universities shall take steps to strengthen the Capital Project Planning and Facility Management Units with required technical personnel and adequate resources.
- All universities shall take steps through the Capital Project Management and Facility Management Units, to assess the needs and status of common amenities and take appropriate steps to construct new facilities as required and maintain, repair/refurbish existing common amenities on regular basis.

Policy-HE 10.3:

All universities must be provided with IT connectivity, and software and hardware facilities that are manned by competent personnel

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to allocate an annual Treasury Grant to Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN), to expand and strengthen the IT connectivity and video conferencing facilities to all universities through an online platform (*This is also emphasized under core area-HE 3: Teaching - learning process and assessments; Policy HE-3.2*).
- The UGC shall take steps to provide funds to LEARN to build a centrally manned Moodle Service Centre and acquire physical and human resources and software to provide free open-source, centralized Moodle as an online platform and other interactive learning platforms (*such as Zoom, MS Teams, etc.,*) and media space (*such as Kaltura media space*).
- All universities shall take steps to establish and maintain well-resourced IT Centres and Faculty/School level IT units that provide technical services and guidance to faculties/departments to facilitate the use of computer-based applications and tools for teaching-learning-assessment in academic programme delivery.
- All universities shall take steps to adopt MIS and other applications for general administration, including the use of electronic signatures for transactions.

Policy-HE 10.4:

All universities must be equipped with the required infrastructure and teaching facilities to accommodate students with special needs

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The UGC shall take steps to provide additional funding to support universities and HEIs to cater for students with special needs.
- All universities shall take steps to provide the infrastructure and teaching facilities required to cater to students with special needs. All buildings must provide facilities to offer easy access to staff and students with special needs.

Policy Context

As stated in the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, higher education is a central government function, and the government is responsible for national policy, financing, allocation of staff and students to universities, and also for quality assurance.

Sri Lanka's higher education system follows the traditional Commonwealth Model, and the apex regulatory body, the University Grants Commission (UGC) functions as the buffer body between the ministry and universities. UGC primarily regulates the governance and management, recruitment and promotion of academic and non-academic staff, admission of students into universities, and also undertakes oversight functions. Further, the UGC appoints a majority of Council members and all categories of executive staff (*except the Registrar, Bursar, and a few other posts*). Besides that, the UGC exerts some control over most of the academic and academic-related matters; creation of new cadres, the establishment of new faculties/departments/centres/units, commencement of new study programmes, and even revisions of curricula of existing study programmes.

At the institution level, Sri Lankan universities have adopted the classical British Commonwealth governance structure, consisting of a University Council, a Senate (*Academic Syndicate*), and Faculty Boards. The Vice-Chancellor functions as the chief accounting officer and is accountable to the University Council, and is responsible for the academic and overall management, while the Registrar is responsible for general administration under the direction of the vice chancellor.

In this system, though the public universities have a high degree of autonomy, the legal constraints and various encroachments seriously limit this autonomy. On the other hand, many universities appear to be reluctant to take decisions and unnecessarily refer to the UGC for clarifications and rulings, thus making the granted autonomy redundant. Within universities themselves, there is often an unhealthy divide between administrators and academic staff. Internal governance is undermined by administrators who lack management experience and is also affected by archaic bureaucratic procedures, and general apathy and inefficiency of the staff coupled with poor communication among institutional compartments. Moreover, the adoption of proven management tools such as strategic planning and management approach, rewarding higher performers, performance-based assessments for increments and promotions, etc., at the university level is rather absent.

In addition, from the recent past, the politicization of university life and affairs, mostly influenced by radicalized students' politics and staff trade unions, has strained internal governance and progressive development in all affairs of the universities.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility for setting the policy and regulatory framework for all State universities and State and non-State degree-awarding HEIs.
- DP 2: The State through the UGC as the apex regulatory body ensures accountability and efficiency of governance and management of all State universities and State and non-State degree-awarding HEIs.
- DP 3: All the State universities shall aspire and work towards becoming semi-autonomous higher education institutions with high quality and standards in all their core functions.

DP 4: All the State universities must take steps to create a vital link between higher management, staff, and students to optimize the tri-patriate alliance among three key stakeholders.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-HE 11.1: While the Ministry in-charge of the subject of Higher Education taking the responsibility for policy, funding, infrastructure development, and oversight, the UGC shall be vested with regulatory matters including quality assurance of universities and HEIs

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry in-charge of the subject of Higher Education and the UGC to take steps to critically review and amend Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 to broaden the mandate and powers of the UGC to make it a more effective regulatory body covering all matters including quality assurance relating to higher education, covering the State universities and State and non-State degree-awarding HEIs. In addition, through these amendments the following three subsidiary arms of the UGC must be established (*this aspect is also dealt with under the Policy-HE 5.2*);
 - Regulatory Council for Degree Awarding Institutions covering both the State and non-State Higher Education Institutions,
 - Quality Assurance Council for the State universities and State and non-State degree-awarding HEIs, and
 - National Institute of Staff Development for higher education.

Policy-HE 11.2: Through regulatory provisions, all State universities shall be granted greater autonomy while holding them accountable for fund management, efficiency, and performance

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All the State universities shall take urgent steps to improve the governance and management system by adopting standard operating procedures, building human resource capacity, particularly of executive staff, coupled with appraisal and reward systems, and regular monitoring through an internal auditing mechanism.
- The UGC shall take steps through its internal auditing system which shall have formal links with internal auditing units of universities to undertake regular monitoring of governance and management and performance of the State universities and HEIs.
- The Governing Councils of the State universities shall undertake regular monitoring of the performance of respective universities with respect to their academic, research, and service outputs.
- The UGC shall take steps through administrative circular instruction and guidelines to grant provisions for all universities and HEIs to establish and operate public-private partnerships.

Policy-HE 11.3:

All universities must create a conducive, harmonious, and rewarding environment for academic and intellectual pursuits, student life, and community engagement

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and UGC shall take steps to introduce an appropriate amendment to the existing Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, to provide provision for all universities to have three Deputy Vice-Chancellors to support the Vice-Chancellor in three important aspects of university affairs, namely, i) academic affairs and quality assurance, ii) student welfare and counselling, and iii) research and international liaison.
- All State universities shall take steps to make special efforts to increase liaison among the higher management, staff, and students.
- All State universities shall take steps to promote the liaison with alumni associations and the community.

PART IV- VOLUME IV

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON TECHNICAL AND
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has become a priority in the global development agenda as it prepares the youth with job-specific skills for industrial, manufacturing, and service sectors to help to improve the productivity of the workforce and provide marketable skills for the youth.

The formal TVET, as we know it today, had its beginnings in Sri Lanka in 1893 when the first Technical College was established at Maradana to train skilled workers needed for the development of physical infrastructures such as laying of railway lines and construction of roads. The period after independence (1948) saw a renewed interest in the development of skills required for achieving the development objectives of a newly emergent nation. Accordingly, actions have been taken to establish many training institutions with mandates for the training of youth and industry employees and apprentices. However, this expansion did not go in parallel in improving the quality and relevance of training provisions. Recognizing the importance of quality and relevance of TVET training provisions, from 1990 onwards attempts have been made to co-ordinate and promote different training institutions to deliver quality and market-relevant training programmes in accordance with a nationally agreed plan. A notable outcome of this plan was the establishment of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)²⁴⁵, as the apex regulatory body in the TVET sector in 1990, and the establishment of a separate ministry for the TVET in 1994. These progressive developments have led to the formulation and adoption of the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF)²⁴⁶ which provides guidelines and standards on many TVET functions including curriculum development, competency-based training, assessment, and quality assurance. The NVQF facilitates the TVET trainees to move up progressively from certificate levels training to earn market recognized qualifications such as diplomas and degrees. This upward mobility was further made possible by establishing nine Colleges of Technology and six University Colleges to conduct NVQ Level 5 and 6 National Diploma courses and then establishing the University of Vocational Technology (UoVT)²⁴⁷ to offer NVQ Level 7-degree programmes. In parallel, the TVEC and TVET institutions have introduced many programmes for upgrading the skills of workers already employed in the industry.

Despite these quantitative and qualitative improvements in the TVET sector, the industrial, manufacturing, and service sectors of the national economy are still suffering from a dearth of skilled workers. On the other hand, there has been rising youth unemployment. Many industries to overcome the shortages of skilled labour have resorted to importing workers from India, Bangladesh, and China²⁴⁸. Therefore, the TVET sector is in dire need of reforms backed by well-formulated national policies and strategies to address the sector-specific issues including bridging the demand for and supply of skilled workers for craft and middle-level technical and vocational occupations, and also for addressing chronic unemployment prevailing among the youth in Sri Lanka.

1.2. Current Organizational Structure of TVET Sector

At present, the State Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational Training, and Research and Innovation (*henceforth referred to as Ministry*) is mainly responsible for the regulation and promotion of the development of the TVET system in Sri Lanka. The TVET institutions operating under the State Ministry (a and b) as well under the other ministries (c), and operated by the private and NGO training providers (d) are listed below.

245. *Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No. 20 (1990, June).*

246. *Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (2021). National vocational qualifications framework of Sri Lanka, Operations Manual.*

247. *University of Vocational Technology Act No. 31 (2008, August).*

248. *Arunatilake, N. (2018). Bringing Skilled workers to Sri Lanka is it a viable option? [unpublished report]. Institute of Policy Studies.*

a. **Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)**

Functions as the apex regulatory, standards-setting, quality assurance, and qualification awarding body of TVET sector.

b. **Public sector training providers with primary responsibility in TVET**

- **Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET)** with a network of 30 technical colleges conducting NVQ Level 1 to 4 courses and 9 Colleges of Technology conducting NVQ Level 5 and 6 courses including NVQ Level 1 to 4 Courses.
- **National Apprenticeship and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA)** with an island-wide network of inspectorates to conduct apprenticeship programmes with 25 district offices and 4 national-level training institutions and about 70 apprenticeship training centres.
- **Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka (VTA)** – operates with a network of about 295 training centres.
- **Ceylon – German Technical Training Institute (CGTTI)**
Leading automobile training institute of the country.
- **University of Vocational Technology (UoVT)**
University conducting degree-level programmes (NVQ Level 7) for middle-level vocational qualification holders.
- **Ocean University of Sri Lanka (OCUSL)**
University conducting marine engineering and aquatic resource technology degree programmes and technical and vocational training programmes in the maritime and aquatic resource sector
- **Sri Lanka Institute of Printing (SLIP)**
Leading printing training institute of the country

c. **Public sector training institutions operated by other Ministries and Industry lead bodies**

- National Youth Services Council (NYSC) with an island-wide network of TVET centres in parallel to youth development programmes
- Construction Equipment Training Centre (CETRAC) of Construction Industry Development Authority
- Sri Lanka Institute of Textile and Apparel
- Gem and Jewellery Research and Development Authority
- Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Schools of Agriculture under the Department of Agriculture
- Schools of the Animal Husbandry of the Department of Animal Production and Health
- Mahapola Training Centre of the Sri Lanka Port Authority
- Sri Lanka – German Railway Training Institute
- National Youth Corp
- Irrigation Training Centres operated under the Department of Irrigation

d. Private and NGO sector training providers

There is a large number of private TVET institutions operating offering training programmes on a fee levying basis. However, the majority of them are in the ICT sector. In addition, there is a widespread network of NGO sector-operated TVET institutions.

1.3. Salient Features of the TVET Sector

- National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) with 7 levels of qualifications was established in 2004, and Sri Lanka was the first South Asian country to establish a qualification framework for the TVET sector.
- According to the dashboard of the TVEC Website²⁴⁹, (as of 02.04.2021), Sri Lanka has 2,946 training centres registered with TVEC, of which 1,146 centres (38.9%) operate with valid registration and 1,800 centres (61.1%) operate with expired registration.
- There are 1,097 public sector TVET centres including 74 NAITA centres, 295 VTA centres, 30 Technical Colleges and 9 Colleges of Technology DTET, and 54 training centres of NYSC.
- According to the TVEC Labour Market Bulletin²⁵⁰, 250,690 trainees have been enrolled in TVET courses in 2019, with 142,906 males and 107,784 females. In the same year, 176,080 have completed the courses with 97,757 males and 78,323 females. The completed number includes the enrolments in previous years in courses with more than a 1-year duration. This number includes both training of school leavers as well as skill upgrading training provided for already employed persons.
- The numbers enrolled and completed vocational training in 2019 were approximately 161,000 and 111,000, respectively. This may include a part-time short-term training programme too.
- For courses in the construction sector, enrolment of males and female students in 2019 was 29,004 and 5,500, respectively. Corresponding completion numbers were 19,943 and 2,776, respectively.
- For courses of the wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, and motorcycles, enrolment of male and female students was 13,737 and 1,294, respectively. Corresponding completion numbers were 7,649 and 881, respectively.
- In 2019, a total number of 78,007 NVQ certificates had been issued including 5,210 NVQ certificates to industry employees through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) approach. However, the number of NVQ certificates issued is much less than the number completed because not all TVET courses have been converted to NVQ Framework yet.
- TVEC in cooperation with NAITA and UoVT has developed 278 NVQ Level 1 to 4 National Competency Standards (NCSs) and Competency-Based Training (CBT) curricula, and 68 NVQ levels 5 and 6 NCS, and accompanied CBT curricula.

1.4. Current Status, Issues, and Gaps

The TVET sector as explained above is widely dispersed across the country, consisting of State and private sector training providers and a regulatory body, the TVEC. The TVET sector is very diverse in terms of size, resources, target populations, and quality of training. Therefore, a rational approach is made to address sector issues and gaps in under sector-specific themes or core areas, i) Access and Enrolment, ii) Qualification Framework, National Competency Standards, and Curricula, iii) Training Facilities and Learning Environment, iv) Quality Assurance in Technical and Vocational Education and Training, v) Human Resources Development and Management, vi) Financing of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, vii) Regulation, and Governance, and Management viii) Data, Information and Research.

249. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. Retrieved April 02,2021, From <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

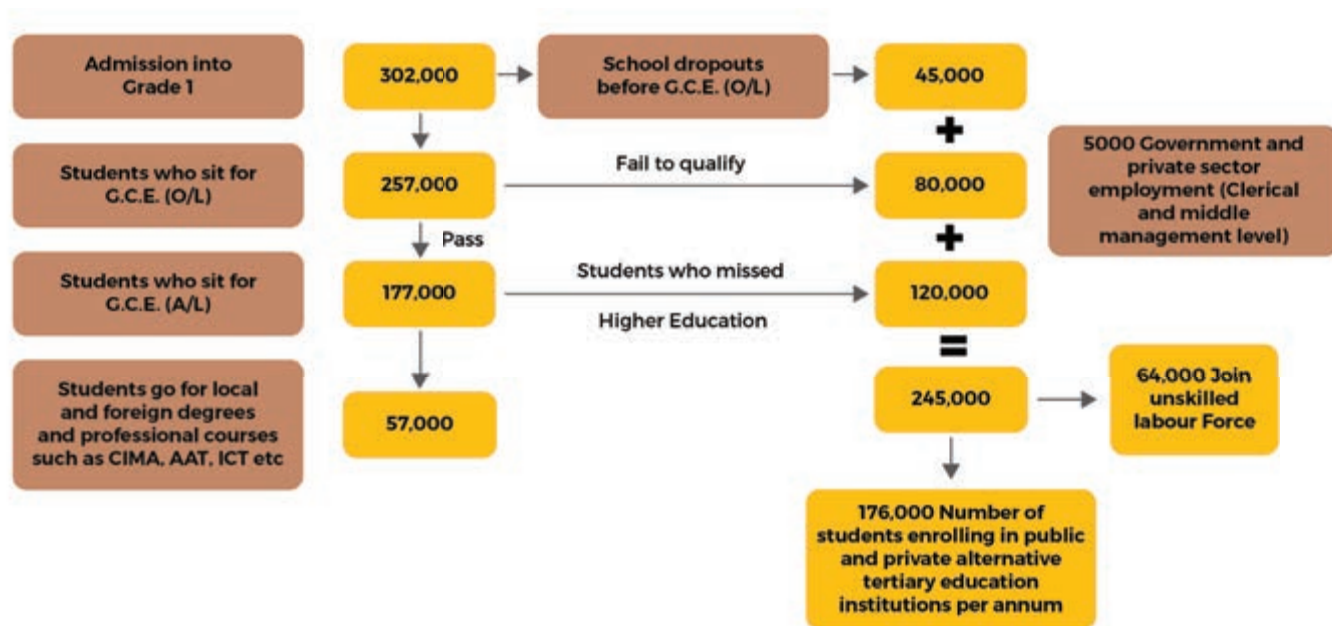
250. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2019). Labour Market Information Bulletin.

1.4.1. Access and Enrolment

Despite having a well widespread network of TVET institutions operated by the State and private sectors, most of the courses offered, particularly by the State-run TVET institutions are operated below the training capacity due to inadequate enrolments and high dropout rates. This phenomenon appears to emanate from many limitations and reasons. Though many interventions, as described below have been put in place to address the issues of TVET, more concerted efforts appear to be required to harness the TVET resource base, and training of school leavers and unemployed youth to match the emerging skilled human resource needs of the country.

As shown in Figure 1, it has been estimated that due to many reasons such as learning difficulties, examination-oriented education, poverty, inadequate guidance, and counselling, well over 245,000 children leave the general education system annually at different points. Out of this group, approximately 72% may join with public and private training system while around 28% may get added annually into the unemployed category, which is often referred to as 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEET) group. From one perspective, this NEET group is a valuable human resource pool to meet the labour demand of the informal sector of the economy. However, this group also needs skills to engage in more productive employments, particularly in the long run. They are considered as additional potential candidates annually available to absorb into the TVET sector to train to cater for the rising labour market demands.

Figure 1: School Leavers at Different Stages at School (Based on 2004 entry age cohort)



Source: Adapted from NEC. (2018). National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education.

Many programmes and interventions have been attempted during the recent past such as i) provision of career guidance and counselling services, ii) launching of social marketing programmes, iii) provision of trainee support system, iv) provision of inclusive training to cater for persons with disabilities, v) programmes to promote female participation in TVET, vi) introduction of vocational education to the secondary school curriculum and vii) building the image of craft occupations and TVET. These programmes and interventions are elaborated on below.

1.4.1.1. Career guidance and counselling service

One of the interventions initiated to address the under-enrolment into TVET programmes and high drop-out rates was the establishment of a network of Career Guidance and Counselling Centres (CGCCs), covering both the TVET sector and general education. In schools, the information related to educational pathways and career prospects is provided to students through School Guidance and Counselling Services (SGCSs). These centres are expected to provide a wide range of services including career guidance, career counselling, job placement, and provision of the information material. The ministry-in-charge of the TVET in 2004 had issued a Guideline for Institutionalization of Career Guidance and Counselling Services (CGCSs) in the TVET Sector.

Accordingly, 52 CGCSs have been established in 23 districts covering all provinces to provide a range of services including career guidance, career counselling, job placement, referral system for further training, and provision of the information material on job placements and for further training. Parallel to this development, most of the schools also have established school guidance and counselling services. Nevertheless, the capacity of the career guidance units/centres is limited as they do not have access to up-to-date labour market information systems, and also the available employment opportunities, skills requirements, trends, etc. A Career Interest Test was introduced to identify the career interest of youth based on an individual's aptitude, traits, and preferences. The general education system of Sri Lanka is also expected to provide career guidance and counselling at schools for which there are administrative guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education to deploy a dedicated teacher per school in all schools with more than 300 students for career guidance activities²⁵¹.

All stakeholders have now realized that the provision of regular career guidance and career counselling is an important aspect of education to create awareness among school children of diverse training and career pathways available to pursue after leaving the schools. A Study on Career Guidance in General Education in Sri Lanka²⁵¹ has recommended establishing a national-level database and mechanism to facilitate career guidance services offered in schools, particularly to educate school children on TVET opportunities. Towards this effort, the TVEC has developed and launched a career guidance and job placement website (www.youthjobs.lk), dedicated to this purpose. Further, the TVEC has established a National Committee on Career Guidance (NCCG), and also has planned to establish national-level career guidance and counselling service.

1.4.1.2. Social marketing

The Ministry in parallel to the above-mentioned efforts, with the assistance of foreign-funded projects from time to time, has launched many social marketing programmes using print and electronic media to promote TVET and to inculcate a positive attitude towards the TVET stream and vocational occupations among youth. However, such programmes did not achieve the objective as they functioned only for a short period, mostly in an *ad-hoc* manner, and therefore the efforts were not sustained. Therefore, a national level TVET promotional programmes should be a regular activity in TVET development, if at all to have an impact in this regard.

Further, from time to time, the Ministry in cooperation with leading TVET institutions organizes national level TVET exhibitions, and many outreach programmes. Though they are not regular programmes, all these programmes have made some positive impact on the increase of annual enrolment in TVET courses. But, the TVET sector still experiences a very high dropout rate²⁵², thus making case for further strengthening of career guidance, counselling, and social marketing activities.

251. Piyasiri, T.A., Padmashanthi Gamage, Y.G., Manathunga, Y.S. (2016). *Study on Career Guidance in General Education in Sri Lanka*. NEC Research Series – No. 08, National Education Commission.

252. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2019). *Labour market information Bulletin*.

1.4.1.3. Trainee support system

The majority of TVET students belong to the lower middle class or poor strata of society and they need financial support to meet their routine expenses including transport costs²⁵³. Such support for TVET students is further justified by the existence of bursaries and Mahapola payments given to students in the State university system.

Up to the late 1980s, DTET and NAITA had been the two leading TVET institutions in the country. In those early days, DTET did not have a system to pay allowances to trainees but NAITA from its inception in 1971 had paid allowances to all trainees. In the 1970s, a monthly allowance of LKR 180.00 had been paid to each apprentice and in the 1980s, it was increased up to LKR 450.00. Compared to the salary structures that prevailed at that time, the apprenticeship allowance was a substantial payment. In the late 1990s, NAITA increased the apprenticeship allowance to LKR 1,000.00 which continued up to 2013 with very high unpaid arrears, and the NAITA discontinued this programme subsequently. It appears that the following reasons may have influenced the NAITA to discontinue the payment of apprenticeship allowance in 2013.

- NAITA did not get sufficient funds to pay allowance in a timely manner and as such, they were burdened with a continuous accumulation of unpaid arrears.
- Funds received were used to pay the arrears and as such some trainees received the payment after completing their courses.
- By 2013, an allowance of LKR 1,000.00 per month was not an attractive incentive for TVET trainees.

Following the discontinuation of the apprenticeship allowance, the NAITA encouraged respective employers who provide the apprenticeship training to pay an allowance to the trainees.

The DTET started payment of attendance allowance to trainees in the 1990s and continues to date. The VTA had a course-specific allowance scheme to attract students to courses with high industry demand sans social demand. However, these financial support schemes are not uniformly applied across all institutions. The Budget-2020 had proposed to pay a monthly allowance for students following technical and vocational education, and it has now been implemented for trainees following NVQ Level 1 to 4 courses.

During on-the-job (OJT) training, many employers make some daily allowance to trainees but some do not make any payment to trainees. When the NAITA stopped the apprenticeship allowance to trainees, then the Chairman of the NAITA who was a reputed industrialist said that: “all trainees in OJT must be paid an allowance by employers and if any employer does not have the capacity to pay an allowance to trainees, that employer does not have sufficient work and capacity to provide training too”.

When international literature is reviewed, it says that trainees in work contribute to the production output, and thus make a contribution to the revenue of the institution. At the same time, trainees are a cost to employers as they may cause some damages to the equipment and material causing a high rejection rate of production outputs. Therefore, many countries have a culture as well as legislation to make it compulsory for industries to pay an allowance to trainees which are usually set at a lesser rate than the rate of payment offered to unskilled workers. Therefore, it is high time to put in place appropriate legislation to provide OJT (*on-the-Job training*) and make it compulsory for industries with certain capacities to pay an allowance for trainees. Some industries argue that training is a cost to them, but they must realize that non-training is also a cost to the industry in the long run.

253. Nanayakkara, W. (2017, October 9). Poverty and Access to Education: An Old Problem Affecting the Young Generation of Sri Lanka. Institute of Policy Studies. <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2017/10/09/poverty-and-access-to-education>

1.4.1.4. Inclusive TVET programmes for persons with disabilities

As per the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities²⁵⁴ ratified by the Government of Sri Lanka in 2016²⁵⁵, a disability of a person is a combination of impairments of the person and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. In order to minimize the disabling effect on persons with disabilities, barriers should be either minimized or removed by making reasonable adjustments to physical and/or environmental requirements without giving undue advantage to persons with disabilities. When society is sensitized to disability-related barriers, social and attitudinal barriers could be removed or reduced.

Going along in this approach, the TVEC and TVET institutions have carried out several activities to promote training for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) as listed below.

- TVEC in cooperation with ILO developed a National Strategy on TVET provision for vulnerable people in Sri Lanka in 2009²⁵⁶.
- TVEC has implemented a grant scheme for courses for persons with disabilities to improve and sustain those courses.
- TVEC addressed the disability issue by introducing Reasonable Adjustments in NVQ Assessment for Candidates with Disabilities and issued the NVQ Circular 01/2020²⁵⁷.
- NAITA enrolls PwDs for enterprise-based apprenticeship and NVTI Narahenpita enrolls PwDs for selected courses.

In addition, the need of providing training for persons with disabilities was included in TVET policies developed in 2009²⁵⁸ and 2018 by the NEC²⁵⁹. However, in the absence of a proper system to compile information on training provided to persons with disabilities, data, and information in this regard is scanty and incomplete.

1.4.1.5. Female participation in TVET

According to the TVET information given in the LMI Bulletin (2019)²⁶⁰, enrolment and completion of females in TVET courses in 2019 were 43.0% and 43.6%, respectively. Though 43.0% participation of females is not critically low, it is lower than the female percentage of the youth population which is above 50%. Nevertheless, as reported by LMI Bulletin (2019), female participation is still low in courses related to some industry sectors.

- Female participation in construction sector courses is 16%.
- Female participation in courses in wholesale, retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycle is 7.7%.
- Female participation in transport and storage courses is 5.7%.
- Female participation in hotel sector courses is 23.2%.

However, females are mostly concentrated in a lower number of courses, and hence they seek employment in a fewer number of occupations. The end result is the lower employability of females and lower female participation in the labour force.

254. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Convention on the rights of persons with disability*. Retrieved November 09, 2021 from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

255. Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations. *Sri Lanka ratifies the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities*. Retrieved November 09, 2021 from <https://www.un.int/srilanka/news/sri-lanka-ratifies-convention-rights-persons-disabilities>

256. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2010). *Development of TVET Policy, Strategy, and Action Plans for Vulnerable Groups of Sri Lanka*. <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

257. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2020). *National Vocational Qualification Circular No. 01/2020: Reasonable Adjustments in NVQ Assessment for Candidates with Disabilities*.

258. National Education Commission. (2009). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*.

259. National Education Commission. (2018). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*.

260. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. (2019). *Labour Market Bulletin*.

One of the barriers to increasing female labour force participation is that females are not employed or willing to be employed in some occupations. This appears to be linked to cultural, attitudinal, biological, and organizational reasons. When cultural and attitudinal issues are concerned, our society does not expect females to work in some occupations. For example, females are not expected to engage in occupations that require creeping under the vehicles, climbing scaffoldings of high-rise buildings, mining, etc. In order to address the low female participation in the labour force, females should be encouraged to undertake non-stereotype occupations and also be ready to work under difficult conditions. But this required a large transformation from current conventions, and it may not happen in a short time.

Another reason for lower female participation in the labour force is the low number of female-friendly / dominated occupations compared to male-dominated occupations. Therefore, this issue could be overcome only by expanding occupations that employ females²⁶¹. For example, there are semi-technical occupations in the interface between technical and non-technical occupations which could be developed to attract females. At present many technical sales assistant jobs in spare parts shops and hardware shops are handled by males. They could well be developed as female-friendly occupations. Further, females should be facilitated to get into semi-technical occupations that may pave the way for them to move into technical occupations. This concept has already been included in the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Framework prepared by the Skills Sector Development Programme (2017)²⁶² of the Ministry.

Recently validated Vocational Education and Training Plan (VETP) for electrical and electronics industry sector has estimated there are about 10,000 production line operators in electrical and electronics industries mostly operating in Export Processing Zones. A large number of these production line operators are females as employers prefer females for this manual work due to their high hand dexterity and higher precision in repetitive jobs. However, their job span is about 3 to 7 years, and thereafter, they leave jobs for various reasons and get unemployed. Nonetheless, these girls have skills to identify electrical and electronics components. The VETP has proposed to train these girls for Technical Sale Assistant (NVQ Level 4) qualification to enable them to find jobs in their home towns. Similarly, the VETP for the automobile repair and maintenance industry sector has proposed to train females for techno-commercial sale assistants and colour mixer occupations for the automobile industry. TVEC and NAITA have already developed NVQ Standards and curricula for these two occupations. Further, the SSDP has already commenced the training of females for techno-commercial sale assistant occupations under the training purchase model.

1.4.1.6. Introduction of vocational education to the secondary school curriculum

According to the age cohort analyses conducted by the NEC in 2017 in preparing the National Policy of TVET²⁶³ only about 19% (out of 2004 school entry age cohort) proceeded for higher education (Figure 1). The traditional pathways of the balance 81% of the age cohort who left the school education at different stages could be explained in the following manner:

- About 12% (15 - 19 age group) of them seek direct employment in the Labour Market. Most of them are engaged in low-skilled and short-term jobs, and eventually, some of them end up in the NEET group. According to the Labour Force Survey (2019)²⁶⁴, the NEET group has accounted for 22% of the youth population.
- Few of them may be fortunate to find formal jobs in the State and private sector.
- Many of them seek and are selected for TVET programmes. Some of them give up the courses due to mismatches with their interests, and many of them end up in informal jobs.

261. Tertiary Vocational Education Commission. (2021). *VET plan for Electrical and Electronics Sector*.

262. Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training. (2017). *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Framework, Skills Sector Development Program (2014–2020)*.

263. National Education Commission. (2018). *National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education*.

264. Department of Census and Statistics. (2019). *Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey*.

- Some of them may seek TVET opportunities but not all will be selected due to poor performance at school examinations. As NVQ level 3 & 4 courses get sufficient applications from school leavers with good grades, applicants with poor school grades do not get opportunities for courses of their interest. Most TVET institutions do not have NVQ level 1 and 2 courses in popular occupations that could have facilitated the entry of school leavers with poor grades.

Almost all countries, both developed and developing, face similar situations. Therefore, many countries have introduced pre-vocational qualifications to qualify school leavers with poor school grades for TVET courses. Pre-vocational qualifications are designed to improve the trade-related basic skills of persons with low levels of education seeking entry into the formal TVET system. Many countries including Mauritius, Bangladesh, and England have introduced systems to award pre-vocational qualifications.

Sri Lanka school system has implemented programmes from time to time to provide vocational skills to school children. Technical and vocational subjects had been taught in schools at G.C.E. (O/L) classes at the commencement of free education in the 1940s to 1960s, but that has not been continued beyond the 1970s. Since 2007 practical and technical subjects (PTS) have been introduced from Grade 6 to 9 classes, but learning of these subjects has not resulted in any vocational recognition.

In 2017, the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme was introduced to give 2-year vocational education preparation courses for students who perform poorly at G.C.E. (O/L) examination. So far several batches of students have completed the 2-year programmes in schools and some of them have already completed an NVQ level 4 programmes in TVET institutions. Nonetheless, this programme suffers from the following gaps and issues:

- All students with poor G.C.E. (O/L) performance are not joining with 13-year Guaranteed Education Programmes.
- All enrolled students in 13-year Guaranteed Education Programmes do not proceed into training in TVET institutions.

A study conducted by Suraweera (2019)²⁶⁵ on the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme has revealed the following:

- Students coming from different schools do not have uniform learning. As there is no assessment in schools, uniformity in learning is not maintained.
- The dropout rate of trainees coming from 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme to TVET institutions was higher than those of the directly enrolled trainees. As explained by the TVET Instructors, the direct entries into TVET institutions come only after exploring other opportunities in the labour market while the trainees from the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme leave the training to explore other opportunities in the labour market.
- Academic grades are not considered when enrolling students from the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme. However, the poor literacy rate is an issue with students from the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme coming into the TVET institutions.
- TVET Institutions have faced difficulties to arrange OJT for students who come from the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme as most industries particularly ICT enterprises expect the good academic performance of students. As a solution to this issue, many instructors have suggested to include an assessment of student performance at the point of exit from the 13-year Guaranteed Educational Programme.

This study has also recommended introducing Foundational Vocational Qualification (in lieu of pre-vocational qualification) to give recognition to vocational skills provided in schools in junior secondary grades and 13-year Guaranteed Education Programmes. Since lately two-year school vocational training under the 13-year Guaranteed Education Programme has been amended with some major reforms. Still, the findings of the above study are valid

²⁶⁵ Suraweera, B.H.S. (2019). *Study of thirteen-year compulsory education programme*. [Unpublished manuscript].

and applicable.

1.4.1.7. Building the image of craft occupations and TVET

The development of the TVET sector has become very crucial as almost all industry sectors in the country are experiencing severe skills shortages. This section discusses the accessibility to TVET as its effects on the number of skilled persons trained by the TVET system to bridge the skill gaps. Similarly, there is an issue on attraction to some occupations and TVET courses by youth which is reflected by the 20% youth unemployment rate despite the existence of severe labour shortages.

Many studies have shown the influence of numerous socio-economic factors in the creation of skills shortages. And these factors are interrelated and their analyses are very complicated. This phenomenon has been simplified by a concept called 'Skill Equilibrium',²⁶⁶ and its dimensions are listed below (Table 1).

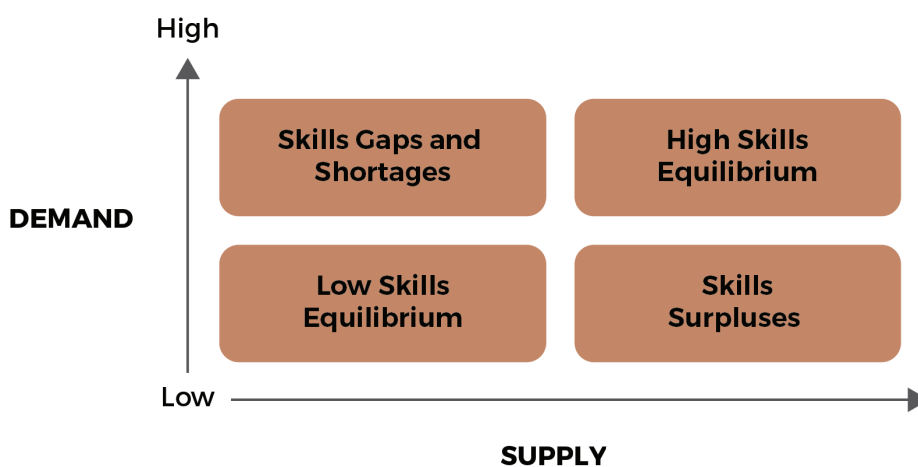
Table 1: Dimension of Skills Equilibrium

Dimension of Low Skills Equilibrium	Dimension of High Skills Equilibrium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low Demand for Skills • Poor Working Conditions • Poor Welfare Measures • Low Wages • Low Supply of Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Demand for Skills • Good Working Conditions • Good Welfare Measures • Higher Wages • Higher Supply of Skills

Source: Wilson, R., and Hogarth, T. (2003).

When these dimensions of equilibrium are not maintained, skills shortages and surpluses will be created as shown in the diagram below (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Skills Equilibrium Diagram



Source: Wilson, R., and Hogarth, T. (2003).

266. Wilson, R., & Hogarth, T. (2003). *Tackling the Low Skills Equilibrium: A Review of Issues and Some New Evidence*. Institute for Employment Research, 1–82.

In contrast to the present-day situation, in the 1970s and 1980s, there were no reports on any significant skills shortages in any industry sector in the country. During that period, it was a case of low skills equilibrium. For example, in those days, there was no demand for high workmanship from craftsmen. It was a case of low skills, low working conditions, and low wages.

Today, quality expectation of the public and industry is comparatively high and they demand high workmanship and training level from craftsmen. But, working conditions become very unsafe (sometimes), and working conditions and workers' welfare are usually poor coupled with comparatively lower salaries. Though the demand for skills has moved to the high side, the skills equilibrium is broken as wages and other dimensions have not been increased. As a result, the skills shortage is created.

There is a similar article published with the title 'Why There's no such thing as a skills gap, and it articulates the following sentiment: *"When employers say there are no skilled workers, what they're often really saying is that they can't find workers willing to work for the pay they're willing to pay"*²⁶⁷

Though this phenomenon applies in general to the industry, some enterprises do not face this problem because they maintain all dimensions of high skills equilibrium.

In 2017, His Excellency the President has recognized the skill shortages in the construction industry and requested the Secretaries of the Ministry of Skilled Development and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Construction to submit a report to address the issue. The report submitted in this regard has made the following recommendations:

- Increase minimum wages of crafts jobs
- Reduce hardship in vocational jobs by introducing mechanization and digitalization
- Introduce attractive names for vocational occupations
- Implement payment of EPF and ETF to informal sector employees
- Ensure workplace health, safety, and welfare.

Further, it was proposed to explore the possibility of formulating a pension scheme for craft persons in the informal sector through the Sri Lanka Social Security Board.

1.4.2. Qualification Framework, National Competency Standards and Curricula, and Industry Foresight

1.4.2.1. NVQ Framework

The most noteworthy achievement in the history of technical and vocational education and training is the development and adoption of the National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) in 2004. It is a unified qualification framework with 7 levels of certificates, diplomas, and degree qualifications. Sri Lanka is the first South Asian Country to establish a vocational qualification framework, and in fact, many South Asian countries have adopted the NVQ system in Sri Lanka to establish similar systems in their countries.

The NVQF has earned public acceptance and has reached a non-reversible level within a short time after launching in 2004. Expectations of the NVQF and its achievements and gaps are listed below:

- NVQF is an industry-based qualification framework developed based on National Competency Standards (NCSs) which specify skills needed to practice in respective occupations in the industry. Therefore, it was expected all public and private TVET training institutions/centres to adopt the NVQF. But still, there are many institutions and courses both in public and private sectors awarding non-NVQ qualifications.

267. Gorbis, M. (2016, September 30). Why There's No Such Thing As A Skills Gap. <https://www.ge.com/reports/theres-no-thing-skills-gap/>

- At the development of the NVQF, there was no concern about awarding NVQs through general education training programmes. However, the school system has started a Technology stream of education for G.C.E. (A/L) and 13-year Compulsory Education Programme, and there is now a need to recognize the vocational skills imparted in schools.
- Though NVQF is in operation for nearly two decades, there is still a tendency for many employers to specify their job advertisements at the required NVQ level along with the institution from which such training is expected. This suggests that there is still a need for improving the acceptance and recognition of TVET institutions and NVQs awarded by them among employers across the country.
- To facilitate the vocationalization²⁶⁸ of higher education qualifications (*i.e. by providing skill upgrading training at NVQ 5 or 6 or 7 levels*), the diploma and degree holders from higher education institutions who face difficulties in finding employment should be given to opportunity to follow technical and vocational programmes at NVQ 5 or 6 or 7 levels depending on applicants' choice leading to diploma certificate, graduate certificate or graduate diplomas. This concept is already practiced in many countries including UK, USA, and Australia (<https://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf-levels>).

According to the above analyses, NVQF has a long march ahead. It has operated for well over 16 years, clearing many hurdles and challenges by introducing several amendments, affected by the Board of Management of the TVEC on the recommendation of the NVQ Steering Committee. Any system needs fine-tuning after a few years of operation, and therefore, this is high time for the NVQF to undergo system review to update it coupled with revised regulations.

1.4.2.2. National competency standards and competency-based training curricula

National Competency Standards (NCSs) are developed occupations-wise, and each set of NCSs specifies the skills, knowledge, attitudes required to practice respective occupations in the industry. The currency/unit system of the NVQF that is used to denote the competencies is NCS, and they are packaged according to the occupations (*or jobs*) in the industry to form qualifications under the NVQF. In this system, one set of NCSs for a given occupation could have different levels of qualifications. For example, the NCS for the mason occupation could have qualifications for the bricklayer, plasterer, tiler, etc.

The curriculum in the NVQ system is designed to impart competencies specified in the NCSs and monitor the progressive acquisition of competencies by the trainees for a given NVQ, and therefore it is called Competency-Based Training (CBT) curricula. In this system, assessments are done based on Performance Criteria specified in a given set of NCSs. Therefore, NCSs form the core of the NVQ framework.

According to the TVEC Website, the TVEC, NAITA, and UoVT in cooperation with other TVET institutions and Industry have developed 346 sets of NCSs and CBT curricula. Further, the NVQ Framework has introduced a standardized process to develop the NCSs and curricula which will ensure all institutions have uniform curricula and thereby consistent course delivery. This is a great achievement compared to the pre-NVQ era before 2005 when institutions used their own curricula developed based on their experiences. Nevertheless, the following gaps and issues have been identified in the area of NCSs and CBT curricula development.

- National Competency Standards specify the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to perform the respective jobs in the industry. Though the competencies in diverse occupations are widely used in the industry, the relevant competency standards specified in NCSs are not widely adopted/adapted by industrial institutions.
- Two hundred and seventy-eight NVQ Level 1 to 4 NCSs and CBT curricula, and 68 NVQ Level 5 and 6 NCSs and CBT curricula have been already developed. But, NVQ certificates have been issued only from 116 NVQ

268. Vocationalization refers to providing vocational training to different streams of education.

Level 1 to 4 NCSs and 25 NVQ Level 5 and 6 NCSs²⁶⁹.

- Too many organizations are linked in the development of NCSs and CBT curricula and therefore, the development process takes an unreasonably long time.
- At present, NCSs and CBT curricula are prepared only for pre-employment training. However, skill upgrading is equally important to have a competent workforce, and it should be facilitated by conducting skills upgrading programmes for industry employees. But it does not happen at the optimum level, and it is primarily due to the non-availability of curricula for skills upgrading programmes²⁷⁰.
- NVQ Framework of Sri Lanka has no level to grant pre-vocational or foundation qualification(s). However, the Bangladesh Vocational Qualification Framework²⁷¹ which was developed after learning Sri Lanka NVQ Framework has two pre-vocational levels to facilitate school children with poor grades to get enrolled in TVET courses.

Therefore, policy intervention and accompanying regulations are required to address the above mention issues and gaps in NVQF, NCSs and CBT curricula development.

1.4.2.3. Industry foresight for the progressive development of the TVET sector

Ever since vocational training has commenced 'off-the-job' training centres after the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, there have been continuous dialogues and debates over bridging the gaps between skills supply from vocational training centres and skills demanded by the industry. In order to bridge this gap, training centres worldwide have sought industry cooperation to develop curricula and to provide on-the-job training. Training centres in Sri Lanka also have followed the same development but without resorting to uniform practices.

Under NVQF, to bridge the skills gaps, the lead agencies responsible for implementing the NVQ framework such as Ministry, TVEC, and NAITA have collectively decided to seek industry cooperation to conduct the following activities.

- Develop National Competency Standards and CBT curricula with industry participation.
- Validation of the NCSs and CBT curricula by National Industrial Training Advisory Committees (NITACs) which are comprised of experts of respective industry sectors.
- Conduct compulsory on-the-job training for all NVQ Level 4 courses.

Industry representatives of NITACs are appointed by the NAITA. The TVEC and NAITA decide the matters that need NITAC consultations. This approach however is not in agreement with some of the industry partners as they do not agree with some of the inputs provided by NITACs. Having similar experiences with advisory committees, many countries such as England, Australia, South Africa, and India have formed an industry-led and industry-owned model for industry collaboration with TVET. That is the Industry Sector Skills Councils (ISSC). In India, there are 34 ISSCs for 34 industry sectors. ISSCs are expected to be proactive and provide industry foresight for the development of curricula of TVET institutions. Going along in that direction of development, the Skills Sector Development Programmes of the Ministry has already established four ISSCs in Sri Lanka - ISSCs for Construction, ICT, Manufacturing and Engineering Services, and Tourism, and they have already commenced their operations.

It is hoped that ISSCs will work as the TVET's gateway to industries to organize OJT, curriculum development, NVQ assessment, and labour market analyses to identify skills needs and trends. There are NITACs for 23 industry sectors. ISSCs are established only for 4 industry sectors. Still, ISSCs are in the piloting stage, and the TVEC and TVET institutions are shouldering the challenge of making ISSCs a sustainable model to obtain industry foresight to foster and develop the TVET sector.

269. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. Retrieved April 02, 2021, From <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

270. Tertiary Vocational Education Commission. (2021). VET plan for Electrical and Electronics sector.

271. Khan, N. I. and Mayaudon, P. (2015). 'National skills development system in Bangladesh 2015', ILO Journal, 25(1), pp. 10–54. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-dhaka/documents/publication/wcms_445255.pdf

1.4.3. Training Institutions and Facilities, Types of Training and Learning Environment

1.4.3.1. Establishing new training centres and improving facilities of existing centres

According to the dashboard of the TVEC Website²⁷² (www.tvec.gov.lk), there are 1155 training centres with active registration as of April 25, 2021. Among these training centres, there are many small-scale training centres. About 40 % of all training centres have only one course⁵. Because of the very large number of small centres, the TVET sector does not reflect a good image to attract youth and industry employees for training. Accessibility is not well ensured as there is no uniform course mix across districts. Many courses available in Colombo are not available in peripheral districts. For example, many districts do not have electrical and electronics-related courses²⁷³. Most of the technical courses also follow the same distribution pattern. Therefore, TVET courses and their availability across the TVET institutions and districts need to be further expanded to enable youth in outstation districts to realize their training and employment aspirations.

Another deficiency in this regard is the inadequate emphasis given to sports and extra-curricular activities of trainees, and most of the TVET institutions do not have facilities for sports and extra-curricular activities which are required for the holistic development of trainees.

1.4.3.2. Use of TVET facilities to provide part-time training for prospective trainees

Most of the TVET training centres are primarily engaged in providing pre-employment training and these programmes are usually conducted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays. And almost all these centres are free in the evenings and weekends. Therefore, these free times available could be used to conduct skills-upgrading courses for industry employees, and also for livelihood training for the community around centres. Further, the NEET group is a problem in the labour market. School leavers from poor families directly go to low skill, short-term jobs in the service sector that require a low level of skills. These jobs employ only young people and many of them get unemployed when they become adults and eventually end up in the NEET group. According to the Labour Force Survey (2019)²⁷⁴, 21.2 % of youth are in the NEET group. Therefore, training centres should facilitate half-day courses (*conducted during convenient times*) for youth from low income families while enabling them to do jobs during the day times. This will provide them opportunities to acquire skills for a stable job while engaging in short-term jobs to make earnings for the family.

1.4.3.3. Developing flagship TVET centres for a cluster of small feeder TVET centres

As stated elsewhere, the TVET sector is very heterogeneous in terms of size and resource base, and in this heterogeneous system, there are very reputed, well resourceful training centres, and as well as centres without much resource base and hence with less reputation. Centres without reputations have not been able to attract students effectively to follow TVET courses. Therefore, it may be desirable to form clusters of flagship TVET centres and feeder centres; in this arrangement, students in feeder centres could move to flagship centres to complete more advanced modules. In order to make these developments, TVET centres need continuous investment. TVEC already implements a grant scheme for private and NGO sector training centres and that needs to be further strengthened.

272. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. Retrieved April 02, 2021, From <https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

273. Tertiary Vocational Education Commission. (2021). VET plan for Electrical and Electronics sector.

274. Department of Census and Statistics (2020). Labour Force Survey.

1.4.3.4. Apprenticeship training

Apprenticeship Training is a strong training methodology as it could develop training up to unconscious²⁷⁵ competency level in crafts skills. Apprenticeship is an age-old tradition of skills development all over the world including in developed countries. Many developed countries use apprenticeship training as their main skills development strategy with many innovations.

In Sri Lanka, the NAITA is the designated national institute with the mandate for apprenticeship training programmes, and it has added many new features such as special apprenticeship²⁷⁶ and situational apprenticeship training programmes²⁷⁷ to the national apprenticeship scheme in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively which are not seen or practiced in other countries.

In the new millennium, many countries have modernized apprenticeship training to get the benefits of advancing technologies and digitalization. NAITA has an important role to play in strengthening apprenticeships in line with the national trend set by the NVQ Framework and the global developments in apprenticeship training programmes.

According to the Labour Market Bulletin (2019)²⁷⁸, the NAITA has enrolled 21,604 apprentices for craft level training in enterprises and out of which 17,941 are in NVQ courses. Apprenticeship training has no course limitations, and it could be applied to all occupations in the labour market. Therefore, in Sri Lanka's full potential of apprenticeship training is yet to be realized. Many large-scale industries are cooperating with NAITA in apprenticeship training. There are many more large-scale industries that are yet to join the apprenticeship training programme.

Enterprise-based situational apprenticeship training programmes had 1,171 enrolments in 2019. The situational apprenticeship training focuses on emerging occupations and only NAITA is working in this area without any competition from other TVET institutions. Therefore, NAITA could expand this area to all emerging occupations.

1.4.3.5. Public-private partnerships in the TVET Training

In the TVET landscape, there are public and private, and industry training centres. In addition, there are some public-private partnerships, and a few examples are listed below²⁷⁹.

- NAITA and Puththalam Cement have developed a public-private partnership, and it manages a training centre in Puththalam.
- NVTI of VTA at Narahenpita conducted a beauty/hairdresser course in partnership with a reputed beautician training centre of the private sector.
- DTET has a partnership with a construction company for the training of construction craftsmen.
- A few training centres in rural areas have been supported by private enterprises under their CSR projects.
- Some private training centres had a partnership with public training institutions to get government funds for apprenticeship allowance and instructors' salaries.

275. A person with unconscious competency has enough experience with automated actions to apply the skill. Example: competent driver could drive a vehicle without paying full attention to the driving function.

276. Special apprenticeship had started in late 1970 to train technical supervisors which has been converted to NDES of the Institute of Engineering Technology, Katunayake in 1985.

277. A new or an emerging occupation initially begins at one or two enterprises. Any training in such emerging occupation is situational to those enterprises. That training in an enterprise is called the situational apprenticeship.

278. Tertiary Vocational Education Commission. (2019). Labour market Bulletin.

279. Piyasiri, T.A., Suraweera, B.H.S., Edirisooriya, M.L.N.S. (2008). Identify Benefits and Analyze Issues Related to Partnership Programs between Public TVET Institutions and Private Sector Enterprises, National Education Commission. http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Issues_related_to_linkages.pdf

These partnerships have been created on the initiative taken by the private sector institutions. It seems that many private sector institutions are not aware of this possibility yet. Therefore, there should be a clear policy and guidelines need to in place to promote such partnerships. Further, the public, private, and industry training institutions have their own strengths and weaknesses, and therefore when these institutions get together, one's weaknesses could be suppressed from other's strengths and thus achieve a synergistic effect.

1.4.3.6. Further training and re-training of industry employees

In the Sri Lankan context, employees need further and continuous training while in service in their occupation. Empirical evidence indicates that a majority of the workforce in the industrial sector has not had formal pre-employment training and therefore they acquired skills while working in their assigned jobs. A vast majority of them have skill gaps, especially in the cognitive domains. Therefore, up-skilling of employees is required to bridge the skills gaps thus improving their productivity. In the global context, skilled staff gives a competitive edge to businesses with changing technologies. Further training or up-skilling boosts employees' motivation with inspiration for lifelong learning.

Under the present trend of technological development, obsolescence of some job categories while opening up new job categories is a world phenomenon of current labour market dynamism. In liberal market economies, the same is true for business enterprises: new businesses are created while some businesses decline. Under both these phenomena, employees who lose jobs need re-skilling to acquire competencies for different occupations.

As a result of the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, many enterprises may have been closed down, but many opportunities may prop up for new business lines. Those new enterprises could absorb a part of the laid-off staff into the new business lines. But these recruits need re-training or re-skilling for the new jobs.

Current status of up-skilling and re-skilling of industry employees: Sections 80 and 81 of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No 20 of 1990 (Part II) specify the functions of further training (up-skilling) and re-training (re-skilling) of industry employees in addition to apprenticeship training. Though regulations on re-training for different jobs are still pending, TVEC and TVET Institutions are implementing and facilitating many skills upgrading programmes for employees in the industry.

The Skill Development Report 2017/2018²⁸⁰ has a Chapter on Skilling Industry Employees and the skills upgrading programmes that were prescribed therein are listed below.

- i. NVQ Level 3 and 4 qualifications through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
- ii. Part-time and flexible delivery of modular programmes
- iii. Part-time delivery of NVQ 5 Diploma Programmes by some Colleges of Technology of DTET
- iv. Part-Time Delivery of Degree Programmes by the UoVT
- v. Mature Candidate Route (MCR) for Industry employees to get NVQ 5 equivalent certificates

The current status, gaps, and issues of up-skilling re-skilling programmes are explained below.

- i. According to the Labour Force Survey (2019)²⁸¹, the country has 1,307,767 craft and related trade workers and 1,375,540 skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers of whom only about 20% have skills certification. But so far from 2004 to 2019, only 87,000 NVQ certificates through RPL have been issued. Therefore, RPL has a long way to go.
- ii. In order to promote skills upgrading of industry employees, Skills Sector Development Programmes (SSDP) of the Ministry and TVEC has introduced modular training with 50% subsidy with the name tag 'Flexible

280. Tertiary Vocational Education Commission. (2017/2018). *Skill Development Report*.

281. Department of Census and Statistics. (2019). *Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey*.

Learning Mode' (FLM). It was expected to facilitate flexible hours for industry employees to follow the courses. These programmes are delivered as modular or competency units and participants who are successful at the assessment are awarded Modular Certificates of NVQ which are called "Records of Achievement". TVEC has issued a circular on implementing FLM, and it is hoped that this programme will further be expanded in the near future.

- iii. Some Colleges of Technology of DTET have commenced delivery of many of their NVQ 5 programmes on a part-time basis. Further, many National Certificate of Technology (NCT) courses of DTET which have been conducted for industry employees on a part-time basis for over five decades have now been upgraded to NVQ Level 5.
- iv. University of Vocational Technology (UoVT) has 13-degree programmes with an enrolment of both full-time and part-time students. Almost all of these part-time students are employed persons, and therefore, this part-time delivery of training aims for further skilling of industry employees.
- v. There are many experienced people at supervisory levels whose promotional prospects are stagnated due to a lack of formal qualifications. Further, Public Administration Circular 2/2009²⁸² has specified qualification levels for salary levels. In order to facilitate these mature employees to get certificates for their competency levels, the TVEC has introduced the Mature Candidate Route (MCR) for Industry employees to get NVQ 5 equivalent certificates.

According to the above programmes, systems are in place for skills upgrading of industry employees. However, the number of programmes and beneficiaries are not enough to make any significant impact on the industry through up-skilling of industry employees. The up-skilling programmes could certainly be expanded as most vocational training centres are inactive in the evenings and weekends, and therefore, the training capacity is not an issue. Therefore, what is needed is funding, coordination, and commitment.

However, no programmes are available in TVET for the re-skilling of industry employees. This is the time to commence re-skilling as many employed persons may have lost their jobs due to Covid -19 pandemic-related issues. This is evident from the rise of unemployment in all categories as indicated by the Labour Market Bulletin (2020)²⁸³.

Funding for up-skilling and re-skilling: In some countries, the employment insurance schemes facilitate funding for the up-skilling and re-skilling of its members. As employment insurance has a liability to look after its members (customers) in case of retrenchment from employment, it funds them for up-skilling to make sure their continuity in employment. In Sri Lanka, Employment Trust Fund (ETF) plays the role of employment insurance for its contributors. It facilitates reimbursement of medical bills for critical illnesses and education scholarships for children of its contributors. But the most vital scheme should be to support the up-skilling and re-skilling of its members. Then they will be able to move up in their career ladder, and thus increase their potential to make a higher contribution to ETF. Therefore, this is high time for ETF to commence such a scheme to fund its contributors for up-skilling and re-skilling to make them well fit for reviving industries and businesses.

1.4.3.7. *Livelihood occupations and 'gig' jobs*

Livelihood occupations: It is well known that a large fraction of society particularly in peri-urban and rural areas survived only by engaging in livelihood occupations. Empirical evidence suggests that a significant proportion of the labour force in the informal sector belongs to this category. According to the literature²⁸⁴, livelihood occupations refer to a category of non-formal, short-term jobs which provide an income just enough to meet their daily needs.

282. Ministry of Public Administration and Home Affairs. (2009). *Public Administration Circular 2/2009: incorporation of national vocational qualifications for the schemes of the recruitment of the public sector.*

283. Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka. (2020). *Labour Market Bulletin.*

284. The Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery. (2017). *PDNA Guidelines, Volume B. Employment, livelihood and Social Protection.*

These people do not have any skills for a particular job. However, in order for these people to become productive and thereby contribute to the economy, they need to be provided with opportunities to acquire skills in livelihood occupations of their preferences. Therefore, TVET institutions must operate livelihood training divisions to cater to this category of people living in the locality of respective training centres. If in-house trainers are not available, the services of external resource persons could be sought for delivery of such short duration courses.

'Gig' Jobs: Another category of emerging employment avenue is working on online platforms without an explicit contract for long-term employment. These jobs are called 'gig' jobs²⁸⁵. These jobs are flexible, temporary, or freelance jobs, often involving or connecting with clients or customers through an online platform. Therefore, the 'gig' jobs can benefit workers, businesses, and consumers by making the work more adaptable to the needs of the moment and demand for flexible lifestyles.

The National Skills Development Report- 2018/19 published by TVEC has a section on 'Gig' Work in Labour Market in Sri Lanka. The Indian Skill Report – 2016 has indicated the need of paying attention to expanding 'gig' works in India. Therefore, it is necessary to identify skills needs and other constraints in livelihood occupations and 'gig' jobs and support them to develop their skill profiles as there is a vulnerability for the workers in these jobs to end up in the NEET group.

1.4.3.8. Entrepreneurship development in vocational training

Many studies have shown some TVET certificate/diploma holders eventually ended up as entrepreneurs running their businesses. According to a tracer study conducted in 2017, among TVET certificate/ diploma holders, 7% of males and 11% of females have ended up in self-employment²⁸⁶.

It is very conceivable that most of the youth have some interest to start their own businesses. But, many do not realize their dream as they do not get the required encouragement and support to make the first initiative. Further, it is very conceivable that a person with trade skills has a lower risk to start a business in his/her trained trades, and therefore, many TVET certificate/ diploma holders appear to make their own initiatives to start business ventures. According to a tracer study conducted by NAITA in 1998, about 6% of Vocational Training (VT) certificate holders had started their own businesses. It is noteworthy to mention that at that time of the survey there were no Entrepreneurship Development (ED) programmes in TVET institutions.

Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurship development in TVET, the ADB assisted Skills Development Project (SDP) from 1998 to 2006 had introduced ED as a project component. The SDP developed an ED sensitization Training Manual (*5-day Training Module*) and an ED Training Manual (*14-day Training Course*) and trained a large number of TVET staff as ED trainers on this aspect. In parallel, the SDP established a revolving fund to provide start-up investment loans at a subsidized interest rate to TVET certificate/diploma holders after completing 2 weeks of ED training. These two-week training programmes have been revised and now it is delivered within 7 to 10 days. Initially, a loan of LKR 250,000 was provided and this has now been increased up to LKR 500,000. At present, the VTA, NAITA, DTET, and NYSC implement the ED programmes for their trainees in limited training locations.

285. Graham, M., Lehdonvirta, V., Wood, A., Barnard, H., Hjorth, I., & D Simon, P. (2017). *The risks and rewards of online gig work at the global margins*. Oxford internet institute, University of Oxford. https://1stdirectory.co.uk/_assets/files_comp/ca4bba3d-fb09-456e-b4bf-2192946ca8d7.pdf

286. Center for Poverty Analysis. (2017). *Tracer Study on Technical and Vocational Education Graduates Employment in Sri Lanka*.

1.4.3.9. Skilling for foreign employment

Foreign Employment is an important structural feature of the employment market in Sri Lanka. Estimates show that Sri Lanka's workforce in foreign employment is approximately 1.2 million which is equivalent to almost 14% of our total number in the labour force. The remittance from the migrant workers in 2019 is LKR 1,200,766 million / USD 6.7 Billion, and this amount was equivalent to 56.3% of the country's total export earnings²⁸⁷. The earning from foreign employment has recorded 12.3% growth from that of 2011.

Nevertheless, there are many issues confronted by the foreign employment market. A major issue is that departures for foreign employment are much less than vacancies received for most of the foreign job categories. There appear to be many reasons for low departures, as shown in Table 2. and one of the reasons is the unavailability of sufficiently qualified and competent people for the job categories requested by foreign employers.

Table 2: No of Foreign Job Orders Received and Number of Departures for Foreign Employment in Years 2017, 2018 & 2019

Job Category	2017		2018		2019	
	No. of Vacancies	No. of Departures	No. of Vacancies	No. of Departures	No. of Vacancies	No. of Departures
Total in all Occupations/Sectors	328,641	68,319	377,075	66,924	495,405	69,379
		20.8%		17.7%		14.0%

Source: TVEC-2020, IS Division

According to Table 2, only 20% of foreign vacancies offered are filled by Sri Lankan workers. The VETP for the electrical and electronics sector – 2020 analysed the foreign employment opportunities in electrical and electronics occupations and found that 80% of vacancies and 80% of departures are in 20% of occupations. Therefore, if this 20% of occupations are identified and training programmes are developed to meet the skills needs of those foreign job categories, 80% of foreign employment vacancies offered for Sri Lanka could be filled.

1.4.4. Quality Assurance in Technical and Vocational Education and Training

1.4.4.1. Quality assurance system in TVET

As in any other education sector, quality assurance plays a very important role in improving the quality and relevance of TVET programmes. Recognizing its importance, the TVEC has implemented a Quality Assurance (QA) mechanism for the TVET sector. In this QA mechanism, quality is expected to be achieved through implementing three regulatory tools; i) registration of training institutions, ii) accreditation of courses, and iii) installation of a Quality Management System (QMS) in TVET institutions. Both the public and private TVET institutions are required to comply with the above requirements. These regulatory processes should be clearly formulated, unambiguous, and efficiently executed for training institutes to comply with the requirements without undue excessive efforts and time.

287. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2020). *Economic and Social Statistics of Sri Lanka*.

1.4.4.2. *Issues related to quality assurance in TVET*

Though the quality assurance system in operation since 2005, it has experienced the following gaps and issues.

- i. According to the dashboard in the TVEC Website²⁸⁸ (www.tvec.gov.lk on 02.04.2021), the TVEC has 1146 training centres (39.9%) operating with active or valid registration and 1800 training centres (60.1%) operating with expired registration.
- ii. These registered centres have 5,674 courses but only 3,357 courses (59.2%) are accredited as of 02.04.2021.
- iii. QMS has been installed only in 250 training centres.
- iv. Skills Competitions which is considered as important tool in quality enhancement were introduced but those were not held regularly though it is listed under the objects of the NAITA as per TVE Act No. 20 of 1990.

The above-mentioned phenomenon appears to have arisen from several reasons:

- i. Inadequate guidelines (Codes of Practice) for registration, accreditation, and QMS.
- ii. QMS is considered a burden to the training providers/instructors due to complexity of the process.
- iii. Inadequate public awareness of registered institutions and accredited courses.

Therefore, the above-mentioned issues of the QA processes make a case for re-visiting the existing QA processes and guidelines to make it simpler to implement and easy for prospective TVET providers to follow, and thereby to implement effectively throughout the Island.

1.4.4.3. *Innovations for quality improvements*

As the public expects excellent performance beyond the standard level of quality, the TVEC has explored further innovation in quality improvements with the following quality enhancement programmes.

- Design and introduction of Quality Management System (QMS) for all TVET institutions
- Design and conduct training programmes to promote quality culture in the TVET sector
- Design and conduct of Quality Improvement System (QIS) with step-by-step star certifications
- Conduct of skills competition programmes among qualification holders and training centres for excellence awards

1.4.4.4. *Quality management system and quality improvement system*

With the development of the NVQ Framework, the TVEC with the assistance of foreign-funded projects has introduced a Quality Management System (QMS) with internal and external quality audits to training centres. This QMS has focused on nine processes listed below:

- i. Ensure availability of relevant training equipment, materials, and consumables.
- ii. Maintain a safe and conducive learning environment and infrastructure.
- iii. Ensure availability of relevant national competency standards, curricula, and learning materials available for all courses.
- iv. Ensure appropriate and proper academic staff requirements are fulfilled.
- v. Students affairs are well managed and student enrolment criteria are available.
- vi. Training delivered as per the plan and training records maintained.
- vii. Timely conduct of continuous and final assessments, and issue of certificates.
- viii. Evaluate customer satisfaction by taking feedback from students, parents, and the industry.
- ix. Address the financial concerns and ensure stability.

288. Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission. Retrieved April 02, 2021, From <https://www.tvec.gov.lk>

The QMS has been installed in about 250 training centres but it demanded further innovations with simplification. Therefore, TVEC with the assistance of projects and foreign consultants developed different quality concepts and introduced a quality culture training programme for the staff, and delivered at the University of Vocational Technology. Further, as Training centres considered QMS as difficult and hard work, Quality Improvement System (QIS) with star certification was introduced and launched with the label 'Quality is Fun'. The QIS has 15 steps and it starts with a kick-off meeting which is done with a lot of fun. It has steps such as quality attitude, happy committee, and critical friend and as it progresses it receives a high level of social attraction. It gives 3-star certification before QMS and that motivates the staff to work for QMS and beyond. Eventually, training centres could get 4-star and 5-star QIS certifications as well.

1.4.4.5. Competition for expertise and excellence

The components of the QA system - Registration, Accreditation, QMS, and QIS - are explained above aimed to improve the standard and quality of the training centres to achieve quality. In parallel with these components, the Ministry and TVEC have introduced another element - competitions to encourage the training centres - to promote the achievement of desired standards and quality. These programmes are well geared to meet public aspirations as the public expects expert performance from NVQ holders and excellent performance from training centres.

1.4.4.6. Skills competition among the TVET certificate holders

Vocational training programmes are developed and conducted to provide competencies required for employment. Here, competency means the ability to meet the requirements of relevant standards. Nonetheless, the public wants technical services, they search for experts in the trade. For example, the public always goes to expert vehicle mechanics or expert hairdressers. This applies to other technical and vocational areas too. Therefore, competent people should be led to acquire the expertise fast.

In 2012 and 2013, the Ministry with the TVEC had conducted a nationwide skill competition for 16 occupations in 2013 and 24 occupations in 2014. Competent people in respective occupations competed at the skills competition and best among the competent persons won. Best among competent persons means experts. If skills competitions are held annually with national, provincial, and district competitions, a culture of competition will emerge and many skilled people will endeavour to reach a high level of proficiency.

1.4.4.7. Competition for excellence among the TVET training centres

The QA system has introduced many quality measures into training centres to achieve expected performance. However, these quality measures should be ordinary or habitual work in a training centre and they become excellent when they perform those ordinary work extraordinarily well. In 2019, in line with the International Youth Skills Day celebration, the Ministry and TVEC introduced a competition to identify training centres with excellence and it has continued in 2021 too.

1.4.5. Human Resources Development and Management

1.4.5.1. Deficiencies in the current human resource management practices

The TVET Institutions are expected to develop the skills of youth and adults to enable them to find productive employment in the industry. Therefore, staff of TVET Institutions should have a higher level of competencies than those of the industry. But the prevailing situation is completely the opposite. As the salary scale of the staff of the TVET institutions is comparatively lower than the salary scales of those in the industry, it is difficult to recruit and retain competent staff and to keep them motivated. Further, trained and skilled trainers are offered better remunerations and other fringe benefits, and hence they have a greater attraction towards the industry. Therefore,

retaining them and keeping them motivated are a challenge for the TVET institutions. In fact, all TVET institutions experience high turnover among trainers and most leading TVET institutions operate with a staff number of lower than 75% of the approved cadre. Because of staff shortages, most TVET institutions do not have the capacity to engage effectively in training and research, and operate and maintain Management Information System (MIS).

Therefore, managerial staff and trainers of TVET institutions/centres should be given opportunities for skills upgrading and opportunities to earn higher qualifications coupled with an incentive payment to bridge the salary difference. In order to offset the low salary issue, the Ministry with the ADB and World Bank assisted Skills Sector Development Programme (SSDP) has introduced a performance-based incentive scheme for trainers of the TVET Institutions. Accordingly, at present, training managers, trainers of leading institutions are paid a monthly incentive of LKR 5,000.00 to LKR 8,000.00 based on their performance: in areas such as maintaining updated course accreditation, involvement in their professional development, maintenance of class capacity, and higher completion rate of students in the course, quality of training delivery, and use of innovative approaches in training. A recent study has revealed that the incentive scheme has made an immense contribution in improving training performance, but it is not sufficient to arrest the turnover of academic staff.

1.4.5.2. Trainer Training system – needs and shortcomings

The TVET trainers have a challenging role in providing education and training which needs competencies in the following areas;

- Updated technical knowledge in his/her subject area in line with advancing technologies and technology applications in the industry with workplace practices,
- Skills in preparation of training material and planning lessons,
- Instructional skills (pedagogical skills) with updated knowledge in training and education technology,
- Digital readiness to explore new skills and knowledge, facilitate online delivery of training, and comply with learning management systems,
- Quality assurance with courses accreditation and adoption of Quality Management System,
- Skills in communication and competencies in mother tongue and English language, and
- Professionalism in discharging core functions.

At the entry-level of trainers, applicants do not have the qualifications or experience to fulfil the above tasks. Recruitment of trainers is done based on the qualifications relevant technical skills and aptitude for other skills. Therefore, they should be given an environment and opportunities for continuing professional development to facilitate the acquisition of those skills.

1.4.6. Financing Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The TVET institutions/centres in the country usually have poor visibility and image compared with the general education and higher education institutions. There are national schools in almost all cities and they are well recognized in their localities. But the country has very few TVET institutions/centres with national stature and most of those too are located in Colombo. Most of the TVET centres outside Colombo have a poor image than the schools in their respective areas. This is a major barrier to attracting school leavers to the TVET system. Therefore, there is a need to develop these TVET centres as attractive alternative tertiary education destinations. Even though there has been an increasing trend in investment in the TVET sector by the government, complemented with donor and loan funding over the last two decades, it is much less than the investment made in general education and higher education sectors in the same period. When the investments in different education sectors since independence are compared, TVET has been given relatively less priority. For example, the TVET sector in 2021 has received only about 3.8% of the total education budget.

Under the free education policy implemented, the public TVET institutions since 2016 could not charge any fee for the pre-employment training programmes/courses offered to the youth. However, to complement the limited government funding and compensate the revenue derived from course fees, the TVET centres have the potential to engage in income generation activities. Courses fees could be charged from skills upgrading, part-time programmes conducted for industry employees. The CGTTI is a good example in this regard as it offers fee levying part-time programmes in the evenings and weekends.

Further, TVET institutions could engage in manufacturing work, provision of technical service, and lending out the facilities without compromising the quality of training provisions. A project funded by GIZ (VTW /1998 – 2004) had introduced a concept of training with production and it was piloted in several VTA training centres. It aimed to generate funds while creating an OJT environment for Trainees with entrepreneurial skills. Further, Skills Development Project (1998 – 2006) introduced a business arm concept to DTET and piloted it at the College of Technology, Maradhana, but it was not continued as the financial regulations became a barrier to make payment to staff. Further, though the TVE Act No 20 of 1990 in its Section 83 has specified about Training CESS (training levy from industry), no attempt has been made so far to implement it. However, many countries use payroll levies²⁸⁹ as a mechanism to finance TVET.

1.4.7. Regulation, and Governance and Management

1.4.7.1. Legal framework governing TVET sector

The legislative enactments passed by the Parliament and Service Minutes relevant to TVET Institutions provide the framework required to regulate and govern the TVET sector. The TVE Act No 20 of 1990 has two parts; Part I for the TVEC and Part II for the NAITA. Part I had been amended in 1999 as the TVE (Amendment) Act No 50 of 1999. The VTA had been established by Vocational Training Authority Act No 12 of 1995. The DTET is currently operated without empowerment through an ordinance, and its staff matters are managed under the Technical Education Services Minute.

1.4.7.2. Issues relating to regulation and governance of the TVET sector

The Acts pertaining to TVET have been more than 20 years old and the TVET sector has been facing many issues as stated below:

- The TVE Act No. 20 of 1990 expected all TVET training centres to have TVEC registration, but still, many training centres operate in the country without valid registration.
- Most of the TVET institutions are not properly empowered to implement their objects and activities.
- Most TVET Agencies/Institutions have no capacity and provision to implement many activities entrusted to them.
- TVET Agencies/Institutions are not empowered to pilot new concepts such as training with production and use generated funds for further strengthening of the institutions and training programmes.
- The TVEC, as well as TVET Agencies/Institutions, have not prepared required regulations or revised the existing regulations for a long time.

As such, there is a need for reviewing the existing Acts and Ordinances, and regulations making appropriate amendments for such enactments to empower the TVEC and other TVET Agencies/Institutions to regulate and govern the TVET sector more effectively.

289. Ziderman, A. (2018). *Funding Mechanisms for Financing Vocational Training: An Analytical Framework*. 110, 135–164.

1.4.8. Data and Information, and Research

1.4.8.1. Labour market and training information

The planning process for the TVET sector has been hampered by not having regular Labour Market Information (LMI) and information on national and regional skills needs. It is well-conceived that identifying sources of information and keeping the up-to-date statistics on the TVET sector are fundamental requirements for TVET planning for reforms and expansions, and also for designing and offering demand-driven courses for a wide variety of TVET seekers. There is no timely and accurate information about the current demand for skills and available training opportunities. Moreover, no regular studies were conducted to track TVET certificate holders and their performances, and thus, it is not possible to evaluate the performance of TVET institutions and TVET certificate holders directly.

Though the government has strengthened the systems in place for the collection and compilation of human resource data, there are still some gaps. For example, the LMI Bulletin of TVEC encompasses data provided by many stakeholders such as the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau, and public and private training institutions, but this data has not been effectively converted to useful information for the purpose of planning and making management decisions, and also for the use of career guidance and counselling services. Therefore, it is important that this fragmented data and information should be pooled and subjected to Big Data Analyses by experts to generate insights from the large volumes of data for deciphering market trends, correlations, customer preferences, hidden patterns, etc. The capacity of a suitable central institution, such as the Department of Census and Statistics or Department of Labour must be strengthened to develop a Labour Market Information (LMI) system that is demand-driven and of a multipurpose nature. This proposed LMI system should produce regular, timely, and relevant information on the labour force, employment, and human resource needs to meet the demands of a wide variety of users of both public and private sectors.

Besides, there are many shortcomings as regards the use of the available data by the TVET officials and other concerned parties. Though the TVEC maintains a database and it carries much useful information for decision-making, the evidence on whether senior TVET officials use them in decision-making is not available. Further, there is no evidence as regards whether any discussions are held regularly on critical information provided in the Labour Market Bulletin of TVEC. It is noted that in the annual VT Analysis Reports produced by the TVEC, in liaison with the SSDP since 2014, the targeted institutions had not made effective use of information provided in such reports to improve their systems. Though almost all leading TVET institutions have established MISs, they still collect and collate data manually on enrolment, assessment, and certification. As such the MISs are not capturing all relevant data as real-time data entry is not facilitated. Therefore, there are deficiencies in data management, and hence the critical analyses of data to produce management information are not effectively possible.

1.4.8.2. Research in TVET

In many countries, the TVET sector receives directions from a strong research arm to provide a better information base, critical analyses, cost-effectiveness, and varied perspectives to ensure a better understanding of education and training processes. These inputs are useful to propel the TVET sector to a higher profile. Having identified the need for research, all legislative Acts relevant to the TVET sector have included research as one of the mandatory functions of institutions. Nevertheless, many TVET institutions do not have the capacity to undertake any research initiatives. Therefore, an ADB / SDP (1998 to 2006) had created a project component to promote research culture in TVET institutions. Accordingly, about 50 training managers and officers were trained on research methodologies and they completed about 30 research projects. The papers coming out from such research projects were presented at a 3-day research convention held in BMICH in 2006. Thereafter, the TVEC established a research cell drawing members from each leading TVET institution and got a budget line from the Treasury to fund the research proposal submitted by trainers in different TVET institutions. TVEC held a mini-research convention annually in the early days. Though the research programmes are still operated, the research conventions are not held on a regular basis.

1.5. Conclusion

The TVET sector has an indispensable role in providing training in technical and vocational occupations to enable people of the country to realize their employment aspirations and for the industry to have a skilled workforce, and for the country to prosper in the manufacturing, industrial, and service sectors. As highlighted in the status review, the TVET sector is confronted with many issues related to access, qualification framework, training delivery and physical resources, quality assurance, human resources, financing, governance and management, information management, and research. Accordingly, 24 policies with accompanying recommended strategic activities addressing the issues and gaps identified are formulated and presented herewith. We earnestly hope that the Ministry, the TVEC, and the relevant TVET institutions will give due consideration to the policy proposals and recommended strategies detailed in this document in designing and implementing sector-specific development activities.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

Having considered the issues highlighted in the Status Review given in Section 1, the policies and recommended strategic activities relevant to sector-specific 8 core areas and accompanying directive principles are formulated in accordance with the guidelines elaborated in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030).

The 8 core areas include: i) Access and Enrolment; ii) Qualification Framework, National Competency Standards, and Curricula; iii) Training Facilities and Learning Environment; iv) Quality Assurance in Technical and Vocational Education and Training; v) Human Resources Development and Management; vi) Financing of Technical and Vocational Education and Training; vii) Regulation, and Governance and Management; and viii) Information Management and Research are detailed below.

This approach is taken, as stated previously, to ensure the policy planning process gives comprehensive coverage across all core areas and elements while giving due consideration to issues and gaps highlighted in the Status Review that impede the progressive developments of the TVET sector.

Core Area – TVET 1: Access and Enrolment

Policy context

The TVET is primarily meant for school leavers, unemployed youths, and adults both the skilled and unskilled to acquire technical and vocational skills and become competent in preferred occupations that have steady demand in the labour market. It also offers opportunities for skill-upgrading and re-skilling for those who are already employed. Unfortunately, many of the intended beneficiaries, particularly the youth in poor segments of society and rural areas do not seek this avenue of training as they are unaware of opportunities available in the TVET sector and labour market. Even after receiving information, many cannot explore training opportunities due to financial constraints and the unavailability of training opportunities in proximity. Though the TVET sector is fairly widespread in the country it does not provide many opportunities for youths with disabilities or special education needs. Moreover, the attraction of the TVET sector for females is still not at the desired level because of the social and cultural barriers. In addition, the medium of instruction, minimum wages, and social and retirement benefits are some of the other limiting factors that affect the attraction and access to TVET.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assures the accessibility of all youth and adults to technical and vocational education and training irrespective of school performances, gender, ethnicity, social status, disability, geographical locations, and any other differences.
- DP 2: The State is committed to providing incentives to attract and retain potential youth for training in technical and vocational education.
- DP 3: The State is committed to inspiring prospective youths and adults to join technical and vocational education and training by implementing an attractive minimum wage policy and offering social security benefits for skilled employees both in the formal and informal sectors.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 1.1: Prospective trainees for TVET programmes should be reached through resourceful career guidance and counselling programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The National Career Guidance Steering Committee (NCGSC) of the TVEC shall function as a national level catalytic unit to liaise with leading the TVET institutions, and the Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Educations to reach out to the wider group of the target groups (*school children, school dropouts, school leavers and those who are in the NEET group*) to educate them about training opportunities in TVET and career prospects for TVET certificate and diploma holders.
- The NCGSC shall review available career guidance material and tools (*e.g. career interest test*) and develop a set of standardized career guidance materials in collaboration with career guidance arms of TVET institutions, Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education, Department of Manpower Planning and Employment, and career guidance units of Provincial Councils.
- The NCGSC shall work in collaboration with the Information System Division (ISD) of the TVEC and ensure that the updated information on TVET programmes, career opportunities for different NVQ qualifiers is made available on a regular basis to all career guidance arms of TVET institutions, Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education, Department of Manpower Planning and Employment, and career guidance unit of provincial councils and schools in the general education system.
- All leading TVET institutions and other career guidance service providers (*Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments of Education, Department of Manpower Planning and Employment, and career guidance unit of provincial councils*) shall take steps to revamp and expand the existing career guidance network by providing required human and physical resources, and career guidance materials.
- The NCGSC shall liaise with the Ministry of Education and Provincial Departments Education to promote the establishment of mechanisms such as career explores clubs in schools to facilitate long-term deliberation on choosing a career or employment-linked training programmes/courses by school children.
- The NCGSC of the TVEC should catalyse the establishment of an ICT-enabled career information system for job placements with links to the current job placement Websites.
- The TVEC in cooperation with TVET institutions and the NEC shall conduct research for analysing labour market dynamics to predict future trends in technical and vocational jobs and occupational roles, and

analyse and report labour market trends in the local and foreign employment-related labour markets, and the reasons for high dropout rates of trainees from the TVET programmes/courses.

- Career Guidance Units of TVET institutions/centres are required to provide counselling services to TVET trainees to minimize dropouts and also encourage potential dropouts to continue the same or different programmes.

Policy-TVET 1.2: Provide financial and logistical support to attract prospective TVET trainees

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC in cooperation with leading TVET institutions shall prepare and issue the eligibility criteria for trainee allowance payment, amount, and selection process.
- The Ministry and all TVET institutions must ensure timely payment of approved allowances to trainees.
- National level TVET institutions which accommodate trainees from all regions of the country shall take steps to provide adequate accommodation facilities for needy trainees.
- All leading TVET institutions shall work collectively to explore the possibilities to obtain training allowance for trainees from industrial enterprises during their apprenticeship training and on-the-job training periods.

Policy-TVET 1.3: All TVET institutions shall facilitate inclusive TVET programmes for vulnerable people

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC shall set up a Steering Committee on Inclusive TVET education to promote TVET institutions to open up TVET programmes/courses for persons with disabilities (PwDs).
- The TVEC shall take steps to transform TVET programmes/courses conducted for PwDs by the Department of Social Services and non-governmental organizations into the NVQF with appropriate adjustments.
- The TVET institutions shall facilitate training centres to have staff trained for handling students with different types of disabilities who could work as shadow trainers²⁹⁰ for students with disabilities.
- The TVET institutions must train career guidance officers to identify PwDs and guide and direct them to appropriate courses.
- The TVEC must monitor and ensure the implementation of reasonable adjustments in the NVQ assessment tools for application on the candidates with disabilities as introduced by the NVQ Circular 01/2020²⁹¹.
- The TVEC shall arrange specialized training programmes for trainers and assessors for serving PwDs.
- The TVEC while assessing training centres for registration must monitor the compliance with the facilities prescribed to cater for the PwDs.

²⁹⁰. Shadow trainer assists the person with disabilities to do the homework and fill the gap after the formal learning session.

²⁹¹. Tertiary and Vocational Educational Commission. (2020). NVQ Circular No. 01/2020: Reasonable adjustments in NVQ assessment for candidates with disabilities.

- The Management Information Systems of the respective TVET institutions must facilitate the compilation of enrolment and other relevant information on PwDs in the TVET system.

Policy-TVET 1.4: Promote female participation in TVET programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All TVET institutions must promote the enrolment of females in all technical and vocational programmes/courses.
- The TVEC shall promote the expansion of TVET programmes/courses and occupations that have greater affinity by female trainees with appropriate NCSs, CBT curricula, and training courses.
- The Ministry and the TVEC must include a component in the future donor-funded development projects to assist training centres and private enterprises which provide on-the-job training to develop training centre facilities and common amenities required for females.
- The TVEC and the TVET institutions shall provide skills upgrading and skill diversification courses targeting particularly females to widen their career options.

Policy-TVET 1.5: The TVET institutions must recognize pre-vocational achievements/qualifications earned from general education as entry qualifications into programmes/courses and extend assistance in conducting vocational education in schools

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC in liaison with the MoE and Provincial Departments of Education shall design and introduce an appropriate mechanism to recognize under the NVQ framework the technical and vocational knowledge and skills imparted under the 13-year guaranteed education programme.
- The TVET institutions shall take steps to provide services of career guidance officers, trainers, and training centre facilities to schools that offer technical and vocational education and training – i.e. conventional vocational training programmes, 13-year guaranteed education programme, and G.C.E. (A/L) Technology stream of education.
- The TVET institutions shall take steps to enrol students coming out from the 13-year guaranteed education programme into relevant training courses, irrespective of the performance at the G.C.E. (O/L) examination.

Policy-TVET 1.6: Enhance the social image of the TVET institutions and centres, programmes and courses, and occupations

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC shall work with the Wage Board of the Department of Labour to facilitate the introduction of an

NVQ-based wage structure with attractive minimum wages for different occupational categories.

- The TVEC shall work with the Department of Labour to take steps to facilitate the implementation of EPF and ETF payment policy for informal sector workers and freelance workers.
- All TVET institutions shall take steps to refurbish existing dilapidated physical facilities and give a facelift to buildings of training centres to improve the image of the places and to create an appealing for the prospective youth.
- All TVET institutions shall take steps to train and develop trainers as mentors, counsellors, and role models so that the trainees could seek advice, guidance, and encouragement, and model themselves by emulating their trainers.
- The TVET institution and centres together with the industries should modernize 3D occupations (*i.e. Dirty, Difficult, and Dangerous occupations*) by integrating with technologies, improving health and safety standards, and also by improving working conditions provided for employees of such occupations.
- The TVET curriculum developers (*i.e. TVEC, NAITA, and UoVT*) shall introduce modules on entrepreneurship, business accounting, and prudent use of earned income so as to ensure success in their careers and lives, and to make trainees aware of social security systems such as EPF, ETF, and pension scheme of Sri Lanka Social Security Board.
- The TVEC together with Industry Sector Skills Councils (ISSC) shall take steps to promote the social image of practicing craft persons.

Core Area – TVET 2: Qualification Framework, National Competency Standards and Curricula

Policy context

The TVEC has developed and implemented a National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) in 2004, and it has outlined how to identify the skills needs of the industry and provided guidelines for curricula development, delivery training programmes, and conduct of assessments. This has been executed as a unified qualification framework and all TVET institutions in the country are expected to adopt, and it was conveyed to all TVET institutions and centres through an executive order signed by the Hon Minister of Vocational Training and Skills development in accordance with the mandates given by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No 20 of 1990. Though NVQF has been well-rooted in the TVET sector, the expectations of the NVQF have not yet been fully realized. There still exist some vocational training institutions/centres awarding non-NVQ qualifications. The full implementation of the NVQF requires the active participation of the industry in the development of competency standards and curricula, and to conduct assessments. Further, the NVQF faces new challenges such as recognizing technical and vocational skills provided in schools, mapping with foreign qualifications frameworks, providing mutual recognition for qualifications offered under similar frameworks, etc.

Directive Principles

DP 1: The TVEC must execute its full mandate in regulating the quality and relevance and the standards of technical and vocational education and training through the strict implementation of the National Vocational Qualification Framework and all the elements of the quality assurance system.

DP 2: All TVET institutions (*both public and private*) are required to comply with National Vocational Qualification Framework and quality assurance system, and take steps to adopt the National Competency Standards and competency-based training curricula and assessments, and seek course accreditation from the TVEC.

DP 3: The Industry Sector Skills Councils are expected to provide the direction and guidance with industry foresight on the skills development process to the TVET institutions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 2.1: Review and revise the National Vocational Qualification Framework and make provisions to benchmark it against the international standards and best practices

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC shall take steps to review the NVQF to add the following features;
 - Accommodate Foundational Vocational/Pre-vocational Level Qualification to recognize achievements in vocational knowledge and skills of school children who have followed the 13-year guaranteed education programme,
 - Facilitate offering higher-level modular certificate courses at NVQ levels 5, 6, and 7, and
 - Facilitate offering higher-level programmes/courses leading to the graduate certificate- and graduate diploma-level qualifications beyond level 7 for graduates coming out from universities and higher education institutions who have faced low employability.
- The TVEC shall take steps to do the mapping of NVQF with the regional or global qualification frameworks that are widely accepted in regions where Sri Lankans seek foreign employment and higher education opportunities, in order to seek recognition for the qualifications granted locally under the NVQF.
- The TVEC in liaison with the Ministry of Public Administration, Wage Boards of the Labour Department, and the Foreign Employment Bureau shall promote NVQ-based recruitments into the public sector, private sector, and for foreign employment.
- The TVEC shall seek recognition for qualifications offered under the NVQF for higher education opportunities in local and global higher education systems.
- The TVEC shall explore the application of competency-based training and assessments for different modes of technical and vocational education and training while being sensitive to the cost of training and assessments.
- The ISSCs shall facilitate the engagement of industry representatives in institution-based assessments at least at 50% level.

Policy-TVET 2.2:

Review the National Competency Standards and Competency-based Training Curricula development processes periodically to reflect skills demanded in the industry, and effective learning and training process

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC and the NAITA together shall review the methodology of development of NCSs and CBT curricula in cooperation with the industry to reflect those competencies that are in use, and are of high demand in the industry.
- The TVEC and UoVT together shall review the methodology of development of NCSs and CBT curricula to ensure that the competencies specified in relevant NCSs are achieved through the prescribed compulsory modules with the provision of optional modules to cater for regional variations in relevant competencies.
- The TVEC, NAITA, and UoVT together shall review and improve institutional capacities, human and training resources, and procedures to complete the development of NCSs and CBT curricula within a reasonable time frame.
- The TVEC shall develop a system including industry and district TVET fora to identify priority occupations and industry/technology sectors with a demand for skills to develop NCSs and CBT curricula.
- The TVEC shall implement a rational mix of NVQ levels 1 - 4, 5, and 6 and 7, NCSs, and CBT curricula to facilitate qualification progression.
- The TVEC, NAITA, and other developers of NCSs and CBT curricula shall take steps to ensure the implementation of newly developed NCSs and CBT curricula by the respective training institutions/centres into the programmes/courses offered by them.
- The TVEC and NAITA shall introduce standalone course units and modules to facilitate skills upgrading and career development in respective occupations.
- The TVEC shall conduct research and innovation on the application of NVQF to explore alternative applications of technical and vocational competencies.
- The TVEC and NAITA together with the Foreign Employment Bureau shall take steps to incorporate skills needs for foreign employment in relevant NCSs and CBT curricula.

Policy-TVET 2.3:

The TVET institutions must bring industry foresight into the design and development and delivery of technical and vocational training programmes

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry and TVEC shall jointly review the existing industry collaboration models and decide on appropriate reforms and financing models for the sustainability of TVET - industry collaborations.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall explore industry collaboration through the ISSCs and also through the National Industrial Training Advisory Committees (NITACs) which play complementary roles to get

the directions and guidance for TVET development.

- The ISSCs should continue to provide inputs to TVEC, NAITA, and other TVET agencies to develop NCSs, CBT curricula, and assessment tools.
- The ISSCs shall extend cooperation to TVET institutions to conduct assessments, facilitate apprenticeships and on-the-job training (OJT) in industries with advanced technologies, and in industry trend analyses, preparation of industry-related career guidance tools, and in nominating members to NITACs.

Core Area – TVET 3: Training Institutions and Facilities, Learners and Learning Environment

Policy context

Traditionally the capacity of the TVET sector is estimated based on the training opportunities available for pre-employment training through institutional training and enterprise-based apprenticeship training. Many training courses are run under capacity, and therefore the TVET institutions are struggling to enrol students to operate in full capacity. Nonetheless, many of the unemployed youth and school leavers do not seek training opportunities in TVET institutions. Instead, they directly enter the labour market as unskilled workers.

As a large number of youths directly enter the labour market without pre-employment training, they have skills gaps, especially in the cognitive domains. Therefore, the TVET sector has a role to provide further training and re-training to the employees with skills gaps²⁹² and also to further improve the completion rate of TVET trainees to enable them to realize their full potential. Further, the training system needs reforms to address advanced skills, skills for livelihood occupations, entrepreneurship, and skills for foreign employment.

Therefore, it is very conceivable that there is an urgent need to rationalize the existing network of TVET centres by establishing new centres, if required, and to improve existing centres with economically viable size, good social image, and to offer uniform course mix in each district to ensure greater accessibility for prospective trainees and to meet the skills needs of the industry.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The TVET institutions are expected to establish training facilities with a uniform course mix with uniform geographical distribution and facilitate all social groups to have access to TVET programmes of their choice.
- DP 2: The NAITA is expected to explore the full potential of apprenticeship training with a wider number of occupations and enterprises with advanced technologies.
- DP 3: The TVET institutions are expected to facilitate the acquisition of skills by prospective trainees for up-skilling with advanced technologies, entrepreneurship, and for foreign employment and livelihood occupations.

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Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 3.1: Rationalize and strengthen the TVET centre network to enhance access, broad-base training provisions, and enhance the social image to attract potential trainees

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry with all TVET institutions shall review the existing network of TVET centres and introduce reforms to ensure rational distribution of training centres and courses in all geographical locations to facilitate uniform course mix in each district with adequate human and physical resources including the provisions to deliver them in languages that are in demand.
- All TVET Institutions should improve the social image of training centres by improving and maintaining physical resources (*i.e. well-maintained buildings and pleasing surroundings, name boards, billboards, etc.*), training resources (*i.e. training workshops, laboratories, IT facilities, library, etc.*), and common amenities (*i.e. study areas and restrooms with changing facilities, recreation facilities, etc.*) to make a positive impression on the public and attract potential trainees.
- All TVET institutions shall take steps to modernize existing training programmes/courses, to make them exciting to the trainees and attractive to potential youth.
- All TVET institutions shall take steps to provide course mixes covering a wider number of trades/occupations to enable youth to select courses according to their choices including the provisions of foundation courses/programmes, and NVQ level 1 and 2 courses, particularly to attract school leavers with poor grades at the G.C. E. (O/L) examination.
- All TVET centres shall conduct regular training needs assessments surveys by covering wider stakeholder groups – industry employees, community involved with livelihood occupations, those involved or aspiring to join overseas employment markets, etc., and design and offer short-courses/programmes offered on part-time and fee levying basis to cater for the needs identified.
- All TVET centres shall establish facilities for both the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to promote and facilitate the holistic development of trainees.
- All TVET Institutions, particularly the flagship institutions (*such as CGTTI, Colleges of Technologies, and other national institutes*) shall cooperate with smaller centres/feeder centres to establish mutually beneficial and synergistic linkages, and also to promote the progression of TVET trainees from smaller centres to gain entry into reputed national institutes/centres to earn higher-level national vocational qualification under the NVQF.
- The TVEC shall take steps to strengthen the existing grant schemes offered to private and NGO training centres and facilitate commercial banks to provide loans with subsidized interest rates for private training providers/centres for expansion and strengthening of training facilities.
- The TVEC shall formulate and issue regulatory directives, making it compulsory for any institution/person to seek prior approval from the TVEC for setting up new training centres.

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NAITA shall take steps to expand apprenticeship-based training for a wider range of occupations available in the labour market in compliance with the NVQ Framework.
- The NAITA shall take steps to explore and use modern methods of workplace learning with relevant theory and practice on par with the international standards and benchmarks.
- The NAITA shall take steps to get the cooperation of large-scale industries including those that are operated through the BOI and Export Processing Zones to expand apprenticeship training provided to the TVET trainees, particularly in industries that employ advanced technologies.
- The NAITA shall take steps to strengthen inter-enterprise cooperation (*between large and medium scale enterprises*) to facilitate quality apprentice training in all courses/modules of occupations. When inter-enterprise cooperation is not possible, apprenticeship should be supported by supplementary training inputs provided by instructors with appropriate quality assurance elements.
- The NAITA shall take steps to review situational apprenticeship training provisions to identify emerging occupations in the industry.
- The NAITA shall take steps to enrol employees in informal jobs (*short-term occupations*) in the formal sector for apprenticeship training programmes and facilitate them to earn an appropriate vocational qualification certificate upon completion of such training under the NVQF.
- The NAITA is required to encourage industries to provide a training allowance to trainees who undergo apprenticeship training in their industrial establishments.

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC and State TVET institutions shall explore and establish public-private training centre partnerships to deliver programmes/courses that cater to the needs of the industry in terms of highly skilled human resources and advanced technological inputs.
- The TVEC, TVET institutions, and ISSCs collectively shall take steps to explore the partnership between TVET centres and industry to deliver training in specialized areas with advanced technology and to explore opportunities in innovative training modes.
- The Ministry and TVEC shall consider provisions of projects and donor funding for start-up capital to encourage partnerships between TVET institutions and industry partners backed by feasibility studies and risk analyses.
- The TVEC should establish collaborations with local and overseas TVET agencies in order to build the capacities of TVET institutions and TVET teachers/trainers.

Policy-TVET 3.4:

The TVET institutions and centres besides providing pre-employment training for youth, shall provide further training and re-training for industry employees

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC, NAITA, and other institutions with delegated authority for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mode of assessment shall expand NVQ certification for industry employees who do not possess formal training/certification.
- The TVET institutions shall provide technical assistance to the industry for the promotion of firm-based training and skill upgrading courses for industry employees with a Record of Achievement Certificate (RoA) under the NVQF.
- The TVET institutions shall develop and conduct advanced skills modules in the occupations which are in demand in foreign employment markets.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall take steps to develop learning modules to deliver through open and distance modes of training and make them available to the public through social media channels.
- The Ministry and TVEC shall consider offering subsidies or concessions for further training of industry employees when the formulation of new skills development projects.
- The TVEC and ISSCs shall explore the funding from the Employee Trust Fund (ETF) for skills upgrading of industry employees who contribute to ETF.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall facilitate re-training of industry employees who have lost their jobs due to any reason.

Policy-TVET 3.5:

All TVET institutions and centres must provide livelihood training skills for nearby communities to enable them to engage in livelihood work effectively

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All TVET institutions and centres shall take steps to establish a separate section/unit to organize programmes/courses in cooperation with public and private industry lead bodies to cater to the skills needs of the community who are engaged in livelihood occupations, and 'gig' job holders for the effective performance of their jobs.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall take steps to undertake research to explore the scope and training needs of livelihood and 'gig' occupations.

Policy-TVET 3.6: All TVET institutions and centres must promote entrepreneurship among TVET trainees and TVET certificate and diploma holders

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All TVET institutions shall offer module/s to all TVET trainees to create awareness on entrepreneurship, and this provision should be made a pre-requisite for registration of training centres by the TVEC.
- The TVET institutions under the guidance of the Ministry, and the TVEC shall develop occupation-specific entrepreneurship development (ED) programmes and deliver them to certificate holders in respective occupations.
- The Ministry shall take steps to monitor the implementation of the Self-employment Promotional Initiative (SEPI) loan scheme with periodic revision of regulations and to make sure availability of funds in the SEPI revolving fund to disperse loans.
- The TVET institutions shall establish an ED promotion unit to offer advisory services to the small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) established by the TVET passed outs.
- The TVEC shall conduct periodic studies to evaluate the progress and weaknesses of ED programmes and propose actions to mitigate weaknesses and to propagate best practices.

Policy-TVET 3.7: Skills needs for foreign employment markets must be included in courses delivered under the NVQ framework and bridge the skills gaps of existing qualification holders to make them eligible for foreign employment

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC shall link with qualification authorities of labour destination countries and map the NVQF with similar qualification frameworks of those countries.
- The TVEC and Foreign Employment Bureau shall take steps to identify key occupations covering a wider range of vacancies in foreign employment markets, and regularly update the list prepared to keep abreast with the changing overseas labour demand patterns.
- Based on the updated overseas labour market demand reports, the TVEC together with NAITA and other key stakeholders shall take steps to regularly revise the NCSs and CBT curricula to include the skills needs for foreign employment markets.
- The TVEC, DTET, NAITA, Foreign Employment Bureau, and TVET institutions collectively shall take steps to develop training modules on advanced skills for foreign employment based on the NCSs and CBT curricula prepared by the TVEC and NAITA to cater for the skills needs for foreign employment markets.
- The TVEC together with the DTET, UoVT and Foreign Employment Bureau shall take steps to identify the Colleges of Technologies/Technical Colleges that have the capacity to undertake skills upgrading/re-training programmes for TVET Certificate and Diploma holders to impart advanced knowledge and skills required for foreign employment and commence the provision of training for those who aspire to seek the overseas employment opportunities.

Core Area – TVET 4: Quality Assurance in Technical and Vocation Education and Training

Policy context

Quality Assurance (QA) in education provisions has been considered as one of the effective tools of ensuring the quality and standard of education inputs, processes and outputs. This indeed has become an important tool in enhancing the quality and standards of TVET provisions as the sector is being served by many TVET providers – public, private, and NGO sector providers. As the first step towards the establishment of a quality assurance system for TVET, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No. 20 of 1990 has introduced compulsory registration of training centres and courses. Thereafter, the Tertiary and Vocational Education (*Amendment*) Act No. 50 of 1999 has mandated the TVEC to establish and maintain systems for quality assurance in technical and vocational education and training including setting standards in respect of occupational skills, prescribing guidelines on training programmes, testing, and introducing quality management system. Accordingly, the TVEC has introduced training standards for course accreditation in the late 1990s. Thereafter, with the development of the NVQ framework in 2004, actions have been taken to strengthen the registration of training centres and accreditation of courses to meet the requirements of NVQF. However, the desired outcome in this regard is yet to be realized as the concept of quality has not yet been institutionalized within the training centres, and internalized among the staff. In order to achieve this goal, the Ministry and the TVEC have introduced many advanced features into the QA system such as Quality Management System (QMS), Quality Improvement System (QIS) with star certifications, skills competitions, and excellence awards. Though many quality assurance programmes have been launched by the TVEC, there still exist many training centres operating with expired registration and accreditation. One of the factors contributing to this situation appears to be the perceived notion that the quality assurance mechanism is too cumbersome to adopt.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All TVET institutions and training programmes irrespective of the type of ownership should operate only with valid registration and quality assurance certification.
- DP 2: Quality assurance programmes should be made easy to implement by making them very rational and persuasive, and easy for TVET institutions to understand and comply with.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 4.1: Quality Assurance processes must ensure quality in design and development, delivery, and assessment of training programmes in TVET

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The TVEC shall take steps to review current quality assurance tools; registration of training centres, pre-registration approval, accreditation of courses, Quality Management System (QMS), and Quality Improvement System (QIS) and make them persuasive and simplified but without compromising their effectiveness.
- The TVEC and the UoVT shall take steps to review and revise the training programme aimed at promoting the institutionalization of quality culture in TVET institutions/centres and internalizing quality concepts among

trainers/instructors and managers of both the public and private sectors and deliver them to intended target groups.

- The Ministry and TVEC shall take steps to hold skills competitions and excellence awards among TVET staff and training centres regularly to promote expertise among competent persons and the quality and standards of TVET training centres.
- The TVEC shall take steps to promote public awareness on the importance of quality of training institutions/centres and their programmes, so as to encourage the public to demand quality educational services from TVET training institutions/centres.

Core Area – TVET 5: Human Resources Development and Management

Policy context

The TVET system consists of many sub-functional areas such as education and training, curriculum development, training and assessment, management, research, ICT, buildings and equipment repair and maintenance, procurement, accounts, auditing, etc. All these functional areas need proficient and motivated staff to manage the TVET system to attract youth and industry employees for skills development programmes to enable them to realize their employment aspirations and to meet the skills needs of the local and foreign employment markets.

In Sri Lanka, all TVET institutions recruit staff based on technical qualifications and aptitude for teaching and other skills. Aptitudes are not skills, but they display the potential for skilling. Therefore, the staff should be provided with continuous in-service training to acquire and perfect the required skills.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The technical and vocational education and training system should be manned and fostered by well-qualified and adequately remunerated managerial and teaching staff.
- DP 2: The technical and vocational education and training staff must remain abreast with continuing advances in technology and technical and vocational education.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 5.1: Review and revise human resource development and management system to ensure the availability of competent and motivated staff at all levels of the TVET system

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All TVET institutions shall have cadre profiles/positions with the appropriate mix of permanent, contractual, and visiting staff.
- The Ministry in consultation with TVET institutions shall review the existing salary structures and schemes

of recruitment, and propose attractive salary structures for different categories of TVET employees and a unified scheme of recruitment applicable to all types of TVET institutions to attract and retain the best talent.

- All TVET institutions shall take steps to adopt merit-based promotional schemes supported by an effective staff appraisal system.
- The UoVT shall take steps to design and offer suitable post-graduate study programmes for academic and academic support and managerial staff in the TVET system.
- All TVET institutions should conduct a periodic human resource audit to identify staff with excellent performance and best practices and take steps to propagate such best practices across all TVET institutions.
- All TVET institutions shall take steps to internalize relevant international best practices in human resource management.

Policy-TVET 5.2:

Technical and teaching competencies of the TVET training staff must be continuously upgraded

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry, TVEC, and UoVT should take action to develop a central dedicated trainer training institution with accommodation facilities for participants with a network of staff training centres across the country. This institution should provide training in the following area but not limited to;
 - Pedagogical training and teaching competencies considering changing teaching, training, and learning practices,
 - Skills development programmes on par with technological advancements and changing work practices in the industry, and aimed at the introduction of TVET staff to modern facilities and technologies adopted by the industry,
 - Application of ICT-based teaching and training tools to develop and deliver courses, and
 - Communication skills and English Language skills.
- The TVEC and UoVT shall periodically review and revise the trainer qualification (*i.e. NVQ Level 5 for training and assessment and above*) by benchmarking them against the international best practices and facilitating all trainers to have NVQ Level 5 trainer and assessor qualification or higher level.
- The TVEC shall issue circular instructions making it compulsory for all recruits into the academic staff to undergo induction programmes to ensure a smooth transition into their workplace and to create an understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and workplace norms and rules and regulations.
- The UoVT and TVEC shall take steps to establish linkages with national and international higher education institutions to provide opportunities to TVET staff for further professional development.
- The TVEC together with TVET institutions shall take steps to introduce a scheme to provide periodic industry attachment to trainers and instructors to stay abreast with recent advances in technology.
- The TVET institutions shall take steps to establish a system to employ relief trainers/instructors to conduct

classes when the regular trainers take short-term and long-term leave.

- The TVEC together with TVET institutions shall develop and offer an online learning portal for skills upgrading of all TVET staff.

Core Area – TVET 6: Financing of Technical and Vocational Education

Policy context

In Sri Lanka, the government plays a central role in the provision and financing of TVET courses. Many social groups make repetitive complaints about low financial allocation to the education sector in the country. In general, the TVET sector receives the lowest allocations from the total budget of the education sector despite the significant contribution it makes to the national economy by providing skilled human resources to the local manufacturing and industrial sector and foreign employment.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility for providing adequate funding for technical and vocational education and training.
- DP 2: The technical and vocational training institutions must explore the potential avenues for income generation to complement the Treasury allocations.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 6.1: Ensure provision of adequate funding for the State TVET system while providing a conducive environment for private investment into the TVET sector

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry shall take steps to enhance the annual Treasury allocation to meet the recurrent and capital expenses for facility maintenance and support the further development and advancement of the TVET system.
- The TVEC shall assess Return of Investment (RoI) including inward remittances from foreign employment of NVQ certificate holders and per students cost to justify the enhanced funding for the TVET sector from the Treasury.
- The Ministry and the TVEC shall ensure that donor funds are disbursed for needy reforms of the TVET sector decided based on the Return on Investment (RoI) and risk analyses.
- The TVET institutions shall take steps to ensure investment decisions are made based on effectiveness and efficiency criteria to ensure the rational use of the allocated funds.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall take steps to do effective project planning and prepare realistic

estimates and budgets for public and donor funding.

- The Ministry and the TVEC shall take steps to provide project-based funding to develop private and industry-based TVET institutions in subject areas/fields where public TVET institutions are not performing effectively.
- The TVEC shall negotiate with the State and commercial banks to facilitate loans scheme for private TVET institutions at subsidized interest rates.

Policy-TVET 6.2:

All TVET institutions must be facilitated to engage in income-generating activities to complement the Treasury allocations

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry and the TVEC in consultation with the Treasury shall develop and issue the administrative circular instructions granting the provisions to engage in income-generating activities, and to retain the generated funds for ploughing back as working capital, and for the incentive payment for the staff.
- The TVEC and TVET institutions shall explore income-generating projects such as fee-levying part-time training programmes, and also by linking the training with production outputs but without compromising the quality of training.
- The Ministry together with the TVEC, and employer organizations shall take steps to explore funding from the ETF for supporting the up-skilling of industry employees.
- The Ministry together with the TVEC and TVET institutions shall explore the possibility of securing a CESS and payroll levy as specified in the TVE Act No. 20 of 1990, and introduce new legislation to make it compulsory for the industry contribution for TVET sector development.

Core Area – TVET 7: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy context

All public sector organizations have been established by enacting the legislative enactments passed by the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Those legislations have defined the mandate as well as the powers and functions of those institutions to govern and manage the respective institutions and regulate the functions performed by the units coming under their purview. Under a fast-changing social, political, and economic environment, no legislation cannot remain static, and it must be reviewed and revised periodically to meet challenges in changing environment.

Usually, many legislations are drafted and passed with very ambitious objects. These legislations have been enacted at different times and as a result, there are overlapping mandates given to different institutions. The mandates given to the TVET providers have not been revised as per the changing needs of the current and the future labour market requirements resulting in overlapping and duplication of TVET delivery. Therefore, the existing legislations should be reviewed and refined to make them appropriate for the current and future context. Further, the leading TVET institutions should establish an effective planning and monitoring culture.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All technical and vocational education and training institutions while exploring their full mandates must take steps to update the respective legal frameworks periodically to cater to the emerging challenges and opportunities of the changing socio-economic environment.
- DP 2: All reforms in the technical and vocational education and training sector should be supported by revised legislation and accompanying regulations.
- DP 3: All TVET institutions, agencies, and centres must have effective planning and monitoring mechanisms and be subjected to review and monitoring through regular oversight mechanisms.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 7.1: The TVET regulatory agencies and the institutions should be empowered with legislative enactments which are reviewed and updated periodically

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Review the mandates of the TVEC and the TVET institutions enacted by respective Acts of the Parliament periodically and align them to suit changing socio-economic circumstances of the country and the requirements of the TVET institutions and their provisions with special reference to the following:
 - Mandate/Objects of the TVET institutions and agencies
 - Functions and powers
 - Provision for strengthening the regulatory mechanisms
 - Provision for the public, private, NGO, and industry-based training
 - Provision for industry collaboration with the TVET sector
 - Provision for income generation
 - Provision for collaborative TVET programmes with local and foreign institutions in areas of high labour market demand
 - Provision for empowering of managerial staff of respective institutions to execute the powers vested by the Acts and Ordinances
 - Provision for empowering respective institutions to take legal action against violators of the provisions of the Acts and Ordinances
 - Provision for effective implementation of NVQF and quality assurances system
- The TVEC shall take steps to work in collaboration with the respective Divisional Secretariats to identify unregistered institutions and guide them to comply with the TVEC prescribed regulations.
- The Ministry must review and monitor the implementation of full mandates of Acts at periodic intervals.

Policy-TVET 7.2:

The TVET sector shall be directed by a long-term strategic development plan prepared in accordance with the National TVET Policy Framework

Recommended Strategic Activities

- As specified by the TVE Act No. 20 of 1990, the Ministry and the TVEC in liaison with leading TVET institutions shall prepare a 5-year national TVET development plan in keeping with the National Policy Framework on TVET prescribed by the NEC, and it should be reviewed and updated annually.
- The TVEC by the middle of each year shall prepare and publish a macro level forecast of annual training demand for the ensuing year.
- The TVEC institutions shall develop and implement vocational education and training plans for industry sectors and provinces based on the national TVET development plan prepared jointly by the TVEC and TVET institutions and also by giving due consideration to the TVEC prescribed macro-level forecast of annual training demand.
- All Training centres should have a 5-year development plan and accompanying annual action plans, based on the annual training plans prescribed by the TVET institutions, and the TVEC should consider their availability and effectiveness in the implementation of such plans for the renewal of the registration of training centres.
- The Ministry and the TVEC should monitor the effective implementation of the above plans by the TVET institutions and their centres to ensure the development of the TVET sector as per the national policy directions.

Core Area – TVET 8: Information Management and Research**Policy context**

In order to make informed decisions, the information and data on the training and labour market needs to be collected and collated to produce processed information and make the right and timely interpretation and decisions. This needs continuous research and documentation too. To facilitate this process, the TVEC with the assistance of three consecutive foreign-funded projects has taken steps to build institutional capacities to collect and analyse training and labour market information. The TVEC regularly assesses the labour market demand by analysing vacancies published in newspapers, requests for foreign employment and other relevant data in the Labour Force Survey. Further, the TVEC collects and collates all supply-side training data continuously. They publish Labour Market Information Bulletin twice a year with labour market and training information. Though, this is a quite satisfactory system it suffers from the following shortcomings and issues;

- absence of real-time data entry leads to inaccuracies in information and reporting, and
- delays in collecting and collating training information.

In order to overcome these issues, the TVEC together with several foreign-funded projects has made many attempts to develop MIS and LMIS. As a result, the VTA, NAITA, and DTET have a computer-based system to collect and collate training data, and the TVEC has a computerized system for registration, accreditation, and assessments with relevant databases. However, they have not succeeded to achieve the required outcomes.

Further, it is well recognized that routine data collection and collation alone cannot enlighten the stakeholders on critical issues in TVET. It needs research, and the TVEC must have a programme to promote institutional-level research among TVET staff. In addition, the TVET sector needs a few national-level research studies to address the systemwide issues and identify solutions for regional and national-level issues.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The management decision by the higher management of the technical and vocational education and training sector must be made based on the labour market and training information and research findings.
- DP 2: The technical and vocational education and training sector must be fostered through a vibrant research and innovation system.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-TVET 8.1: The TVET sector must be guided and directed through evidence-based, well-informed decisions derived from real-time analyses of the labour market and training information, and research findings

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry and the TVEC shall take determined efforts to strengthen the existing MIS system with extensive linkage with the network of TVET Institutions.
- The TVEC must coordinate and support all training institutions and centres to have transaction support for MIS with operational and financial information with real-time data entry.
- The TVEC through the central MIS should maintain a graduate tracking facility to trace the movement of their alumni and to estimate the employability of NVQ certificate holders.
- The TVEC and all the public TVET institutions must compile reports on management information annually to support the evidence-based decision-making by the management of respective institutions, regulatory bodies, and the Ministry and the policymakers.
- The TVEC shall take steps to identify data sources, and capture and map data relevant to demand and supply of skills in the labour market.
- The TVEC together with TVET institutions shall take steps to strengthen the research and innovation programme in the following lines;
 - Seek enhanced funding from the Treasury to support research and innovations undertaken by the staff of the TVEC and the TVET institutions,
 - Embark on commissioned research on identified issues and themes of national importance,
 - Establish a dedicated cadre for full-time research staff, and
 - Conduct annual research symposia with the publication of proceedings.

IV කොටස - V වැනි වෙළුම

පිරිවෙන අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රතිපත්ති රාමුව



1. තත්ව සමාලෝචනය

1.1. හැඳින්වීම

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය වූකලී බුදුන් වහන්සේගේ ඉගැන්වීම් පදනම් කරගෙන ආරම්භ වූ අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයකි. පැරණි භාරතීය ආරාමික අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයට සම්බන්ධකම් දක්වන එය ලක්දිවට බුදුසමය ලැබුණු කාලයේ ම ආරම්භ වූවකි. එහි කේන්ද්‍රස්ථානය මහාවිහාරය විය. අනුරාධපුර යුගයේ සිට සියවස් ගණනාවක් මුළුල්ලේ සංවර්ධනය වෙමින් ආ පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය විශේෂයෙන් ම ප්‍රාග් යටත් විජිත යුගයේ (Pre - Colonial era) ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පැවති ප්‍රධාන අධ්‍යාපන ධාරාව ලෙස හැඳින් විය හැකි ය. සමාජයේ උසස් තලයේ කටයුතු කළ සියලු දෙනා ම පාහේ තත්කාලීන මෙකී ආරාමික අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් පන්නරය ලැබුවන් බව පෙනේ.²⁹³ ධර්ම ශාස්ත්‍ර මෙන් ම ලෝක ශාස්ත්‍ර ද ආරාම ආශ්‍රිත අධ්‍යාපනයට අයත් විය. බොහෝ විට එහි අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබුවන් අතර නියමුවෝ වූවෝ භික්ෂූහු ය. බෞද්ධ දර්ශනය හා සංස්කෘතිය ආශ්‍රිත එකී ශ්‍රද්ධා උන්වහන්සේලා සතුව නො අඩුව පැවතිණ. එසේම එය අන්‍යයන්ට සම්ප්‍රේෂණය කිරීමට අවශ්‍ය විවේකය ද උන්වහන්සේලා සතුව විය. ඒ අනුව, බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතිය රැක ගන්නා ලද්දේන් එය පරම්පරාවෙන් පරම්පරාවට ව්‍යාප්ත කරන ලද්දේන් උන්වහන්සේලා විසිනි.

ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ජාතික අධ්‍යාපනය හා බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපනය දෙකක් නොව එකක් ලෙස එකල ක්‍රියාත්මක විය. ජාතික සංවර්ධනයට අදාළ වන අයුරින් හා බෞද්ධ ආකල්පවලට එකඟ වන පරිදි ලාභ අපේක්ෂාවෙන් තොර ව අධ්‍යාපන කටයුතුවල නිරත වීම භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේගේ යුතුකම හා වගකීම විය. රජ, ඇමති, වෙළෙඳ, ගොවි ආදී විවිධ වෘත්තීය ස්තරවලට අයත් වූවෝ ආරාම ආශ්‍රිත විද්‍යාස්ථානයන්හි නඩත්තුව, ආරක්ෂාව හා පෝෂණය සඳහා එක් ව කටයුතු කළහ. දේශීය හා ජාතික අවශ්‍යතාවලට සරිලන අයුරින් බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපනය සකස් වූයේ ගිනි පැවිදි දෙපිරිසේ ම අන්‍යෝන්‍ය අවබෝධය හා සහයෝගය නිසා ය.

අධිරාජ්‍යවාදී පාලනයෙන් මිදී නිදහස ලැබූ ශ්‍රී ලංකාව ජනරජයක් බවට පත් වූ පසු 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතින් හා 1980 අංක 01 දරන නියෝගමාලාව මගින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ව්‍යුහගත කරන ලදී. ඒ අනුව, ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ පිරිවෙන් වර්ග තුනකි. i) මූලික පිරිවෙන්, ii) මහ පිරිවෙන් හා iii) පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතන යනුවෙනි. විද්‍යාදාය, විද්‍යාලංකාර යන පිරිවෙන් දෙක හැර ඒ වන විට මෙරට ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ අනෙකුත් සියලු පිරිවෙන් එම පනතට යටත් කෙරිණ. එසේම, එකී පනතට යටත් සියලු පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂ මණ්ඩලයක් මගින් පාලනය කරනු ලැබේ.

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ මූලික අරමුණ වන්නේ, භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේලාට අධ්‍යාපනය ලබා දීම වේ. ඒසේ වුවත්, සුවිශේෂී අවස්ථාවන්වලදී ගිනි ශිෂ්‍යයන්ට ද අධ්‍යාපන පහසුකම් ලබා ගැනීමට අවස්ථාව විවරකර ඇත. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය මගින් ක්‍රීඩා ශාසනය ආරක්ෂාකරමින් අනාගත ලෝකයේ අභියෝගවලට මුහුණ දිය හැකි භික්ෂූ පරපුරක් බිහිකළ යුතු වේ. තවද, ආධ්‍යාත්මික ගුණ නුවණින් හෙබි පුරවැසියන් බිහිකරලීමට උන්වහන්සේලාගේ දායකත්වය රටට අත්‍යවශ්‍ය වේ. අග්‍රගණ්‍ය භික්ෂූ පරපුරක් බිහි කිරීම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය පහසුකම් සැලසීම රජයේ ප්‍රධාන වගකීමක් වන්නේ ය.

1.2. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ආරම්භය හා ව්‍යාප්තිය

බුද්ධධර්මය ඉගැන්වීම සඳහා සැකසුණු අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයේ වර්තමාන භාවිතය පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සේ අප හමුවේ විද්‍යාමාන වේ. ක්‍රි. ව. 6 වන සියවසෙහි ලොව පහළ වූ ගෞතම බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ තමන් අවබෝධ කරගත් ධර්මය අන්‍යයන් වෙත සම්ප්‍රේෂණය කිරීමේ ක්‍රියාවලිය අරඹමින් බරණැස ඉසිපතන මගදායේ දී කොණ්ඩඤ්ඤ ආදී තම ශ්‍රාවකයින් පස්දෙනෙකුට දැනම් දෙසූහ. එය බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපනයේ ආරම්භය ලෙස සැලකේ.²⁹⁴ මෙම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය භාරතය තුළ ඉතා ශීඝ්‍රයෙන් ව්‍යාප්ත විය. බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ ජීවමානව වැඩසිටි වසර හතළිස් පහක කාලය තුළදීම විවිධ ඵලඹුම් මගින් එය පැතිරී ගියේය. විශිෂ්ට ආචාර්යවරයෙකු වශයෙන් විවිධ ක්‍රමවේද මගින් කරුණු පැහැදිලි කිරීමට බුදුරජාණන් වහන්සේ සමත් වූහ. උන්වහන්සේ යටතේ ශික්ෂණය ලද දක්ෂ ශ්‍රාවකයෝ ද එකී සමත්කම ප්‍රදර්ශනය කළහ. එවන් පිරිස් යටතේ ඉගෙනගත් බොහෝ අතවැසියෝ ද වූහ. ආචාර්යවරයා හා අතවැසියෝ එක් ගණයක් හෙවත් සමූහයක් ලෙස ක්‍රියාකළහ. එය බුද්ධ පරිනිර්වාණයෙන් පසු ද අඛණ්ඩව පැවතිණ. ක්‍රි. පූ. තෙවන සියවසේ දී මිහිඳු මානිමියන් මගින් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවට ද එම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය හිමි වූ අතර අනුරාධපුර මහාවිහාරය එකල එම අධ්‍යාපනය ක්‍රියාත්මක කළ ප්‍රධාන මධ්‍යස්ථානය විය. පසුව ලක්දිව වෙතත් තැන්වලට ද එම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය පැතිර ගියේ ය.

ධර්මය හා විනය හැඳුරීම බෞද්ධ ආරාමික අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයේ මූලික ලක්ෂණය විය. තදනුබද්ධ තටාගත දේශනා ගුරු

293. අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය. (2012). පිරිවෙන් ද්විභාෂා අධ්‍යාපනය සම්බන්ධ යෝජිත සංකල්පීය රාමුව.
294. ශ්‍රී ලංකා බෞද්ධ හා පාලි විශ්ව විද්‍යාලය. (2016). ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පාර්වේණික අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ පර්යේෂණ වාර්තාව.

මුඛයෙන් ඇසීම, වාචෝද්දාන කිරීම හා එහි අර්ථය විග්‍රහාත්මකව පිරික්සීම එහිදී සිදුවිය. නවද, ගුරු ඇසුරෙන් ලබාගත් ගැඹුරු ඥානය හා ජීවිත පරිඥානය මෙන්ම ආරාමික පසුබිම තුළ පැවති ප්‍රායෝගික ක්‍රියාකාරකම් නිසා නිකුත් වන්නේදා තුළ සුවිශේෂ ගුරු පෞරුෂයක් ගොඩනැගුණි. එසේම, ඔවුහු ඥානසම්පාදකයන් වශයෙන් ද ක්‍රියා කළහ. ඒ නිසා රජුගේ පටන් රටවැසියා දක්වා වූ ගිහි පිරිසට අවශ්‍ය බුද්ධිමය මාර්ගෝපදේශ නිකුත් වෙතත් ලැබිණ. බුද්ධධර්මය විචරණය කරගනීමෙන් හා පිළිපැදීමෙන් ලබාගත් පරිචය තුළ ගොඩනැගුණු ජීවිත පරිඥානය තුළ නිකුත්වූ අධ්‍යාපන නායකත්ව භූමිකාව තහවුරු විය. විදේශ ආක්‍රමණ, දේශීය විප්ලව, දුර්භික්ෂ යනාදි සංකීර්ණ අවස්ථා හා විවිධ ආගමික මතිමතාන්තර ආදියට නොබියව මුහුණ දෙමින් මෙම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රියාවලියේ නිරත වූ නිකුත්, බුදුදහමත් බුදුසසුනත් රටේ සංස්කෘතියත් ආරක්ෂා කරගත්හ. ඒ සඳහා අවශ්‍ය රාජ්‍ය අනුග්‍රහය ද නොඅඩුව ලැබිණ.

බුද්ධවචනය ග්‍රන්ථාරූඪ ව නොතිබූ මුල් යුගයේ ගුරු-සිසු පරපුරෙන් පර්යාප්තිය පරම්පරාවෙන් පරම්පරාවට පවත්වාගෙන යාමට අවශ්‍ය ක්‍රියාමාර්ග එම අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ ක්‍රියාවට නැගිණ. ක්‍රි. පූ. පළමු වන සියවසේ දී ත්‍රිපිටකය ග්‍රන්ථාරූඪ කිරීමෙන් පසු ඒ අධ්‍යාපනයට නව ජීවයක් ලැබුණේ ය.

මුල් අවධියෙහි අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා ම නිශ්චිත ව වෙන් වූ ස්ථාන නො තිබිණි. නිකුත් වන්නේදා වැඩ සිටි ආරාමය ම උගන්වන ස්ථානය ද විය. එම ආරාමය 'පරිවේණ' නම් විය.²⁹⁵ එක් ආරාමයක එවන් තැන් රැසක් විය. ආචාර්යවරයා නැවතී සිටින එම පිරිවෙනට ගොස් ශිෂ්‍යයෝ ඉගෙන ගත්හ. ක්‍රි. ව. පස්වන සියවස වන විට ඒවායේ පුස්තකාල පවා තිබුණි. මහාවිහාරයන්හි සන්නිපාතශාලා වැනි විශාල ගොඩනැගිලි වූ අතර ඒවායෙහි ද ඉගැන්වීම් සිදුකර තිබේ. අනුරාධපුර ලෝවාමහා ප්‍රාසාදයේ ඒ ඒ මහල්වල වෙන් වෙන් ව ඉගැන්වීම් කටයුතු සිදුවී ඇති බවට සාධක තිබේ. ක්‍රි. ව. පස්වන සියවස වන විට මහාවිහාරය හා අභයගිරිය යන විහාරද්වය ජාත්‍යන්තර මට්ටමින් ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ අධ්‍යාපන මධ්‍යස්ථාන බවට පත්ව තිබිණ. ෆාහියන්, සියුංසියැං වැනි චීන ජාතික නිකුත්ගේ දේශාටන වාර්තාවල ඒ පිළිබඳ තොරතුරු දක්නට තිබේ. එම වාර්තාවලින් අනාවරණය වන කරුණු අනුව නූතන ලෝකසන්දර්භයෙහි දක්නට ඇති විශ්වවිද්‍යාල මට්ටමේ අධ්‍යාපනයක් එවකට ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ආරාමික අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ ක්‍රියාත්මකව තිබූ බව පෙනෙයි.

මෙසේ වැඩිහිටි ආරාමික අධ්‍යාපනය පොළොන්නරුව යුගය වන විට වඩාත් ස්ථාපිතව පැවතියේ ය. අනුරාධපුරයේ පැවති 'මුල' නමින් හැඳින්වූ නිකුත් අධ්‍යාපන ගුරුකුල අටක් පොළොන්නරුව යුගය වන විට 'මුලායතන' නමින් ආයතනික ස්වරූපයෙන් ගොඩනැගී තිබිණ. සේලන්තර, දක්ඛිණ, සේනාපති, උත්තර, මහානෙත්තප්පාසාද, කප්පුර, වාහදීපක හා සරොගාම ආදී නම්වලින් ඒවා හඳුන්වනු ලැබිණ.

විවිධ රාජධානි යුගයන්හි අඛණ්ඩ ව පැවත ආ මෙම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය ජයවර්ධනපුර රාජධානි යුගයේ දී ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ ආකාරය ඒ යුගයේ ලියැවුණු සිංහල සංදේශවලින් ද දැන හැකි ය. ප්‍රබල අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන රැසක් එකල මෙරට ක්‍රියාත්මක විය. ඒ අතර, තොටගමුවේ විප්සකා පිරිවේණ, කැරගල පද්මාවති පිරිවේණ, විදාගම ඝනානන්ද පිරිවේණ, ඉරුගල්කුලතිලක පිරිවේණ හා පැපිලියාන සුනේත්‍රාදේවී පිරිවේණ සුප්‍රසිද්ධ විය. මෙම පිරිවේණ ක්‍රියාත්මක වූ අධ්‍යාපන පටිපාටිය විමසීමෙන් පැහැදිලි වන්නේ එකල රටේ සැමටම පොදු සහ අවශ්‍ය අධ්‍යාපනයක් පිරිවේණ තුළින් ලැබුණු බවයි.

ක්‍රි. ව. 1505 දී ලක්දිවට පැමිණි පෘතුගීසීන්ගේ ආගමි ව්‍යාප්තියෙන් ද, ඉන්පසු පැමිණි ලන්දේසි ආක්‍රමණයෙන් සහ දැඩි ආගමි ප්‍රචාරණයෙන් ද, බෞද්ධ ආරාම කේන්ද්‍ර කරගත් අධ්‍යාපනය මෙන් ම බුද්ධශාසනය ද ශිෂ්‍යයන් පිරිහීමට ලක්වුණි. සීතාවක රාජසිංහගේ ක්‍රියාකාරකම් හමුවේ එය තවදුරටත් නිවූ විය. ජීවිතය රැක ගැනීම පිණිස වඩා වෙනසෙන්ම නිකුත්ව සිදු වූ අතර ඇතැම්විට නිකුත්වේශය හැර ගිහිවේශයෙන් පෙනී සිටින්නට ද සිදුවිය. එහෙත් ඔවුහු දිවිහිමියෙන් බෞද්ධ ග්‍රන්ථ ආරක්ෂා කළහ. ඒ හා සමග ම ගිහියන්ට අවශ්‍ය ශාන්තිකර්ම, වෛද්‍යකම්, නැකැත්කම් ආදියෙහි හියැලී සිටියහ. මේ අතර ලන්දේසිහු හා පෘතුගීසිහු ඔවුන්ගේ අධ්‍යාපනය මෙරට ව්‍යාප්ත කරන්නට පටන්ගත්හ. ලක්දිවෙන් වියැකෙමින් පැවති බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපනයත්, ශාසනයත් නැවත නංවාලන්නට දැන අටවන සියවසේ වැඩසිටි වැලිවිට ශ්‍රී සරණංකර ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ පුරෝගාමී වූහ. සාමණේර අවධියේ දී මහත් වැයමින් අධ්‍යාපනය ලබා සියමෙන් උපසම්පදාව ගෙන්වාගෙන උපසම්පදාවීමෙන් පසුව හා සංඝරාජ තනතුරට පත්වීමෙන් පසුවත් උන්වහන්සේ ඒ පිළිබඳ ඉමහත් කැපවීමකින් ක්‍රියාකළහ. ධර්ම විනය ප්‍රගුණ කිරීමට ඇවැසි ශබ්ද ශාස්ත්‍ර ලබා දෙන ආයතන දෙකක් නියමකන්දේ සහ ගඩලාදෙණියේ උන්වහන්සේ විසින් ආරම්භ කිරීම ඉන් එක් සේවාවකි.

උඩරටට ගොස් සංඝරාජ මානිමියන්ගෙන් ධර්මශාස්ත්‍ර හදාළ පහතරට ශිෂ්‍යයෝ තම ගම් පළාත්වලට ආපසු පැමිණ තවත් බොහෝ පිරිස්වලට ඉගැන්වීමට පටන්ගත්හ. ඒ අතර සුප්‍රසිද්ධ කරතොට ධම්මාරාම හිමියන් මාතර වෙහෙරගම්පිට විහාරයේ වැඩ සිටිමින් ආරම්භ කළ ශාස්ත්‍ර ශාලාව ප්‍රමුඛ වෙයි. උන්වහන්සේගේ ශිෂ්‍යයන්ගෙන් කෙනෙක් වූ බෙන්තර අන්ට්‍රස්සි හිමියන්

295. ශ්‍රී ලංකා බෞද්ධ හා පාලි විශ්ව විද්‍යාලය. (2016). ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පාර්වේණික අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ පර්යේෂණ වාර්තාව.

බෙන්තර වනවාස විහාරයේ 1827 දී ආරම්භ කළ විද්‍යාස්ථානයේ ශාස්ත්‍රාචාර්යවරයාගේ යුරෝපය දක්වා පැතිර ගිය බව වාර්තා වේ. එම අවස්ථාව වන විට ශ්‍රී ලංකාව බ්‍රිතාන්‍යයේ යටත් විජිතයක් බවට පත්ව තිබූ අතර, එවකට මෙහි පැමිණි ඇතැම් ඉංග්‍රීසි ජාතිකයෝ සිංහල හා පාලි භාෂාව ඉගෙනීමට මෙම විද්‍යාස්ථානයට පැමිණියහ. එහි ආචාර්යවරයෙක් වූ යාත්‍රාමුල්ලේ ධම්මාරාම හිමියන්ගෙන් පාලි භාෂාව ඉගෙනීමට ඊස් ඩේවිස්, රොබට් සිසර් විල්ඩර්ස් වැනි ඉංග්‍රීසි ජාතිකයන් ද පැමිණි බව ඓතිහාසික ලේඛනවල සඳහන් වේ.

කරනොට ධම්මාරාම මාහිමියන්ගේ ම ශිෂ්‍යයෙකු වූ ගාල්ලේ මේධංකර හිමියෝ පැල්මඩුල්ල විහාරස්ථානයේ නවත් එවැනිම විද්‍යාස්ථානයක් ආරම්භ කළහ. වර්ෂ 1823 දී පානදුරේ අරුගේගොඩ ඉන්ද්‍රසරාරාම විහාරයේ දී මැදිමාලේ රේචන මාහිමියන් වෙතින් පැවිදි වූ වලානේ සිද්ධාර්ථ හිමියන් 1832 දී එහි ගොස් අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබූහ. ඉදිරුවේ සුමංගල, වස්කඩුවේ සුභති ආදී තෙරවරු ද එකල එහි ඉගෙන ගත්හ. එහි අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් පසිවරු බවට පත් වූ මෙකී තෙරවරු ස්වකීය ප්‍රදේශයන්ට වැඩම කොට විද්‍යාස්ථාන ඇරඹූහ. රත්මලානේ පදිංචිව සිටි දොන් පුරෝලිස් ලේකම් ඇතුළු සැදැහැනි බෞද්ධයෝ ක්‍රි.ව 1849 දී රත්මලානේ යෝග්‍යස්ථානයක අධ්‍යාපන මධ්‍යස්ථානයක් ඉදිකර එය එකල පහතරට කීර්තිධර පඬිවරයාණන් වහන්සේ නමක් වූ වලානේ ශ්‍රී සිද්ධාර්ථ හිමියන් වෙත පුජාකළහ. උන්වහන්සේ එහි පරමධම්මචේතිය පිරිවෙණ ආරම්භ කළහ. එහි අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබූ හික්කඩුවේ ශ්‍රී සුමංගල මාහිමිපාණන් වහන්සේ 1873 දී කොළඹ මාලිගාකන්දේ විද්‍යාදාය පිරිවෙණත්, රත්මලානේ ශ්‍රී ධර්මාලෝක මාහිමිපාණන් වහන්සේ 1875 දී පැලියගොඩ විද්‍යාලංකාර පිරිවෙණත් ආරම්භ කළහ. මෙම පිරිවෙන් දෙක මුල් කරගෙන ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය නව ජීවයක් ලැබීය. ඒවායෙහි ශාඛා ප්‍රශාඛා පිරිවෙන් ශ්‍රී ලංකාව පුරා වේගයෙන් ස්ථාපිත විය. වර්තමානය වන විට අටසියයකට අධික පිරිවෙන් සංඛ්‍යාවක් ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ක්‍රියාත්මක වේ.²⁹⁶

1.3. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය කෙරෙහි රජයේ මැදිහත්වීම: නිදහසට පෙර හා පසු

විද්‍යාදාය හා විද්‍යාලංකාර පිරිවෙන්වල පැවති විශිෂ්ට අධ්‍යාපනික පසුබිම ශ්‍රී ලංකාණ්ඩුවේ නොමඳ අගයීමකට ලක්වී ඇත. ඒවා අඛණ්ඩව විධිමත් ලෙස පවත්වාගෙන යාම සඳහා අනුබල දීම වශයෙන් විද්‍යාදාය හා විද්‍යාලංකාර පිරිවෙන්වලට විශේෂ ආධාර මුදලක් වාර්ෂිකව පිරිනමා තිබේ. එසේම අනෙක් පිරිවෙන් සඳහා ද ඊට වඩා අඩු මට්ටමකින් ආධාර මුදල් පිරිනමා ඇත. කෙසේ වුවත්, 1943 වර්ෂයේ දී අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍ය ආචාර්ය සී. ඩබ්. ඩබ්. කන්නන්ගර මහතා ‘පිරිවෙන් උපදේශක සභාව’ පත් කරන ලදී. එහි නිර්දේශ මත 1939 අංක 31 දරන පොදු අධ්‍යාපන ආඥා පනතේ 32 වගන්තිය අනුව සකස් වූ ‘ආධාර ලබන පිරිවෙන් පිළිබඳ ව්‍යවස්ථා සංග්‍රහය’ රාජ්‍ය මන්ත්‍රණ සභාවේ සම්මත වී 1947 සිට ක්‍රියාත්මක විය. මෙය ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ රජය විසින් සම්මත කළ පිරිවෙන් පිළිබඳ මුල් ම රෙගුලාසි මාලාව වේ.

මෙම නියෝග ක්‍රියාත්මක වී නොබෝ කලකින් පිරිවෙන්වලට වැඩි වරප්‍රසාද ලබාදෙන ලෙසට බෞද්ධ සමාජයෙන් ඉල්ලීම් ඉදිරිපත් විය. ඒ අනුව, සැකසුණු වගන්ති 36 කින් යුතු පිරිවෙන් නියෝග මාලාව 1959 දී පාර්ලිමේන්තුවේ සම්මත විය. ඊට අනුව, කතිෂ්ඨ, ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ, හා විශ්වවිද්‍යාල අනුබද්ධායතන යන වර්ග තුනකට අයත් පිරිවෙන් බිහිවිය. රජයේ පාසල්වල 6 ශ්‍රේණියේ සිට අ. පො. ස. සාමාන්‍ය පෙළ පන්ති හා ප්‍රාචීන පුරාණ පන්ති කතිෂ්ඨ පිරිවෙණක ද, අ. පො. ස. උසස් පෙළ පන්ති හා ප්‍රාචීන මධ්‍යම පන්ති ජ්‍යෙෂ්ඨ පිරිවෙණක ද, විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයක අවසරය මත ප්‍රථම උපාධි පරීක්ෂණය සඳහා පන්ති විශ්වවිද්‍යාල අනුබද්ධායතන පිරිවෙන්වල ද පැවැත්වීමට ඒ අනුව අවකාශ හිමි විය.

මෙම නියෝග මාලාව ක්‍රියාත්මක වීමත් සමඟ, පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍ය පිරිස ඉක්මවා විශාල ගිහි ශිෂ්‍ය පිරිසක් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට එක්විය. ඒ සමඟ ම එතෙක් පැවති ත්‍රිපිටක ධර්මය හා තදානුබද්ධ භාෂා ශාස්ත්‍ර මෙන්ම, සාම්ප්‍රදායික විෂයන් සමඟ රටේ පැවති පොදු අධ්‍යාපනයේ විෂයමාලාව ද පිරිවෙණ තුළ ක්‍රියාත්මක වන්නට පටන් ගැණින. කලක් යන විට පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට ම ආවේණික වූ විෂය යටපත් වෙමින් සාමාන්‍ය අධ්‍යාපනයට අදාළ විෂයමාලාව නැගී සිටියේ ය. එහෙයින් මෙම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය තුළින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ අපේක්ෂිත අරමුණු ඉටු නොවන බව මහාසංසරත්නය දැඩිව අවධාරණය කළ අතර, 1967 අංක 4 වකුලේඛනය මගින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ වෙනස්කම් ඇති කිරීමට උත්සාහ ගත් නමුත් එයින් අපේක්ෂිත ආකාරයේ ප්‍රතිඵලයක් නො ලැබිණි. මෙම පසුබිම යටතේ එවකට සිටි අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යවරයා විසින් ‘පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන විශේෂ කමිටුව’ නමින් කමිටුවක් පත්කරන ලදී. මෙම කමිටුව කරුණු ගවේෂණයේ දී පහත සඳහන් කරුණු කෙරෙහි විශේෂ අවධානය යොමු කොට ඇත.

1. ආගමික අංශයට වඩා ලෞකිකත්වයට බරව පවත්වා ගෙන යන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ගැන නො සතුටට පත් ගිහි පැවිදි ජනතාවගේ අදහස්,
2. ස්වකීය පිරිවෙන්වල නඩත්තුව කරගෙන යාම පිළිබඳව ආර්ථික දුෂ්කරතාවලින් පෙළෙන කෘතෘතාධිකාරී හිමිවරුන්ගේ අවශ්‍යතා,

296. විද්‍යාලංකාර මහා පිරිවෙණ. (2011). විදුලකර අභිමන් ස්වර්ණ ජයන්ති සැමරුම් ශාස්ත්‍රීය සංග්‍රහය

3. ආර්ථික වටිනාකමක් සහිත අධ්‍යාපනයක් ලැබීමට උනන්දුවන ශිෂ්‍යයන්,
4. වෘත්තීය පිළිබඳ අසහනයට පත් පරිවේණික වාර්ෂිකවරුන්ගේ අවශ්‍යතා,

ඉහත කරුණු සැලකිල්ලට ගනිමින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන විශේෂ කමිටුව විසින් පූර්ණ වාර්තාවක් රජයට ඉදිරිපත් කරන ලදී. එම වාර්තාව පදනම් කොට සකස් කළ 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත, ශ්‍රී ලංකා ප්‍රජාතන්ත්‍රවාදී ජනරජයේ පාර්ලිමේන්තුවේ සම්මත වී එකී පනතේ නියෝග හා විධිවිධාන 1980. 10. 01 දින සිට ක්‍රියාත්මක වන්නට පටන් ගැණින.

1.4. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත එහි බලතල හා කාර්යභාරය

දැනට ක්‍රියාත්මක වන සියලු පිරිවෙන් 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතට හා 1980 අංක 01 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සම්බන්ධ නියෝග මාලාවට යටත් වේ. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතේ වගන්ති 36 කින් හා පනතට අදාළ නියෝග වගන්ති 41 කින් යුක්ත වේ.²⁹⁷

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතේ කොටස් 6 ක් ඇත.

- I. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ හා අරමුණු
- II. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන මණ්ඩලය
- III. පිරිවෙන් වර්ග කිරීම සහ පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවීම
- IV. අධ්‍යක්ෂ ජනරාල්වරයාගේ බලතල කාර්ය හා කාර්යව්‍ය
- V. පිරිවෙන් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීන් වහන්සේලා සහ පරිවේණික වාර්ෂිකවරුන්
- VI. පොදු විධිවිධාන

1.4.1. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ හා අරමුණු/ පනතෙහි 2, 3 වගන්ති

අරමුණ - නිකුත් වහන්සේලාට සහ වයස අවුරුදු 14 ඉක්ම වූ ගිහි පිරිමි ශිෂ්‍යයන්ට අධ්‍යාපන පහසුකම් සැලසීම.

පරමාර්ථ -

- (අ) නිකුත් වහන්සේලා තුළ ත්‍රිවිධ ශාසනයේ ආරක්ෂාව හා අභිවෘද්ධිය සඳහා උනන්දුවක් ඇති කිරීම.
- (ආ) නිකුත් පරපුර අවිච්ඡින්න ව හා නිර්මල ව පවත්වා ගෙන යාම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය විනය, ත්‍රිපිටක ඥානය හා ධර්ම ගරුක බව නිකුත් වහන්සේලා තුළ ඇති කිරීම.
- (ඇ) ධර්මදාන මෙහෙයෙහි හා යෝග්‍ය වෙනත් සේවාවල නිරතවීම සඳහා නිකුත් වහන්සේලාට දැනුම හා ශික්ෂණය ලබාදීම.
- (ඈ) ගැඹුරු භාෂාන්තර හා විෂයාන්තර ඥානයක් ලබාගැනීම සඳහා නිකුත් වහන්සේලාට පහසුකම් සැලසීම.

1.4.2. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන මණ්ඩලය (පනත/ 4 - 5 - 6 වගන්ති)

මහානායක නිමිවරුන් සිව් නම (මල්වතු, අස්ගිරි, අමරපුර, රාමඤ්ඤ නිකායවල) අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ ලේකම් හා පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව හා අධ්‍යක්ෂ නිල බලයෙන් පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ සමාජිකයෝ වෙති. අමාත්‍යවරයා විසින් පැවිදි තුන් නමක් ද ගිහි තුන් දෙනෙක් ද පත්කරන අතර, මණ්ඩලයේ සමස්ත සාමාජික සංඛ්‍යාව දොළොසකි. ඒ අනුව පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ විධායක බලධරයා අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ ලේකම් වන අතර පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාවේ අධ්‍යක්ෂක, පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ ලේකම් වේ.

මෙම මණ්ඩලයේ කාර්ය හා කාර්යව්‍ය විමසන විට පෙනීයන්නේ එය උපදේශක තත්ත්වයෙන් මෙන් ම විධායක තත්ත්වයෙන් ද ක්‍රියාකරන බවයි.

1. පිරිවෙන් විෂයමාලාව හා පාඨමාලාවේ කාලය නියම කිරීම.
2. පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවීම.
3. පරිවේණික වාර්ෂික පත්වීම් අනුමත කිරීම, මාරු කිරීම, උසස් වීම් ලබා දීම හා සේවය නතර කිරීම.
4. පිරිවෙන් ලියාපදිංචි කිරීම හා ලියාපදිංචි අවලංගු කිරීම.

297. 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත. (1979, ඔක්තෝම්බර්). 1979 අංක 64. 1979 ඔක්තෝම්බර් 23

- 5. පිරිවෙන් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීත්වයට හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා නිර්දේශ කිරීම ආදී බලතල පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන මණ්ඩලයට හිමි වේ.

1.4.3. පිරිවෙන් වර්ග කිරීම හා පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවීම (පනතෙහි 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 වගන්ති හා 6, 7, 8, 9 නියෝග)

1959 පිරිවෙන් නියෝග මාලාවේ වර්ගීකරණය ඉවත්කොට මෙම පනත මගින් පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන හැර සෙසු පිරිවෙන්

- 1. මූලික පිරිවෙණ 2. මහ පිරිවෙණ 3. පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතන යයි වර්ග කොට ඇත.

මූලික පිරිවෙණ (පනත/ 8 වගන්තිය හා නියෝග 6)

මූලික පිරිවෙණ I ශ්‍රේණියේ සිට V ශ්‍රේණිය දක්වා පන්ති පැවැත්විය යුතු නේවාසික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනයකි. නියෝග 6 (අ) අනුව මූලික පිරිවෙණක අධ්‍යාපන පාඨමාලාවක කාලසීමාව වසර පහක් (5) විය යුතු ය. එහි පළමු වසර දෙක පැවිදි බණ දහම්, සේබියා, වත් පිරිත් පුහුණු කිරීමටත්, ලේඛන හා උච්චාරණ විධි පුහුණු කිරීමටත් වෙන්ව ඇත. ඉතිරි වර්ෂ තුන පාලි, සිංහල, සංස්කෘත, ත්‍රිපිටක ධර්මය, ඉංග්‍රීසි, ගණිතය යන අනිවාර්ය විෂයයන් ද ඉතිහාසය, භූගෝල විද්‍යාව, සමාජ විද්‍යාව, විද්‍යාව, හින්දු, දෙමළ යන විෂයයන් හා මණ්ඩලය අනුමත කරනු ලැබිය හැකි වෙනත් විෂයන් ද ඉගැන්විය හැකි ය.

මූලික පිරිවෙණක ශිෂ්‍ය හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා 12 නමකට නො අඩු සංඛ්‍යාවක් නාම ලේඛනයේ සිටිය යුතු ය.

- මූලික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පාඨමාලාව අවසානයෙහි මණ්ඩලයේ උපදෙස් මත විභාග කොමසාරිස් විසින් පරීක්ෂණයක් පැවැත්විය යුතු ය. (මෙම විභාග අ. පො. ස. සාමාන්‍ය පෙළට සමාන කොට ඇත.)

මහ පිරිවෙණ (පනත/ 6 වගන්තිය හා නියෝග 7)

- ප්‍රාචීන භාෂෝපකාර සමාගමේ පුරාමිත, මධ්‍යම, අවසාන යන විභාගත්‍රය
- අ. පො. ස. උසස් පෙළ විභාගය

යන විභාගයන්ට අදාළ විෂය හා මණ්ඩලය විසින් අනුමත කරනු ලැබිය හැකි වෙනත් විෂයයන් මහ පිරිවෙණක ඉගැන්විය හැකි ය. දර්ශනය, ආගම්, ඉතිහාසය, වාග්විද්‍යාව, ආයුර්වේදය, හස්ත කර්මාන්තය, ප්‍රතිමා ශිල්පය, ජ්‍යෝතිෂය යන විෂයයන් ද අතිරේක විෂයයන් ලෙස ඉගැන්විය හැකි ය.

- මහ පිරිවෙණක නාම ලේඛනයේ ශිෂ්‍ය හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා 25 නමක් වත් සිටිය යුතු වේ. මූලික පිරිවෙණ හා මහ පිරිවෙණ එක ම කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීවරයෙකු යටතේ එකම භූමියක පැවැත්විය හැකි ය.
- නියෝග 7 (ආ) අනුව මහ පිරිවෙණක පාඨමාලාවල උපරිම අධ්‍යයන කාලසීමාව (අදාළ විභාග සඳහා පවත්වන පන්ති අනුව) මණ්ඩලය විසින් කලින් කළ තීරණය කළ යුතු ය.

පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතන (පනත/ 10 වගන්තිය හා නියෝග 8)

- ප්‍රාචීන භාෂෝපකාර සමාගම, විභාග දෙපාර්තමේන්තුව හා පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය විසින් පිලිගනු ලබන විභාග, විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයක් විසින් පවත්වන විභාග සඳහා පන්ති පැවැත්විය හැකි ය.
- රජයේ පාසලක අටවන ශ්‍රේණිය සමත් ගිහි ශිෂ්‍යයන් ද මූලික පිරිවෙන් අවසාන විභාගය සමත් පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයන් ද පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතනයට ඇතුළත් කරගත හැකි ය.
- මෙහි ශිෂ්‍යයන් සියයකට නොඅඩු සංඛ්‍යාවක් සිටිය යුතු අතර, ඉන් 25 ක් හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා විය යුතු ය.

පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පනත (පනත/ 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 වගන්ති හා නියෝග - 9)

පනත සඳහන් අරමුණු ඉටුකර ගැනීම සඳහා පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය විසින් පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවිය යුතු ය.

1. පිරිවෙන්වල ඉගැන්වීම.
2. බුද්ධ ධර්මය හා බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතිය පතුරුවා හැරීම හා බෞද්ධ ජීවන ක්‍රමය ප්‍රචලිත කිරීම.
3. සමාජ සේවය.
4. බෞද්ධ භාවනා ක්‍රමවල යෙදීම.

5. බුද්ධි ධර්මය හා විනය පිළිබඳ දැනුමක් ලබා ගැනීම.
6. බුද්ධි ධර්මය ඉගැන්වීම.

පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයකට කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හිමි ඇතුළු සාමාජිකයන් දෙදෙනෙකුගෙන් සමන්විත උපදේශක කමිටුවක් තිබිය යුතු ය. (පිරිවෙන්වල ඉගැන්වීම හා සමාජ සේවය සඳහා පමණක් දැනට අභ්‍යාස ආයතන දෙකක් පිහිටුවා ඇත.)

අධ්‍යක්ෂ ජනරාල්වරයාගේ කාර්ය හා කාර්යය (පනත/ 18 වගන්තිය)

අමාත්‍යවරයාගේ සාමාන්‍ය විධානයට හා පාලනයට යටත් ව පනත ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම පිළිබඳ ව අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම්වරයා විසින් වගකිව යුතු ය. පනතේ බලතල හා කාර්ය කාර්යය ඉටුකිරීමට අධ්‍යාපන දෙපාර්තමේන්තුවේ වෙනත් නිලධාරීන් බඳවා ගැනීම ද කළ හැකි ය.

1.4.4. පිරිවෙන් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීන් වහන්සේලා පරිවේණාධිපතින් වහන්සේලා හා පරිවේණාචාර්යවරුන් (පනතෙහි 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 වගන්ති)

කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීන් වහන්සේ

අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම් විසින් පත්කළ කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී ස්වාමීන්වහන්සේ නමක් සෑම පිරිවේණක ම සිටිය යුතු ය. විභාගාධිපතින් වහන්සේ හෝ උන්වහන්සේ නම් කළ භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේ නමක් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී ලෙස පත්කළ හැකි ය. විභාගාධිපති ධුරයේ ගැටලුවක් ඇති වූ අවස්ථාවක මණ්ඩලයේ එකඟතාව මත සුදුසු වෙනත් භික්ෂුවක් අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම් විසින් පත් කළ යුතු ය. රජයේ නතතුරක් දරන භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේ නමකට කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී තනතුරක් දැරිය නොහැකි ය. කෘත්‍යාධිකාරීන් වහන්සේ පිරිවෙන් පරිපාලනය පිළිබඳ ව අධ්‍යාපන ලේකම්ට වගකිව යුතු ය.

බලතල හා කාර්ය කාර්යය

- පිරිවෙනෙහි භෞතික අවශ්‍යතා සම්පූර්ණ කිරීම.
- නියමයන්ට අනුව අධ්‍යාපන හා සංස්කෘතික තත්වයන් පවත්වා ගැනීම.
- මණ්ඩලයේ අනුමැතිය අනුව පරිවේණාධිපති හා පරිවේණාචාර්යවරුන් පත්කිරීම හා සේවය නතර කිරීම.
- රජයෙන් ලැබෙන ආධාර මුදල් නිසි පරිදි යෙදවීම.
- පිරිවෙනෙහි පරිපාලනය සහ නඩත්තුව.
- පරිවේණාචාර්යවරුන්ගේ කාර්යය නිසි පරිදි ඉටු කරවා ගැනීම.

පරිවේණාධිපති (පනතෙහි 25 වගන්තිය හා නියෝග 13 හා 23)

- උපසම්පදාවෙන් පස් වසක් ඉක්මවූ භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේ නමක් පරිවේණාධිපති විය යුතු ය.
- ප්‍රාචීන පණ්ඩිත විභාගය හෝ පිළිගත් විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයක උපාධියක් හෝ ප්‍රථම පන්තියේ පුහුණු ගුරු සහතිකය හෝ විද්‍යොදය, විද්‍යාලංකාර පිරිවෙන්වල අවසාන පරීක්ෂණය සමත්වීම, ඒ සඳහා වන සුදුසුකම් වේ.
- පරිවේණාධිපති විසින් අධ්‍යාපන තත්වය මතවින් පවත්වාගෙන යාම හා පිරිවෙනෙහි ලේඛන පවත්වාගෙන යාම කළ යුතු වේ.

පරිවේණාචාර්යවරුන් (පනතෙහි 26, 27 වගන්ති හා නියෝග 12)

- පරිවේණාචාර්ය තනතුරු සඳහා භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේලා පත් කළ යුතු නමුත්, යම් විෂයයක් ඉගැන්වීමට භික්ෂුවහන්සේ නමක් සොයාගැනීමට නොහැකි වූ විට ගිහි පිරිමි ආචාර්යවරයෙක් වුව ද පත් කරගත හැකි ය.
- ප්‍රාචීන භාෂෝපකාර සමාගමේ විභාග, අ. පො. ස. උසස් පෙළ, විද්‍යොදය/විද්‍යාලංකාර පිරිවෙන් අවසාන පරීක්ෂණය, ත්‍රිපිටකවේදී උපාධිය, පුහුණු ගුරු සහතිකය, පිළිගත් විශ්වවිද්‍යාලයක උපාධි සහතිකය හෝ මණ්ඩලය විසින් පිළිගනු ලබන වෙනත් විභාග සහතිකයක් තිබීම මේ සඳහා සුදුසුකම් වේ.
- රජයේ පාසලක ගුරුවරයෙකුට සේවා කඩවීමකින් තොර ව පිරිවෙන් ගුරු සේවයට ඇතුළත් විය හැකි ය. (ගුරු ව්‍යවස්ථාවට සමාන ව පරිවේණාචාර්ය සේවා ව්‍යවස්ථාව ක්‍රියාත්මක වන නිසා රජයේ ගුරුවරුන්ට මෙන් ම උසස්වීම් හා වැටුප් වර්ධක පිරිවෙන් ගුරුවරුන්ට ද ලැබේ. එසේ ම, රජයේ ගුරුවරුන්ට මෙන් ම විශ්‍රාම වැටුප්, උත්සව අන්තිකාරම්, දුම්රිය බලපත්‍ර, රක්ෂණය වැනි වරප්‍රසාද හිමි වී ඇත.)

- පිරිවෙනෙහි වාර්ෂික ශිෂ්‍ය පැමිණීමේ සාමාන්‍ය ගණන් අනුව ගුරුවරුන් බඳවා ගනු ලබන අතර සේවාදායකයා වන්නේ කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී නිමියන් ය. කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී නිමිවරුන්ගේ එකඟතාව මත පරිවේණාවාර්යවරයා මාරුවීම් කළ හැකි ය.

පොදු විධි විධාන (පනතෙහි 28 සිට 34 දක්වා වගන්ති)

ලියාපදිංචි කොට ඇති පිරිවෙන්වල කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හා පරිවේණාවාර්ය තනතුරු සුරක්ෂිත කොට තිබේ. පිරිවෙන් ආධාර, ගුරු වැටුප් හා රජයේ ආධාර වැය ශීර්ෂය මගින් ලබා දීම මෙන්ම කවර විධි විධාන යටතේ අමාත්‍යවරයාට පිරිවෙන් නියෝග සෑදිය හැකි ද යන්නත්, පිරිවෙන් විභාග හා පරීක්ෂණ, ප්‍රදානය කළ හැකි සහතික හා අභියෝග පත්‍ර පිළිබඳවත් පොදු විධිවිධාන යටතේ දක්වා ඇත.

අර්ථ නිරූපණ (පනතෙහි 35 වගන්තිය හා නියෝග 45)

පසු සටහන

මෙම පනත ක්‍රියාත්මකවීමට පටන් ගැනීමෙන් පසු පැන නැගී ඇතැම් ගැටලු සැලකිල්ලට ගත් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන මණ්ඩලය පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත සංශෝධනය කිරීම සඳහා කිහිප අවස්ථාවක යෝජනා ඉදිරිපත් කොට ඇත.

1. 1984 ප්‍රකාශයට පත් කමිටු වාර්තාව
2. 1989 ප්‍රකාශයට පත් කමිටු වාර්තාව
3. 1994 ප්‍රකාශයට පත් කමිටු වාර්තාව
4. 2010 ප්‍රකාශයට පත් කෙටුම්පත (මෙය නීතිපති අනුමැතිය තෙක් ක්‍රියාත්මක වී ඇත.)

මෙතෙක් මෙම එකඳු වාර්තාවක් හෝ කෙටුම්පතක් ක්‍රියාවට නැංවී නොමැත.

1.5. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පරිපාලනය

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පරිපාලනය සිදුවන්නේ පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත මගින් ස්ථාපිත පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය මගිනි. එය උපදේශක තත්වයෙන් මෙන් ම විධායක තත්වයෙන් ද ක්‍රියාකරන උත්තරීතර මණ්ඩලයකි. අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ ලේකම්වරයා විසින් අමාත්‍යවරයාගේ සාමාන්‍ය විධානයකට හා පාලනයට යටත් ව පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ වගකීම දරනු ලැබේ. එම වගකීම් පිරිවෙන් විෂයභාර අධ්‍යක්ෂවරයාට පහත සඳහන් පරිදි පවරා තිබේ.

- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය නිසි ලෙස පවත්වාගෙන යාම සඳහා විධිවිධාන සැලසීම.
- පිරිවෙන් සඳහා රජය ලබාදෙන මූල්‍යමය හා වෙනත් ආධාර කලට වේලාවට ලබා දීමට වගබලා ගැනීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ගුණාත්මක සංවර්ධනයක් ඇති කිරීම මෙන් ම සමස්තයක් වශයෙන් පිරිවෙන් පනතේ අරමුණු ඉටුවන බවට වගබලා ගැනීම.

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂවරයා විසින් පහත සඳහන් කාර්යව්‍යයන් ඉටුකරනු ලැබේ.

- ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ප්‍රතිපත්තියට අනුකූල ව පිරිවෙන් පනතේ විධිවිධාන අනුව පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන කටයුතු සැලසුම් කිරීම, ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම හා නියාමනය.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ගුණාත්මක සංවර්ධනයට අවශ්‍ය කඩඉම්, ප්‍රතිඵල හා කාර්ය සඳහා ප්‍රතිපත්ති සකස් කිරීම.
- විෂයමාලා, සංවර්ධනය හා ඒ සඳහා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනයේ සහය ලබා ගැනීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන ප්‍රතිසංස්කරණ යෝජනා නිසිලෙස ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම.
- රජයේ මූල්‍ය ආධාර පිරිවෙන් සඳහා නිසිපරිදි යෙදවීම.
- අධ්‍යාපනයේ ගුණාත්මක බව පවත්වා ගැනීම සඳහා යෝග්‍ය අධීක්ෂණ ක්‍රියාවලියක් සැලසුම් කිරීම හා ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම.
- නියෝජ්‍ය හා සහකාර පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂවරුන්ට වගකීම් හා බලතල පැවරීම හා ඔවුන් අධීක්ෂණය කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ ලේකම්වරයා වශයෙන් කටයුතු කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අංශයේ සමස්ත අධීක්ෂණය.

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂවරයාගේ සහයට නියෝජ්‍ය හා සහකාර අධ්‍යක්ෂවරුන් පිරිවෙන් උපදේශකවරුන් හා කාර්ය මණ්ඩලයක් පත්කොට තිබේ. එමෙන් ම, ඒ ඒ පිරිවෙන්හි කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී නිමිවරුන්, පරිවේණාධිපතිවරුන් මෙන් ම පරිවේණාවාර්යවරු

ඒකාබද්ධ ව ඒ ඒ පිරිවෙන්හි ශිෂ්‍ය සංඛ්‍යාව ප්‍රවර්ධනය, විෂය ඉගැන්වීම, විෂය දැනුම, කුසලතා ප්‍රවර්ධනය, විෂය සමගාමී ක්‍රියාකාරකම් වර්ධනය මෙන්ම හික්ෂු හා ගිහි සිසුන්ගේ සාරධර්ම සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම කරනු ලැබේ.

1.6. වර්තමාන පිරිවෙන් පද්ධතිය

අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය විසින් හිකුත් කර ඇති පාසල් සංගණන වාර්තාව (2020) ට අනුව, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ මූලික පිරිවෙන්, මහපිරිවෙන් හා පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතන යනුවෙන් පිරිවෙන් 816²⁹⁸ ක් ස්ථාපනය වී ඇති අතර, එහි අධ්‍යාපනය ලබන ශිෂ්‍ය ප්‍රමාණය 69,878²⁹⁸ ක් වේ. මෙයින් 36,497²⁹⁸ ක් පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයන් වන අතර, ගිහි සිසුන්ගේ ප්‍රමාණය 33,381²⁹⁸ කි. මෙම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ සමස්ත ගුරුභවතුන්ගේ ප්‍රමාණය 7,336²⁹⁸ කි. පැවිදි ගුරු සංඛ්‍යාව 3,428²⁹⁸ කි. ගිහි ගුරු සංඛ්‍යාව 3,908²⁹⁸ කි. එම දත්ත වගු අංක 1, 2 සහ 3 මගින් ඉදිරිපත් කර ඇත.

වගු අංක 1: පිරිවෙන් සංඛ්‍යාව

පිරිවෙන් ආයතන	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
මූලික පිරිවෙන්	455	462	447	469	470	466	467	475	500	515
මහ පිරිවෙන්	210	215	228	216	218	222	221	222	237	236
පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතන	55	57	59	62	61	66	65	66	64	65
එකතුව	720	734	734	747	749	754	753	763	801	816

මූලාශ්‍රය: පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය

වගු අංක 2: ශිෂ්‍ය සංඛ්‍යාව

ශිෂ්‍යයා	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
පැවිදි	33964	35019	35595	34028	34652	35025	33441	32160	35264	36,497
ගිහි	28897	29589	30521	28869	29954	30978	29431	28715	33055	33,381
එකතුව	62861	64608	66116	62897	64606	66003	62872	60875	68319	69,878

මූලාශ්‍රය: පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය

වගු අංක 3: පැවිදි, ගිහි ගුරුවරු සංඛ්‍යාව

ගුරුවරයා		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
අනුමැතිය ලත්	පැවිදි	2939	2886	2860	2978	3279	3131	3085	3140	3253	3,299
	ගිහි	3190	3200	3202	3086	3497	3372	3329	3404	3549	3,837
අනුමැතිය නොලත්	පැවිදි	-	-	-	201	190	-	207	153	207	129
	ගිහි	-	-	-	-	-	-	161	127	191	71
එකතුව		6129	6086	6062	6265	6966	6503	6782	6824	7200	7,336

මූලාශ්‍රය: පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය

මෙම දත්ත අනුව පැහැදිලි වන්නේ වර්තමාන පිරිවෙන් පද්ධතිය තුළ පිරිවෙන් සංඛ්‍යාව, ශිෂ්‍ය සංඛ්‍යාව හා ගුරුවරුන්ගේ සංඛ්‍යාව වාර්ෂිකව යම් ප්‍රමාණයකට වර්ධනය වන බවත්, පැවිදි හික්ෂු ශිෂ්‍යයන් හා ගිහි ශිෂ්‍යයන් ප්‍රමාණය සමාන වන බවත් ය. එසේම, පැවිදි හා ගිහි ගුරුවරුන් ලෙස සමානව සැලකිය යුතු ප්‍රමාණයක් සේවයෙහි නියුතු බවයි.

298. අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය. (2020). ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ වාර්ෂික පාසල් සංඛ්‍යාන.

1.7. නිගමනය

'පිරිවෙණ' යන වචනයෙන් වර්තමානයේ දී අදහස් කරන්නේ නිකුත් වන්නේදැයි අධ්‍යාපන කටයුතු සඳහා ප්‍රමුඛත්වයක් දෙමින් ගොඩ නැගුණු බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන විශේෂයකි. බුදුදහම මෙරටට පැමිණි මුල් අවදියෙන්, පොළොන්නරු, කුරුණෑගල වැනි රාජධානියුවල දීත් එම වචනය යෙදී ඇත්තේ නිකුත් වන්නේදැයි වැඩ වෙසෙන ස්ථාන හඳුන්වාදීම සඳහා ය. මහාවංසය, පාලි අට්ඨකථා ඇතුළු පැරණි මූලාශ්‍රයන්හි 'පිරිවෙණ' යන පදය භාවිත වී ඇති හා ඊට නිරුක්ති සපයා ඇති ආකාරයෙන් ඒ බව තහවුරු වෙයි. ආචාර්ය වල්පොල රාහුල හිමියන් පවසන අන්දමට, "බෞද්ධ අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයෙහි ඉතිහාසයත්, සංඝයා පිළිබඳ ඉතිහාසයත් දෙකම එකම යැයි කිය හැකි තරමට එකිනෙකට සම්බන්ධ ය."²⁹⁹ එසේම විද්‍යාස්ථානයක් හැඳින්වීම සඳහා 'පිරිවෙණ' යන පදය යෙදුණු බවට සාධක හමුවන්නේ දඹදෙණි රාජධානි සමයේ සිට ය. පූජාවලි කතුවරයා වැඩිහුන් මධුරපාද පිරිවෙණ, සිදත් සගරා කතුවරයා වැඩිහුන් පතිරාජ පිරිවෙණ ඊට උදාහරණයි. ඒ අනුව, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ විධිමත් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ආරම්භය දීර්ඝ ඉතිහාසයකට උරුමකම් කියන පිරිවෙණ කේන්ද්‍රකොට ගෙන සිදුවූවක් බව ඉතා පැහැදිලි ය. 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන පනත හා 1980 අංක 01 දරන පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනය සම්බන්ධ නියෝග මාලාව මගින් පිරිවෙණ තවදුරටත් විධිමත් හා ශක්තිමත් ආයතනයක් බවට පත්කර ඇත.

එසේ වුවත්, පරිභෝජනවාදී සංස්කෘතිය, යටත්විජිතකරණය, කාර්මීකරණය, ගෝලීයකරණය, විද්‍යාව, තාක්ෂණය හා සන්නිවේදනයේ දියුණුව ආදිය මගින් සමාජයේ ඇති කර ඇති විචල්‍යතා හා සමාජයේ ඇති වූ ශීඝ්‍ර නවීකරණයන් සියළු අංශයන් කෙරෙහි බලපා ඇති බව ප්‍රත්‍යක්ෂ කරන්නකි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පිරිවෙත් සම්ප්‍රදායත්, පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනයත්, සම්බුද්ධ ශාසනයත් මෙබඳු හේතූන් නිසා යම් යම් ගැටලු හා අභියෝගවලට මුහුණ දෙමින් සිටී.

එබැවින් දීර්ඝ ඉතිහාසයකට උරුමකම් කියන පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය ආරක්ෂා කර ගනිමින් සම්බුද්ධ ශාසනයේ චිර පැවැත්ම උදෙසා අදාළ වන පරිදි එය ප්‍රතිසංවිධානය කිරීම අධ්‍යාපනික මෙන්ම ජාතික හා ශාසනික අවශ්‍යතාවක් වේ. එසේම එය පවතින සමාජ විචල්‍යතාවලට ඔරොත්තු දෙන සහ ආනාගත තාක්ෂණික ලෝකයේ ඇති විය හැකි අභියෝගයන් පිළිබඳ අවබෝධයෙන් යුතුව කළයුත්තක් වේ. පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය ආරක්ෂා කර ගැනීමේ දී විශේෂයෙන් ම පිරිවෙත් ශිෂ්‍යයා හා ගුරුවරයා ආරක්ෂා කර ගැනීම මූලික අවශ්‍යතාවකි. ඒ අනුව, පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය තවදුරටත් සුරක්ෂිතව පවත්වාගැනීම හා පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන පනත මගින් දක්වා ඇති පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කර ගැනීම සඳහා කලානුරූපීව සිදුවී ඇති සමාජ විචල්‍යතාවන්ට අනුගත වෙමින් මෙම පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා වන ජාතික ප්‍රතිපත්තිය සකස් කරන ලදී.

2. අග්‍රගණ්‍ය පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනයක් බිහිකිරීම සඳහා ජාතික ප්‍රතිපත්තියක් සම්පාදනය කිරීම

ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ප්‍රතිපත්ති රාමුවේ (2020-2030) III වන කොටසෙහි දක්වා ඇති මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම සහ පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන අංශයට විශේෂිත වූ මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍ර 7 ක් යටතේ, පිරිවෙත් ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා සහ නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග සකස් කර ඇත.

ඒ අනුව; (1) පැවිදි හා ගිහි සිසුන් පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනයට ප්‍රවේශ වීම, (2) ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය, (3) පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපනයේ විනය හා ආකල්ප, (4) මානව සම්පත් සංවර්ධනය, (5) භෞතික සම්පත් හා මූල්‍ය සම්පත්, (6) පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම හා (7) දස සීල මාතාවන්ගේ අධ්‍යාපනය, මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍ර ලෙස හඳුනා ගෙන ඇත.

තත්ත්ව සමාලෝචනයේ පෙන්වා දී ඇති පිරිවෙත් අධ්‍යාපන ක්ෂේත්‍රයේ ප්‍රගමනයට බාධාවක් වන ගැටළු සහ අභියෝග පිළිබඳව අවධානය යොමු කරමින් සියලු මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍ර සහ අංශ ආවරණය වන පරිදි ප්‍රතිපත්ති සැලසුම් ක්‍රියාවලිය සිදු කර ඇත.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 1: පැවිදි හා ගිහි සිසුන් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා ප්‍රවේශය

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට ප්‍රවේශ වන ප්‍රධාන ශිෂ්‍ය කණ්ඩායම වන්නේ ප්‍රවෘත්තිමය පත්වන නවක සාමනේර භික්ෂූන් ය. මෙරට දැනට වාර්ෂික ව පැවිදිවන කුල දරුවන් සංඛ්‍යාව සීමා සහිත වීම හේතුවෙන් පිරිවෙන්වල ඉගෙනුම ලබන පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍ය සංඛ්‍යාව ද අඩු වී ඇත. තවද, ප්‍රවෘත්තිමය පත්වන විවිධ වයස් ස්තරවල සිටින භික්ෂූන් වහන්සේලා අතුරින් අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබිය යුතු වයසේ පසුවන සාමනේර ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේලා පමණක් බොහෝවිට පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට ප්‍රවේශ වෙති. මේ අතර ගිහි සිසුන් ද අවම ප්‍රතිශතයකින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට ප්‍රවේශ වෙති. එවන් පසුබිමක පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයකුගේ අධ්‍යාපනය කවර පිරිවෙනකින් ලැබිය යුතු ද යන්න එම ශිෂ්‍යයාගේ පැවිදි ආචාර්යවරයා විසින් තීරණය කෙරේ. මේ අතර පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබීමට කැමති ගිහි සිසුන් පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතනවලට ඇතුළත් කරගැනීමේ විධිමත් ක්‍රමවේදයක් හා වැඩපිලිවෙලක් නොමැතිවීම හා ශික්ෂණ මූලික ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපන වටපිටාවක් ඇති පිරිවෙන් කරා වැඩි ශිෂ්‍ය ප්‍රමාණයක් ඇදීයාම හේතුවෙන් අනෙක් බොහෝ පිරිවෙන්වල පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයන්ගේ සංඛ්‍යාත්මක අඩුවීමක් දක්නට ලැබේ. එමෙන්ම, සාමාන්‍ය පාසල් හා සසඳන විට පිරිවෙන් හා විද්‍යායතන පිරිවෙන්හි භෞතික පහසුකම් ඉතා අවම මට්ටමක පැවතීම හා පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳව ප්‍රමාණවත් අවබෝධයක් ගිහි සමාජයේ බහුතරයක් තුළ නොතිබීම ද නිසා ගිහි සිසුන්ගේ ආකර්ෂණය දිනාගත නොහැකිවී ඇත. තවද, ප්‍රාථමික අධ්‍යාපනය අවශ්‍ය ශිෂ්‍ය පිරිසක් පිරිවෙන්වලට ප්‍රවේශ වුවත් ඔවුන්ගේ විෂයමාලා යාවත්කාලීන නොවීම හා ප්‍රාථමික අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ පුහුණු ගුරුවරු නොමැතිවීම වර්තමානයේ මුහුණ දෙන ප්‍රධාන ගැටලු වේ.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

- මෙ.මු 1: පිරිවෙන් ආයතන පද්ධතිය ක්‍රමවත් ලෙස පවත්වා ගැනීම සඳහා ප්‍රතිපත්ති හා නියාමන රාමුවක් සැකසීමේ වගකීම පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ උපදෙස් පරිදි රජය විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.
- මෙ.මු 2: පිරිවෙන් ආයතන තුළ අවශ්‍ය අවස්ථා පුළුල් කිරීම පිරිවෙන් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී භිමියන්ගේ ප්‍රධානත්වයෙන් පිරිවෙන් සංවර්ධන සභා සහ පාලක සභා විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 1.1: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට යොමු වන ගිහි පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍ය සංඛ්‍යාව වර්ධනය කිරීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- බුද්ධිශාසන අමාත්‍යාංශය හා ඒ ඒ නිකායන්හි මහනායක ස්වාමීන්වහන්සේලා විසින් කුල දරුවන් සසුන්ගත කිරීම ප්‍රවර්ධනය සඳහා අවශ්‍ය පියවර ගැනීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී, පරිවෙනාධිපති භිමිවරුන් විසින් පිරිවෙන් විද්‍යායතනවලට ගිහි සිසුන් බඳවා ගැනීමේ ප්‍රවර්ධනාත්මක වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම.

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාවේ උපදෙස් මත අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය මගින් දේශීය හා විදේශීය ශිෂ්‍ය නිකුත් වහන්සේලාට පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන අවස්ථා පුළුල් කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව/ කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හා පරිවේණාධිපති හිමි විසින් ප්‍රාථමික අධ්‍යාපනය අවශ්‍ය පිරිවෙන්වලට අදාළ පහසුකම් සැලසීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 2: ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතින් ඉදිරිපත් කර ඇති පරමාර්ථ සාධනය වන පරිදි ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනයක් පිරිවෙන්වලින් ලබා දිය යුතු ය. එම අධ්‍යාපනය (අ) ත්‍රිවිධ ශාසනයේ ආරක්ෂාව හා අභිවෘද්ධිය සඳහා නිකුත් වහන්සේලා තුළ උනන්දුවක් ඇති කරවීමට සමත් විය යුතු ය. (ආ) නිකුත් පරපුර ඉදිරියට පවත්වා ගෙන යාම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය විනය මෙන්ම, ත්‍රිපිටක ඥානය හා ධර්ම ගරුක බව නිකුත් වහන්සේලා තුළ ඇති කරවීමට ප්‍රතිඵල සම්පන්න විය යුතු ය. (ඇ) ධර්ම දැන මෙහෙවරෙහි හා යෝග්‍ය වෙනත් සේවාවල නිරත වීම සඳහා නිකුත් වහන්සේලාට දැනුම හා ශික්ෂණය ලබා දෙන්නක් විය යුතු ය. (ඈ) ගැඹුරු භාෂාන්තර හා විෂයාන්තර ඥානයක් ලබා දිය යුතු ය. එසේ වුවත්, එම පනතේ එන පරමාර්ථ සාධනය වන ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය පිරිවෙන්වල තහවුරු වී නොමැත. පනතේ එන සියලු පරමාර්ථ සාධනය වන විෂයමාලාවක් ක්‍රියාත්මක නොවීම හා විභාග සමත් කරවීම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ප්‍රමුඛ කාර්යය කරගෙන තිබීම මෙයට මූලික හේතුවක් වී ඇත. දැනුම් සම්පාදනයට පමණක් වැඩි අවධානයක් යොමු කිරීම නිසා බණ දහම් පුහුණුවට ප්‍රමුඛතාවයක් නො ලැබීම. පැරණි පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ තිබූ නිර්දේශිත ගුණාත්මක අධ්‍යාපනය කිරීමේ ක්‍රමය වෙනුවට අභිනවයෙන් හඳුන්වා දෙන ලද පෙළපොත් ක්‍රමය හා ඒ මත යැපෙන ගුරු-සිසු ක්‍රියාකාරකම්වල වර්ධනය, සාම්ප්‍රදායික වනපොත් ක්‍රමය පිළිබඳ අඩු අවධානයක් යොමු කිරීම, ශිෂ්‍ය කේන්ද්‍රීය අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයක් පිරිවෙන්වල තහවුරු නොවීම, ශික්ෂණ අධ්‍යාපනයේ අවශ්‍යතාව හා එය කළ යුතු ආකාරය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රමාණවත් අවධානයක් යොමු නොකිරීම, පිරිවෙන් ගුරුවරයා තුළ පවතින (තමන් උගන්වන) විෂය පිළිබඳ දැනුම ප්‍රමාණවත් ලෙස යාවත්කාලීන නොවීම, ඉගෙනුම් ඉගැන්වීම් ක්‍රියාවලිය පිළිබඳ ප්‍රමාණවත් පුහුණුවක් නො ලැබීම. පිරිවෙන් ශිෂ්‍යයන් තුළ පවතින නව්‍ය තාක්ෂණික මෙවලම් භාවිතය පිළිබඳ අවධිමත් ඥානය, විෂය සමගාමී ක්‍රියාකාරකම් ආදිය සහිත මෘදු කුසලතා සංවර්ධනය තහවුරු නොවීම මෙන්ම ශිෂ්‍ය සාරධර්ම ප්‍රවර්ධනයෙහි ලා නිසි වැඩ පිළිවෙළක් නොවීම යනාදී ගැටලු රාශියක් හඳුනාගත හැකි ය.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

- මෙ.මු 1: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ගුණාත්මකභාවය වැඩි දියුණු කිරීම සඳහා ප්‍රතිපත්තිමය වෙනස්කම් කිරීම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන මණ්ඩලයේ උපදෙස් මත රඳා විසින් සිදු කළ යුතුවේ.
- මෙ.මු 2: පිරිවෙන් විෂයමාලාව යාවත්කාලීන කිරීම හා ගුරුවරුන්ගේ දැනුම වැඩිදියුණු කිරීම සඳහා වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂ, කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හා පරිවේණාධිපති හිමිවරුන් විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 2.1:

පහතේ එන පරමාර්ථ සාධනය වන පරිදි පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ගුණාත්මකභාවය වැඩි දියුණු කිරීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව හා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය විසින් දැනුම හා ශික්ෂණය යන අංශ දෙක ම ලැබෙන සේ මූලික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම (ඊට අදාළ යෝජනාවක් මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍ර 06 හි දක්වා ඇත.), පහතේ දැක්වෙන සියලු පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරවීමට සමත් විෂයමාලාවක් හඳුන්වාදීම (මෙහි දී බුද්ධි ධර්මය වෙනම මත්, විනය වෙනමත් විෂයවලට වෙන් කිරීම වඩා උචිත වේ.) හා එය ක්‍රියාවට නැංවීමේ දී පැරණි නිර්දේශිත ග්‍රන්ථ අධ්‍යයන ක්‍රමය හා ව්‍යාපාරික ක්‍රමය සමඟින්, විෂයානුබද්ධ ගුරු පුහුණුව හා මානව සම්පත් පිළිබඳ පුහුණුව වැඩි දියුණු කිරීම සඳහා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය සමඟ ඒකාබද්ධව වැඩසටහන් සංවිධානය කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව සහ අදාළ ආයතන විසින් ශිෂ්‍යයන්ගේ මානසික සංවර්ධනය උදෙසා වූ අනිවාර්ය පුහුණු වැඩසටහන් දියත් කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාවේ මූලිකත්වයෙන් පරිවේණාධිපතිවරුන් විසින් පැවැදී සිසුන්ගේ ප්‍රායෝගික ක්‍රියාකාරකම් (භාවනා/ධර්ම සන්නිවේදන කුසලතා ආදිය) වර්ධනය කිරීමට පියවර ගැනීම.
- තොරතුරු හා සන්නිවේදන තාක්ෂණ නියෝජිතායතනය සහ ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය මගින් නූතන තාක්ෂණවේදය පිරිවෙන් තුළ ඵලදායී ලෙස ක්‍රියාත්මක කරවීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය සහ බුද්ධිශාසන අමාත්‍යාංශය විසින් භාෂා පුහුණුව (ඉංග්‍රීසි, දෙමළ, පාලි, සංස්කෘත හා වෙනත් භාෂා) ප්‍රවර්ධනය කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, පරිවේණාධිපති ගිම් විසින් ගිම් පැවැදී සියලු ශිෂ්‍යයන් සඳහා විෂය සමගාමී ක්‍රියාකාරකම් නිර්දේශ කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය මගින් පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාවේ ධාරිතා සංවර්ධනය කිරීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 3: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය, විනය හා ආකල්ප

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය, විනය හෙවත් ශික්ෂණ මූලික අධ්‍යාපනයක් විය යුතු ය. විශේෂයෙන් එසේ විය යුත්තේ මෙම අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයෙන් බිහිවන හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා ස්වකීය අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් පසුව ගිම් පැවැදී උභය පාර්ශවයන් ගෙන් සමන්විත සමාජයට නායකත්වය සපයන කෙනෙකු බවට පත්වන නිසා ය. එසේ වුවත්, නූතන සමාජ සන්දර්භය තුළ ක්‍රියාත්මක වන හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාගේ විනය හා ආකල්ප පිළිබඳ සමාජය තුළ ගැටලු මතුව ඇත. මේ සඳහා බලපා ඇති හේතු පිරික්සීමේදී ශික්ෂණ මූලික අධ්‍යාපනයක මූලධර්ම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පටිපාටියෙන් ගිලිහීයෑම හා ඒ වෙනුවට දැනුම මූලික කරගත් අධ්‍යාපන පටිපාටියක් නඟවූ වි තිබීමත් පිරිවෙන් පරිවේණාධිපති/ ආචාර්ය මණ්ඩලය විසින් ශිෂ්‍ය විනය සම්බන්ධයෙන් සැලසුම් සහගත, අඛණ්ඩ සහ විධිමත් වැඩ පිළිවෙළක් ක්‍රියාත්මක නො කිරීමත් හේතු වන බව ඉස්මතු වී ඇත. එමෙන්ම, ඇතැම් පුරෝගාමී හික්ෂු වර්ගවල දක්නට ලැබෙන විෂම දේශපාලන ක්‍රියාකාරකම් හා වෙනත් ශ්‍රමණ සාරූප්‍ය නොවන ක්‍රියාකාරකම්හි පූර්වාදර්ශ බහුලවීම, ලෝකික ක්‍රියාකාරකම් සඳහා පොළඹවන නූතන සමාජ ජාලාවන් කෙරෙහි දැඩි නැඹුරුවක් හා රුචිකත්වයක් දැක්වීම, එබඳු ක්‍රියාකාරකම්වල හා ස්වභාවයන්ගේ අහිමි වීමට විපාක පිළිබඳ සබුද්ධික විමර්ශන පසුබිමක් පිරිවෙන් පරිශ්‍රය තුළ නොතිබීම යනාදී කරුණු මෙන්ම, ළමා විශ්‍ය ඉක්මවා ගැටවර වියට එළඹෙන හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේ තුළ හික්ෂු පෞරුෂය ගොඩනැගීමට අවශ්‍යය වින්තනමය හා ආකල්පමය පරිවර්තනයක් ඇතිකිරීමට අවශ්‍ය ප්‍රමාණවත් පුහුණුවක් නොතිබීම යන ආදී කරුණු පදනම්වන බව දැක්විය හැකි ය.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

මෙ.මු 1: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ලබන සිසුන්ගේ විනය හා ආකල්ප වර්ධනය සඳහා සුදුසු පරිසරයක් සකස් කිරීමේ වගකීම පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලයේ උපදෙස් මත රඳා විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

මෙ.මු 2: විනය සකස් කිරීම හා ආකල්ප වර්ධනය සඳහා වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂ මණ්ඩලය, කෘතියාධිකාරී හා පරිවේණාධිපති හිමිවරුන් විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 3.1: ශික්ෂණ මූලික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයක් ස්ථාපනය කිරීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හිමි මගින් වඩාත් ප්‍රායෝගික ක්‍රියාකාරකම් සහිතව විනය හැඳුරු හැකි වෙනම විෂය ධාරාවක් හඳුන්වා දීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හිමි මගින් සෑම පිරිවේණකට ම ධර්මය හා විනය පිළිබඳ මනා පරිවයක් ඇති හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේ නමක් ධර්ම අධ්‍යක්ෂ ලෙස පත් කිරීම හා උන්වහන්සේගේ කාර්යභාරය සැලසුම් කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති විසින් පිරිවෙන් සඳහා ආදර්ශමත් පොදු දින වර්ෂාවන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම.
- කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හා පිරිවෙන් ආචාර්යවරුන් විසින් හික්ෂු ආකල්ප පුහුණු වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාවට නැංවීම.
- කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හා පිරිවෙන් ආචාර්යවරුන් විසින් සාමන්තර හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාට මාසකට වරක් හෝ පැවිදි දසසීලය සමාදන් කරවීම, විනය නීතියට අනුගතව උපසපත් හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා දිනපතා සන්ධ්‍යාවේ ඇවැත් දෙසීම, මාසිකව උපෝසට කර්ම කිරීම අනිවාර්ය කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘතියාධිකාරී හා පරිවේණාධිපති විසින් විනය කඩවීම් පිළිබඳ කටයුතු කිරීම සඳහා අපක්ෂපාති විනය කමිටු ස්ථාපිත කිරීම හා ගුණදහම් හා ශක්‍යතා වැඩෙන ආකාරයේ සුදුසු දඬුවම් ක්‍රමයක් හඳුන්වාදීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව, කෘතියාධිකාරී, පරිවේණාධිපති හිමි විසින් ළමා විය ඉක්මවා තුරුණු වියට එළඹෙන හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා තුළ යහපත් චින්තනමය හා ආකල්පමය පරිවර්තනයක් ඇති කර, හික්ෂු පෞරුෂය ගොඩනැගීමට අවශ්‍ය පුහුණුවක් අනිවාර්ය කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව සමස්තය දැකිය හැකි පරිදි පිරිවෙන් හික්ෂුවගේ මුද්ධිය වර්ධනය කිරීම සඳහා ව්‍යාපෘති සකස් කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව සෑම පිරිවේණකට ම උපස්ථායකයෙකු (හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාගේ වනාවන් කිරීමට කැපකරු තනතුරක්) සැකසීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 4: මානව සම්පත් සංවර්ධනය

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

'පිරිවේණ' යනු මුද්ධි ශාසනයේ විරපැවැත්ම උදෙසා අවශ්‍ය මානව සම්පත් සකස් කෙරෙන ආයතනය කි. එමෙන් ම එය රටට අවශ්‍ය ආධ්‍යාත්මික නායකත්වය සඳහා හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා බිහි කරන ආයතනයක් ද වේ. එබැවින් දුරදක්නා මුද්ධියෙන් හා කැපවීමෙන් කටයුතුවල නිරත වන මානව සම්පත් සංවර්ධනයක් හා කළමනාකරණයක් වෙසෙසින් අවශ්‍ය වේ. එතෙකුදු වුවත් මුද්ධි ශාසනයේ විර පැවැත්ම සහ රටේ ආධ්‍යාත්මික සංවර්ධනයට නිරපේක්ෂකව දායකත්වය සපයන ධර්ම විනය, ඥානයෙන් පිරිපුන් ධර්මානුධර්ම ප්‍රතිපත්ත, ප්‍රතිබල සම්පන්න දැනුමෙන්, ආකල්පවලින් හා කුසලතාවලින් පිරිපුන් ශක්තිමත් හා උද්‍යෝගිමත් මානව සම්පත්වල උනන්දුවක් පිරිවෙන් පද්ධතිය තුළ දැනට විද්‍යමාන වේ. එමෙන්ම, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ

පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරලීමට සමත් අධ්‍යාපනික සුදුසුකම් හා ප්‍රායෝගික පුහුණුව මෙන්ම කුසලතා පූර්ණ ගුරුවරුන් ප්‍රමාණවත් නොවීම ද ප්‍රබල ගැටලුවකි. පිරිවෙන් ආචාර්යවරුන්ගේ දැනුම යාවත්කාලීන නොවීම, වෘත්තීය කුසලතා ප්‍රවර්ධනය හා ආකල්ප සංවර්ධනය සඳහා අවශ්‍ය ක්‍රියාකාරකම්, ගුරු පුහුණු හා සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් ප්‍රමාණවත් නොවීම, වෘත්තීය දිරිගැන්වීම් ක්‍රමයක් නොතිබීම, විවිධ අඩුපාඩු හේතුවෙන් දක්ෂ ගුරුවරුන් ක්ෂේත්‍රයෙන් ඉවත්ව යාම, ගුරුවරුන් බඳවා ගැනීමේ අවිධිමත් ක්‍රමවේදය, ගුරු භාරකාර/දෙමාපිය සංවාද දුර්වල වීම, පිරිවෙන්හි කළමනාකරණ ධාරිතාව හා ශිෂ්‍ය සංවර්ධනය සඳහා වන කැපවීම ප්‍රමාණවත් නොවීම යන කරුණු වර්තමානයේ පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ මානව සම්පත සම්බන්ධයෙන් පවතින ගැටලු ලෙස හඳුනාගත හැකි ය.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

මෙ.මු 1: පනතට අනුකූලව පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා අවශ්‍ය අධ්‍යයන හා අනධ්‍යයන කාර්ය මණ්ඩල බඳවා ගැනීම හා ඔවුන්ගේ හැකියාවන් වර්ධනය කිරීම පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව විසින් සිදුකළ යුතු ය.

මෙ.මු 2: ගුරුවරුන්ගේ දැනුම යාවත්කාලීන කිරීම හා ධාරිතා සංවර්ධනය මෙන්ම වෘත්තීය ගැටලු විසඳීම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය පියවර ගැනීම පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හා පරිවේණාධිපති හිමිවරුන් විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 4.1: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය නගා සිටුවීම සඳහා සුදුසු මානව සම්පත් සංවර්ධන ක්‍රියාකාරකම් හඳුන්වා දී ඒවා ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම සහ අඛණ්ඩ ධාරිතා සංවර්ධන වැඩසටහන් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

පරිවේණාචාර්යවරුන්

- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කිරීමට පදනම් වන ආකාරයෙන් සකස් කළ අනිවාර්ය පුහුණුවක් පිරිවෙන් ගුරුවරුන්ට ලබා දීම.
- සෑම උපාධිධාරී පරිවේණාචාර්යවරයෙකු විසින් ම පත්වීම අනුමතවීමේ සිට වසර 05ක් ඇතුළත අධ්‍යාපන ඩිප්ලෝමාව සම්පූර්ණ කිරීම අනිවාර්ය කළ යුතු ය.
- උත්ත අධ්‍යාපන ඩිප්ලෝමාව පූර්ණකාලීන වුවක් වේ නම්, ඒ වෙනුවෙන් වෙනත් ආචාර්යවරයෙකු අනියුක්ත කළ යුතු අතර, අර්ධකාලීන වුවක් නම් දුර ප්‍රමාණය අනුව පාඨමාලාවේ දේශන පැවැත්වෙන සෑම සතියක ම දිනක් හෝ දින දෙකක් රාජකාරී නිවාඩු ලබා දිය යුතු ය. ඊට අමතර ව, පාඨමාලා ගාස්තු අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය විසින් දැරිය යුතු ය. එම ප්‍රතිලාභ ලබන ඕනෑම ආචාර්යවරයෙකු පාඨමාලාව අවසන් කිරීමෙන් පසුව අවම වශයෙන් වසර 05ක් වත් පිරිවෙන් ක්ෂේත්‍රයෙහිම සේවය කළ යුතු වන අතර ඊට පෙර ඉවත් වන්නේ නම් පුහුණුව සඳහා රජය මගින් දැරූ මුදල ආපසු ගෙවා සේවයෙන් නිදහස්වීමට අවස්ථාව ලබා දිය යුතු ය. (පවතින නතතුරට වඩා ඉහළ නතතුරකට යාමේ දී එම කරුණ අදාළ නොවේ)
- ප්‍රාචීන මධ්‍යම උපාධියට පිරිවෙන්වල පත්වීම් අනුමත කෙරෙන හෙයින් එසේ බඳවාගන්නා ගුරුවරුන්ගේ වෘත්තීය නිපුණතා දිරි ගැන්වීම සඳහා වසර 05ක් ඇතුළත ප්‍රාචීන අවසාන විභාගය හෝ පාලි හා සංස්කෘත විෂයයන් සහිත ව ශාස්ත්‍රවේදී (බාහිර) උපාධිය සම්පූර්ණ කිරීම අනිවාර්ය කිරීම.
- පාලි, සංස්කෘත, සිංහල හා ත්‍රිපිටක ධර්මය වැනි විෂයන් ඉගැන්වීම සඳහා පැවිදි ආචාර්යවරුන් සඳහා නිරන්තරයෙන් ප්‍රමුඛතාව ලබා දීම සහ යාවත්කාලීන වන අධ්‍යාපන ශිල්ප ක්‍රමවලට අනුව පිරිවෙන් ගුරුවරයාගේ විෂය දැනුම යාවත්කාලීන කරගැනීමට නිසි වැඩපිලිවෙළක් සැකසීම හා ඒ සඳහා වැඩිමුළු, සම්මන්ත්‍රණ හා පුහුණු සැසි ආදී අඛණ්ඩ අධ්‍යාපන වැඩසටහන් සංවිධානය කිරීම.
- යම් උපාධිධාරී පරිවේණාචාර්යවරයෙකු ගුරු පුහුණු වැඩසටහනකට (එක් අවුරුදු හෝ දෑ අවුරුදු) සම්බන්ධ වන්නේ නම්, උන්වහන්සේ හෝ ඔහු වෙනුවෙන් අනුප්‍රාප්තිකයෙකු පත් කිරීමට අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය ප්‍රතිපාදන සැපයිය යුතු වේ.

- පරිවේණික ගුරු මාරු ක්‍රමයක් ඇතිකිරීම අත්‍යවශ්‍ය වන අතර, එය වඩාත් විනිවිදභාවයකින් සිදු කිරීමට පිරිවෙන් ගුරුවරු මාරු කිරීම සඳහා වන මණ්ඩලයක් ස්ථාපිත කළ යුතු ය. (කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී ස්වාමීන්වහන්සේගේ එකඟතාවය හා සෑම පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුම අවශ්‍යතාවය පරිදි අවුරුදු දහයකට වරක් මෙම ගුරු මාරුව සිදු කළ යුතු ය.)
- පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුට නවීන තාක්ෂණය, නූතන භාෂා හා පශ්චාදී උපාධි පාඨමාලා හැඳුරීම සඳහා යොමු කිරීම කෙරෙහි දිරිමත් කිරීම පිණිස ආධාර මුදල් හා පාඨමාලා ගාස්තු ලබා දීමේ වැඩපිළිවෙලක් සකස් කිරීම.
- ප්‍රාචීන උපාධිය සහ ශාස්ත්‍රවේදී උපාධිය නොමැති පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුට විසින් පත්වීම අනුමතව වසර පහක් ඇතුළත පිරිවෙන් ගුරු අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයේ හෝ රජයේ ගුරු විද්‍යාලයක ගුරු සහතිකය හෝ ඊට සමාන පුහුණු සහතිකයක් ලැබිය යුතු ය.
- පිරිවෙන් තුළ ඉංග්‍රීසි, ගණිතය හා සෞන්දර්ය වැනි විෂයන් ඉගැන්වීම සඳහා අ. පො. ස. (උසස් පෙළ) විභාගය සමත්වීමේ සහතිකයෙන් බැඳවූ ගන්නා ලද ගුරුවරුන් විසින් වසර පහක් ඇතුළත ගුරු පුහුණු ඩිප්ලෝමාවක් හෝ උපාධියක් ලබා ගැනීම අනිවාර්ය කළ යුතු ය.

කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේලා

- උපසම්පදාව ලබා වසර 05ක් වත් ඉක්මවා තිබීම අනිවාර්ය කිරීම.
- කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී තනතුරට හැකි සෑම අවස්ථාවක දී ම විභාගාධිපති හිමියන් පත් කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය ආකාරයෙන් සකස් කළ අනිවාර්ය අඛණ්ඩ පුහුණුවක් කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හිමිවරුන්ට ලබාදීම.
- නියෝජ්‍ය කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී තනතුරක් (කෘත්‍යාධිකාරී හිමියන්ගේ එකඟතාවය හා අවශ්‍යතාවය මත) ඇති කිරීම.

පරිවේණිකවරයෙකු ස්වාමීන් වහන්සේලා

- පරිපාලන පුහුණුව අඛණ්ඩව ලබාදීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය ආකාරයෙන් සකස් කළ අනිවාර්ය අඛණ්ඩ පුහුණුවක් පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුට ලබාදීම.
- පාසල් පද්ධතිය තුළ විදුහල්පතිවරුන්ට හිමි පහසුකම් පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුට ද ලබාදීම.
- පරිවේණිකවරයෙකුට තනතුර සඳහා විශේෂ දීමනාවක් පිරිවෙන් වර්ග අනුව වෙන් වෙන් වශයෙන් ලබා දීම.

ගුරු උපදේශක/ විෂය අධ්‍යක්ෂ/ සහකාර අධ්‍යාපන අධ්‍යක්ෂ/ නියෝජ්‍ය අධ්‍යාපන අධ්‍යක්ෂ (පිරිවෙන්)/ පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂ

- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය හා පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව මගින් අදාළ තනතුරු දේශපාලන මැදිහත්වීම්වලින් තොරව අධ්‍යාපන සුදුසුකම් හා වෘත්තීය පළපුරුද්ද ආදිය ඇගයීමට ලක්වෙන පිළිගත් ක්‍රමවේදයකට අනුව පත් කිරීමට අවශ්‍ය විධිවිධාන සැලසීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරගැනීමට අවශ්‍ය ආකාරයෙන් සකස් කළ අනිවාර්ය අඛණ්ඩ පුහුණුවක් ලබාදීම.

විශේෂඥයන්

- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය හා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන එක්ව විෂය මාලා සංවර්ධන අවශ්‍යතා හඳුනාගැනීම, වසර අටෙන් අටට විෂයමාලා යාවත්කාලීන කිරීම හා විෂය නිර්දේශ සකස් කිරීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 5: භෞතික සම්පත් හා මූල්‍ය සම්පත්

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

සියලු ම වර්ගයේ පිරිවෙන්, විහාරස්ථාන ආශ්‍රිතව ක්‍රියාත්මක වේ. එහෙයින්ම ඒවාට අයත් ගොඩනැගිලි හා වෙනත් භෞතික සම්පත් අධ්‍යාපන කටයුතු සඳහා ද භාවිත කෙරේ. දැනට රජය විසින් වාර්ෂික ව පිරිනැමෙන අවම ආධාරයකින් හා බෞද්ධ මහජනයාගේ අනුග්‍රහයෙන් පිරිවෙන්හි කටයුතු සිදු වෙයි. එම නිසා, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය වූකලී අවම භෞතික සම්පත් හා යටිතල පහසුකම් මත ක්‍රියාත්මක වන්නකි. සාමාන්‍ය අධ්‍යාපනය ක්‍රියාත්මක වන පාසල්, උසස් අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන හා වෘත්තීය අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනවලට සමානව පිරිවෙන් සඳහා භෞතික සම්පත් හා යටිතල පහසුකම් සැපයීමට රජය සෘජුව මැදිහත් නොවීමත් පළාත් සභා ප්‍රතිපාදන ක්‍රමවත් අයුරින් නොලැබීමත් මීට හේතු වී ඇත. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතින් කෘතඥකාරී හිමිවරුන් වෙත මෙම පහසුකම් සැපයීමේ වගකීම පවරා තිබීම එම ප්‍රතිපාදන නිසි පරිදි නො ලැබීමට හේතු වී ඇත. මේ යටතේ යම්හෙයකින් කෘතඥකාරී හිමියන් අදාළ සම්පත් සැපයීමට අපොහොසත් වුවහොත් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ පැවැත්ම අහිමිවීමට ලක්වේ. බොහෝ පිරිවෙන්හි ශිෂ්‍යයන් අධ්‍යාපනය ලබන්නේ විහාරස්ථානයේ ධර්ම ශාලාව තුළ ය. එය බහුකාර්ය ගොඩනැගිල්ලකි. අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා ම වෙන් වූ පරිසරයක් එවන් තැනක දක්නට නැත. එම නිසා, ශිෂ්‍යයාගේ ආකර්ශනය බිඳී යයි. ශිෂ්‍යයන් වෙනුවෙන් වෙන් කර ඇති මේස පුටු පවා නොමැත. එහි ප්‍රතිඵලයක් ලෙස අධ්‍යාපන පරිසරයක් ඇතැම් පිරිවෙන් තුළ හා පිරිවෙන් නේවාසිකාගාර තුළ නොමැත. තවද, දේශපාලනමය වශයෙන් විහාරස්ථානයට යම් යම් මූල්‍ය අනුග්‍රාහ ලැබෙන නමුත් එය පිරිවෙන සඳහා නොලැබීම පිරිවෙන් පද්ධතිය භෞතික වශයෙන් මුහුණ දෙන ප්‍රධාන ගැටලු ලෙස හඳුනාගත හැකිවේ.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

මෙ.මු 1: පිරිවෙන් පවත්වාගෙන යාම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය භෞතික පහසුකම් වර්ධනය කිරීමට රජය පියවර ගත යුතු ය.

මෙ.මු 2: එම භෞතික සම්පත් නඩත්තුව හා පවත්වාගෙන යාම සඳහා කටයුතු කිරීම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යක්ෂ, කෘතඥකාරී හා පරිවේණික හිමිවරුන් විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 5.1:

පිරිවෙන්වල භෞතික සම්පත් හා මූල්‍ය සම්පත් නිසි පරිදි ලබාදීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- පිරිවෙන්හි භෞතික සම්පත් නඩත්තුව සඳහා යම් ආධාරයක් වාර්ෂිකව ලබාදීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය මගින් පිරිවෙන් ශාලා විධිමත් පරිදි ඉදිකරවීමට සහ පිරිවෙන් සඳහා අවශ්‍ය ඩෙස් පුටු ආදී භෞතික උපකරණ ලබාදීමට කටයුතු කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් ශිෂ්‍යයන්ගේ අධ්‍යාපන හා පෝෂණ අවශ්‍යතා වෙනුවෙන් ලබාදෙන ආධාරය වඩාත් ශක්තිමත් කිරීම.
- නිකුත් වනය හා අනෙක් ආකාරයේ ආරක්ෂා වන ආකාරයෙන් නේවාසිකාගාර පහසුකම් ලබාදීම.
- ප්‍රමාණවත් පංති කාමර, පුස්තකාල පහසුකම්, භාෂාගාර, පරිගණක විද්‍යාගාර, ගුරු විවේකාගාර හා සනීපාරක්ෂක පහසුකම් ලබාදීම.
- පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා රජයේ වාර්ෂික අයවැය මගින් මූල්‍ය ප්‍රතිපාදන කලානුරූපීව සම්පාදනය.
- පිරිවෙන් සංවර්ධන ජාතික අරමුදලක් ස්ථාපිත කිරීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 6: පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ අරමුණ භික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාට හා එම අධ්‍යාපනය රැවිකරන ගිහි ශිෂ්‍යයන් සඳහා අධ්‍යාපනික පහසුකම් සැලසීම යි. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය යන්නෙන් විවිධ විභාග සඳහා ශිෂ්‍යයන් දැනුමින් සන්නද්ධ කිරීමක් පමණක් අදහස් නොවන බව මෙහි ලා අවධාරණය කළ යුතු කරුණකි. රටේ ආගමික හා සංස්කෘතික අවශ්‍යතාවන් සපුරාලිය හැකි භික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලා පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් බිහිවිය යුතු ය. ජනතාවට අවශ්‍ය ධර්ම ඥානය ලබාදීමට උන්වහන්සේලා දැනුමෙන් සන්නද්ධ විය යුතු ය. අධිසංකීර්ණ නූතන සමාජ සන්දර්භය තුළ ඒ කටයුතු සිදුකිරීමේ දී භික්ෂුවකට අවශ්‍ය සියලු හැකියා අත්පත් කරගත යුතුව පවතී. කායික හා මානසික ශක්ෂණය එහිලා අනිවාර්ය වේ. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතේ එන පරමාර්ථ ඒ සියල්ල ආවරණය කරන බව පෙනේ. එය වර්තමාන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ව්‍යුහය සමඟ ගලපා ගැනීමේ දී යම් පරස්පරතාවක් පෙන්නුම් කරයි. ශිෂ්‍යයාගේ දැනුම මෙන්ම ශික්ෂණය ද සමබරව පෝෂණය කළයුතු අතර, ඊට ගැලපෙන විෂයමාලාවක් සහ ආනුෂංගික ක්‍රියාවන් ද නිර්දේශ විය යුතු ය. ඒ සම්බන්ධයෙන් වර්තමාන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ යම් හිඳුසක් ඇති බව පෙනී යන හෙයින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම සුදුසු වෙයි. මෙහි ලා ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම යන්නට පිරිවෙන්හි පවතින පන්තික්‍රමය, විෂයමාලාව, විෂය නිර්දේශය හා එය ක්‍රියාත්මක කෙරෙන ආකාරය, ශිෂ්‍යයා ඇගයීමට ලක් කරන අවස්ථා හා ක්‍රමවේදය, අධ්‍යාපනය අවසානයේ ශිෂ්‍යයා ලබාගන්නා සාධන මට්ටම ආදී සියල්ල ඊට ඇතුළත් වේ. නමුත් ගැටලුව වන්නේ, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනතේ පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කරන භික්ෂු පිරිසක් වර්තමාන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් බිහි නොවීම යි. මේ සඳහා බලපා ඇති හේතු ලෙස, පනතේ එන පරමාර්ථවල ඇතැම් වැදගත් අංශවලින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය බැහැරවී තිබීම හා පනත හා නියෝග අඛණ්ඩව ගොස් තිබීම, පිරිවෙන් පනත සංශෝධනයට අවස්ථා කිහිපයක දී උත්සාහ ගත් නමුත් එම උත්සාහයන් අසාර්ථක වීම (උදා: 1984, 1989, 1994 හා 2010 වර්තාවල පත්කළ කමිටු හරහා නීතිගත නොවීම), ලෝකීකත්වයට බරව පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත මේ වන විට ක්‍රියාත්මක වීම, පිරිවෙන් විෂයමාලාව හා විෂය නිර්දේශය රටේ පොදු අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමයට අනුගත කරවීමට කලක් තිස්සේ උත්සාහ දරා තිබීම හා ශක්තිමත් පිරිවෙන් පරිපාලන ඒකකයක් මෙතෙක් බිහි නොවීම යනාදිය දැක්විය හැකි ය.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

මෙ.මු 1: අවුරුදු දහස් ගණනක් සිට පැවත ගෙන එන පිරිවෙන් සම්ප්‍රදාය ආරක්ෂාකර ගනිමින් කාලීන අවශ්‍යතාවයන්ට අනුරූපව පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම රජය විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

මෙ.මු 2: සිදුවන වෙනස්කම්වලට අනුරූප ලෙස පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය සකස් කිරීම පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය හා අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව විසින් සිදු කළ යුතු ය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 6.1:	ශිෂ්‍යයා වෙත දැනුම, ශික්ෂණය, පුහුණුව හා ශක්‍යතා යන සියල්ල ලැබෙන පරිදි පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රමය ප්‍රතිව්‍යුහගත කිරීම
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නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව මගින් නවක පැවිදි තෙරණුන් වහන්සේ මූලික පිරිවෙණට පිවිසීමට පෙර (ප්‍රාථමික) පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයට ඇතුළත් කරවීම.
- පිරිවෙන් පනතේ දක්වා ඇති පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන (පනත 13 වගන්තිය) අතරින් දැනට පවත්වාගෙන යන අභ්‍යාස ආයතනවලට බාධාවක් නොවන පරිදි අරමුණු කිහිපයක් සඳහා කණිෂ්ඨ අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවීම. (බෞද්ධ භාවනා ක්‍රමවල යෙදීම, බුද්ධ ධර්මය සහ බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතිය පතුරුවා හැරීම, බුද්ධ ධර්මය හා විනය පිළිබඳ දැනුමක් ලබාගැනීම ආදිය අරමුණු වේ.)

යෝජිත පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ව්‍යුහය (ඇමුණුම් අංක 01) දක්වා ඇත.

- ප්‍රාථමික අන්‍යාස ආයතන පුහුණුව වසර 2 - (මූලික පැවිදි විනය, ලේඛන හා භාෂණ පුහුණුව)
- මූලික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය වසර 5 - (විෂයමාලාව ඉගැන්වීම හා ඇගයීම)
- ද්විතියික (කනිෂ්ඨ) අන්‍යාස ආයතන පුහුණුව (අර්ධකාලීන වසර 1) - (භික්ෂු ජීවිතයට අදාළ ආකල්ප හා ශක්තින් වර්ධනය (භාවනා ධර්ම දේශනා පිරිත් දේශනා භික්ෂු විනය ආදිය) ත්‍රිපිටක අධ්‍යයනය, ඉංග්‍රීසි හෝ වෙනත් භාෂා පරිචය.
- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය මගින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට සුදුසු පරිදි නියාමනය කිරීම හා ඒ සඳහා කාලීන අවශ්‍යතාවයන්ට ගැලපෙන පරිදි පහත සංශෝධනය කිරීම.
- විෂයමාලා සංවර්ධනය හා විෂය නිර්දේශ යාවත්කාලීන කිරීම.
- ද්වි භාෂා (සිංහල/ඉංග්‍රීසි) පිරිවෙන් ආයතනවල තත්ත්වය නංවාලීම.
- අංග සම්පූර්ණ පිරිවෙනකට අවශ්‍ය පහසුකම් නියමකොට වරද පහසුකම් සහිත වූ පිරිවෙන් පමණක් අලුතින් ආරම්භ කිරීම.
- ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන කොමිෂන් සභාව, අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, ප්‍රාචීන භාෂෝපකාර සමාගම හා විභාග කොමසාරිස් විසින් මහ පිරිවෙන්හි ක්‍රියාත්මක වන ප්‍රාචීන භාෂෝපකාර සමාගමෙහි විභාග ශ්‍රී ලංකා යෝග්‍යතා මාර්ගෝපදේශයට සම්බන්ධ කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව විසින් අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශයේ පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව තුළ විවිධ විද්වතුන්ගෙන් සැදුම්ලත් තත්ත්ව පාලන ඒකකයක් (Quality Assurance Unit) ඇති කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව මගින් පිරිවෙන් සම්බන්ධ අධ්‍යයන කේන්ද්‍රයක් ස්ථාපිත කිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව මගින් අන්‍යාස ආයතන සමස්ත භික්ෂු අධ්‍යාපනයේ උන්නතිය සඳහා යොමුකිරීම.
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව මගින් භික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාට අනන්‍ය අධ්‍යාපනයක් සඳහා ධර්ම දේශනා, සප්තධ්‍යානය, ගණ සප්තධ්‍යානය, විභාර කළමනාකරණය, නායකත්ව පුහුණුව සහ භික්ෂු විනය සඳහා අන්‍යවශ්‍ය පුහුණුව ඇතුළත් භික්ෂුවගේ ජීවන හිපුණුතා ප්‍රවර්ධනය කිරීමේ අන්‍යාස ආයතනයක් පිහිටුවීම (පහතෙන් ඊට අවශ්‍ය ප්‍රතිපාදන දැනටමත් ලැබී තිබේ).
- පිරිවෙන් මණ්ඩලය, අධ්‍යක්ෂ/පිරිවෙන් ශාඛාව දේශීය හා ජාත්‍යන්තර ධර්ම ප්‍රචාරය සඳහා අවශ්‍යවන භාෂා දැනුම වැඩි දියුණු කිරීම සම්බන්ධ ධර්මදාන පුහුණු ව්‍යාපෘතියක් ක්‍රියාත්මක කිරීම.

මූලික ක්ෂේත්‍රය 7: දසසීල මාතෘකාවන්ගේ අධ්‍යාපනය

සන්දර්භය හා ගැටලුව

දසසීල සමාදන්ව අනගාරික තත්ත්වයට පත් වන දසසීල මාතෘකාවන් සඳහා ද විධිමත් අධ්‍යාපනයක් ලබාදිය යුතු වේ. එසේ වුවත්, දසසීල මාතෘකාවන් සඳහා ප්‍රමාණවත් අධ්‍යාපන අවස්ථාවන් මෙතෙක් හිමිවී නැත. ඒ සඳහා බලපා ඇති හේතු ලෙස, පවතින අධ්‍යාපන රාමුව තුළ දසසීල මාතෘකාවන්ට අධ්‍යාපන අවස්ථාවන් ප්‍රමාණාත්මකව නොලැබීම, ශාසනික සම්ප්‍රදාය තුළ දසසීල මාතෘකාවන්ගේ ස්ථානය තහවුරු නොවීම, විවිධ වයස් ස්තරවලදී දසසීල මාතෘකා තත්ත්වයට පත්වීම හා දසසීල මාතෘකාවන් පරිවේණිකව සේවයට ඇතුළත් නොකිරීම හා මෙම අධ්‍යාපනය කෙරෙහි පවත්නා අඩු අවධානය යනාදී කරුණු දැක්විය හැකි ය.

මෙහෙයවීමේ මූලධර්ම

මෙ.මු 1: සැමට සමාන අධ්‍යාපන යන සංකල්පය යටතේ දසසීල මාතෘකාවන්ගේ ද අධ්‍යාපන අයිතිය සුරක්ෂිත කිරීම රජයේ වගකීම වේ.

මෙ.මු 2: ඒ සඳහා වන ප්‍රතිපත්ති සම්පාදනය අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, බුද්ධිශාසන අමාත්‍යාංශය, බෞද්ධ කටයුතු කොමසාරිස් හා සමස්ත ලංකා සිලමතා මහා සංගමය, ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය මගින් සිදු කළ යුතුය.

ප්‍රතිපත්ති යෝජනා හා උපාය මාර්ග

ප්‍රතිපත්තිය 7.1:

දුසසීල මාතාවන්ට අධ්‍යාපන අවස්ථා නිර්මාණය කිරීම

නිර්දේශිත උපාය මාර්ග

- අධ්‍යාපන අමාත්‍යාංශය, බුද්ධි ශාසන අමාත්‍යාංශය, බෞද්ධ කටයුතු කොමසාරිස් හා සමස්ත ලංකා දුසසීලමතා මහා සංගමය හා ජාතික අධ්‍යාපන ආයතනය මගින් අධ්‍යාපනය ලැබිය යුතු වයසේ සිටින දුසසීල මාතාවන්ට සම අධ්‍යාපන අවස්ථා උදාකරදීම.
- ඔවුන්ගේ සමාජ තත්ත්වය තහවුරු කිරීම.
- අවම වශයෙන් පළාත් මට්ටමින් හෝ පහසුකම් සහිත සීලමාතා අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන ආරම්භ කිරීම.
- අධ්‍යාපන සුදුසුකම් සහිත දුසසීල මාතාවන් හෝ ගුරුවරයන් එම ආයතනවල ආචාර්ය මණ්ඩලවලට පත්කිරීම.
- ඔවුන්ට අදාළ ගුරු පුහුණු ආදිය ලබාදීම.
- දුසසීල ආචාර්ය ධර්ම පද්ධතියක් නිර්මාණය කිරීම.

3. නිගමනය හා සමාලෝචනය

දැනට ක්‍රියාත්මක පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ක්‍රියාවලිය 1979 අංක 64 දරන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත හා 1980. 10. 01 දින නිකුත් වූ නියෝගමාලාවට අනුව සකස් වී ඇත. එහි සඳහන් පරිදි පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයෙහි පරමාර්ථ සතරකි. ඒවා ඉටුකරගැනීම සඳහා මූලික පිරිවෙන්, මහපිරිවෙන් හා විද්‍යායතන පිරිවෙන් යනුවෙන් පිරිවෙන් වර්ග තුනක් පනතෙන් නිර්දේශ කර ඇති අතර, ඒවා දැනට ක්‍රියාත්මක වේ. ඊට අමතරව, අරමුණු 6ක් මුදුන්පත් කරගැනීම සඳහා පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවීමට ද බලය ලබා දී තිබේ.

ඉතා දීර්ඝ ඉතිහාසයකට උරුමකම් කියන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය, පිරිවෙන් සම්ප්‍රදායන් ආරක්ෂා කර ගනිමින් සම්බුද්ධ ශාසනයේ විර පැවැත්ම උදෙසා පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය තුළ යම් යම් වෙනස්කම් ඇති කළ යුතු ව ඇත. එය පවතින සමාජ විචල්‍යතාවලට ඔරොත්තු දෙන සහ ආනාගත තාක්ෂණික ලෝකයේ ඇති විය හැකි අභියෝගයන් පිළිබඳව ද අවබෝධයෙන් යුතුව සකස් කළ යුතු වේ. ඒ අනුව, ගිහි සිසුන්ට ද පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයට අවස්ථාවන් විවිධ කර දෙමින් පවතින පිරිවෙන් පද්ධතිය තුළ අග්‍රගණ්‍ය හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේ නමක් බිහි කිරීම මෙහි මුඛ්‍ය පරමාර්ථය වේ.

කුල දරුවෙකු පැවිදි කළ පසු දැනට ක්‍රියාත්මක වන මූලික පිරිවෙන්ට ඇතුළත්වීමට පෙර හික්ෂු ජීවිතයට අවශ්‍ය මූලික දැනුම හා ශික්ෂණය ගොඩනැගීම සඳහා ආයතනගත විධිමත් වැඩපිලිවෙලක අවශ්‍යතාවය මතු ව ඇත. නවක පැවිදි හෙරණුන් වහන්සේ මූලික පිරිවෙන්ට පිවිසීමට පෙර (ප්‍රාථමික) පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයට ඇතුළත්විය යුතු ය. (පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත අංක 13, 14 යටතේ ප්‍රතිපාදන සලසාගත හැකිය) මෙහි හෙරණ පැවිදි, බණ, දහම්, සේබියා සහ වන් පිරිත් ආදිය ප්‍රගුණ කිරීමට ද පැවිදි වන් පිළිවෙත් හි හික්මවීම හා ලේඛන උච්චාරණ විධි පුහුණුවට ප්‍රමුඛත්වය දී සකස් වූ විෂය නිර්දේශයක් දැවස පුරා ක්‍රියාත්මක විය යුතුය. ශිෂ්‍යයන් මෙම ආයතනයෙහි අනිවාර්යයෙන්ම නේවාසික විය යුතු ය. පුහුණු කාලය වසර දෙකකි. එහෙත්, යම් සාමණේරු නමකගේ ශික්ෂණය හා වයස සැලකිල්ලට ගෙන ආයතනාධිපතින් වහන්සේගේ අභිමතය පරිදි වසරකින් පුහුණුව අඩු කිරීමට හැකිවිය යුතු ය. පවතින පිරිවෙන් තුළම හෝ වෙනත් සුදුසු විහාරස්ථානයක මෙම වැඩසටහන ආරම්භ කළ හැකිය. මෙම ආයතනයට ප්‍රතිබල සම්පන්න සුදුසුම ආයතනාධිපතිවරයෙක් හා සුදුසුම එක් උපාධ්‍යයන් වහන්සේ නමක් සිටිය යුතු ය.

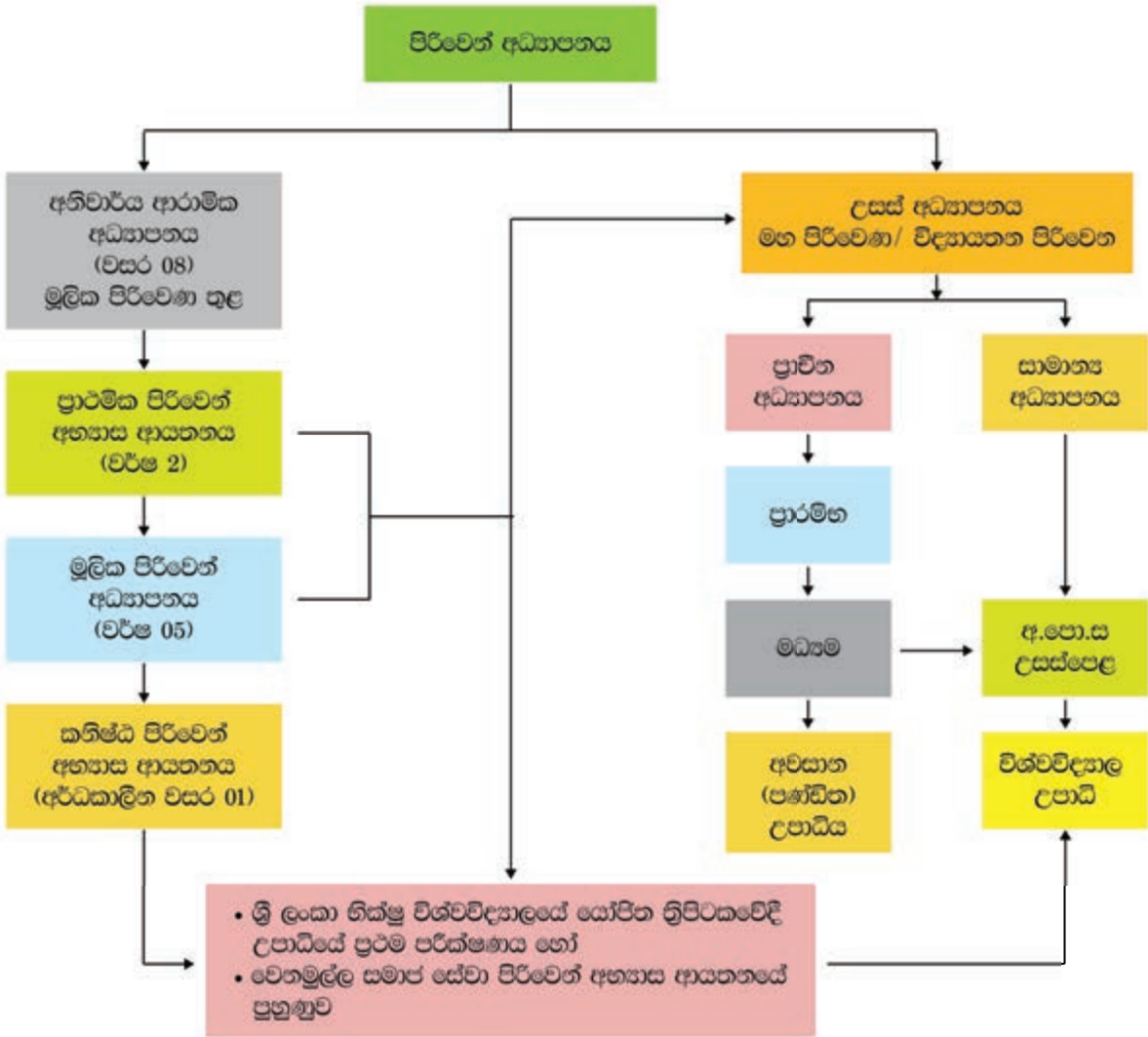
ප්‍රාථමික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයෙන් පසු දැනට ක්‍රියාත්මක මූලික පිරිවෙන්ට ඇතුළත්වන පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයා එහි පස් අවුරුදු පාඨමාලාව හදාරා මූලික පිරිවෙන් අවසාන විභාගයට පෙනී සිටියි. (මූලික පිරිවෙනෙහි විෂය නිර්දේශ, ඇගයීම් - පරීක්ෂණ, ඉගැන්වීමේ ක්‍රම ආදිය සංවර්ධනය වීම වැදගත්ය) මූලික පිරිවෙන් අවසාන විභාගයට පෙනී සිටි පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයා යෝජිත (කණිෂ්ඨ) පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයට ඇතුළත් වෙයි. පිරිවෙන් පනතේ දක්වා ඇති පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන (පනත 13

වගන්තිය) අතරින් දැනට පවත්වාගෙන යන අභ්‍යාස ආයතනවලට බාධාවක් නොවන ලෙස අරමුණු කිහිපයක් සඳහා ද්විතීයික අභ්‍යාස ආයතන පිහිටුවිය හැකි ය. (බෞද්ධ භාවනා ක්‍රමවල යෙදීම, බුද්ධ ධර්මය සහ බෞද්ධ සංස්කෘතිය පතුරුවා හැරීම, බුද්ධ ධර්මය හා විනය පිළිබඳ දැනුමක් ලබාගැනීම ආදී වේ.) මෙම ආයතනයට ඇතුළත් වන ශිෂ්‍යයන් වර්ෂයක් තුළ දින 60 නොඅඩු හික්ෂු පුහුණුවක් ලැබිය යුතුය (අර්ධකාලීන වසර 01). එම පුහුණුවට භාවනා, ධර්ම දේශනා, පිරිත් දේශනා, හික්ෂු විනය ආදී හික්ෂු පිටිතයට අදාළ ආකල්ප හා ශක්තීන් වර්ධනය ද ත්‍රිපිටක අධ්‍යයනය සමයාන්තර දැනුම, ඉංග්‍රීසි හෝ නූතන භාෂා අධ්‍යයනය ද ඇතුළත් විය යුතුය. ද්විතීයික අභ්‍යාස ආයතන ඩිප්ලෝමාධාරී හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේලාට ශ්‍රී ලංකා හික්ෂු විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ යෝජිත ත්‍රිපිටකවේ දී උපාධි ප්‍රථම පරීක්ෂණයට හෝ වෙනමුල්ල සමාජසේවා පිරිවෙන් අභ්‍යාස ආයතන ප්‍රවේෂ විභාගයට පෙනීසිටිය හැකිය.

පුහුණුව සඳහා හික්ෂු ආකල්ප හා කුසලතා වර්ධනයට අදාළ විෂය නිර්දේශ සකස් විය යුතුය. පිරිවෙන් පරීක්ෂක කොට්ඨාසයකට හෝ දෙකකට එක් අභ්‍යාස ආයතනයක් පිහිටුවීම සැහේ. පිරිවෙන් කොට්ඨාසභාර අධ්‍යක්ෂවරුන් මගින් මෙම වැඩසටහන නියාමනය කළ හැකිය. ඒ ඒ කොට්ඨාසවල ත්‍රිපිටක ගුරු උපදේශකවරුන්ට සෘජුවම මෙහි වගකීම පැවරිය හැකිවේ.

කුල දරුවෙකු පැවිදි බිමට පත්වීමත් සමග හික්මවීම හා ආකල්ප ගොඩනැගීම පහසුවේ. ප්‍රාථමික ආයතනය තුළින් එම අරමුණට ළඟා විය හැකි ය. මූලික පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය මගින් දැනුම දියුණු කරගන්නා පැවිදි ශිෂ්‍යයා නැවත ශික්ෂණය මුල්කරගත් පුහුණුවක් ද්විතීයික අභ්‍යාස ආයතනය තුළින් ලබාකරගනු ඇත. ඉන්පසු විනයවත් ගුණවත්, ශික්ෂිත, ප්‍රියශීලී හික්ෂුන් වහන්සේ නමක් ලෙස උසස් අධ්‍යාපනයට හෝ ශාසන සේවාවට එක් වීමට අවස්ථාව හිමි වේ.

ඇමුණුම් අංක 01: යෝජිත පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයේ ව්‍යුහය



PART IV- VOLUME VI

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON SPECIAL AND
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Special and inclusive education refers to two mutually inclusive approaches that facilitate the learning of students who show difficulty gaining the benefits of regular education. Special education requires support beyond what is usually offered in the regular school for children with Special Educational Needs (SENs). The Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)³⁰⁰ in the U.S.A defines Special Education as instructions designed specifically to respond to the learning needs of an individual with disabilities regardless of their environment, whether in a classroom, home, or hospital. On the other hand, the inclusive education is an approach to educating children with disabilities and learning difficulties with normal ones under the same roof. By allowing it to happen, the inclusive education approach offers a child with special educational needs the right to enrol him/her in a local mainstream school, and he/she is supported and guided to reach their academic and social potential. The National Center in Educational Restructuring and Inclusion (NCERI)³⁰¹ in New York defines inclusion as providing all students, including those with severe disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with supplementary aids and supportive services as needed, in age-appropriate general education classes in their neighbourhood schools, towards the outcome of preparing all students for productive lives as fully functioning members of the society.

According to the IDEA (2004)³⁰⁰, there are 13 categories of children with disabilities and special education needs who are eligible for receiving special education services, namely, i) autism, ii) deafness, iii) deaf and blindness, iv) hearing impairment, v) mental retardation, vi) multiple disabilities, vii) health impairment, viii) serious emotional disturbance, ix) specific learning disabilities, x) speech or language impairment, xi) traumatic brain injury, xii) visual impairment/blindness, and xiii) orthopaedic impairment.

As per the guidelines and directives given by the Ministry of Education, through its Circular 37/2020 of 03-12-2020³⁰², the Ministry of Health through its letter of 28-10-2021³⁰³, has instructed all provincial and regional health authorities to identify children who have confirmed diagnosis of any one or more of the following conditions as children with special education needs; i) cerebral palsy, ii) autism spectrum disorders, iii) global development delay, iv) intellectual disability, v) Rett syndrome, vi) fragile X syndrome, vii) down's syndrome, viii) any syndromes as identified by a paediatrician as having a disability acquired due to brain injury, ix) development regression, x) development delays with cognitive or speech involvement, xi) deafness, xii) blindness, xiii) speech impairment, xiv) meningomyelocele repaired, xv) seizure disorders/epileptic syndromes, xvi) cortico-visual impairment, xv) other structural brain disorders, e.g., hydrocephalus, and xvi) children with myopathy/neuropathy,

1.2. Evolution of Special and Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka

The first school for students with disabilities was established in 1912³⁰⁴, and this was primarily meant for dealing with children who were blind and deaf. Later on, it was expanded to cater the children with other categories of disabilities. Since then, more than 27 special schools for children with disabilities have been established and operated in the country. Since 1939 with the enactment of the Education Ordinance No. 31³⁰⁵, several assisted special schools managed either by Christian/Catholic missionaries or Buddhist organizations have come into operation. In 1948 Code of Regulation for Assisted School was revised, and the education of children of 6-14 years was made

300. U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Section 300.39. Special Education*. Retrieved September 15, 2021 from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.39>

301. National Center on Educational Restructuring and Inclusion. (1994). *National Study of Inclusive Education*.

302. Ministry of Education Circular 37/2020 of 03-12-2020

303. Ministry of Health. (October 28, 2020). *Provision of education facilities and inclusive education for children with special needs. Letter No. FHB/CDU/GEN/01/2021*

304. Ekanayake. S. B., Ariyaratna, A., Senevirathna, R., & Hettiarachchi. S. (2014). *Study on the development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education. National Education Commission*.

305. Education Ordinance No. 31 (1939, September).

compulsory. Since 1961 children who were not profoundly disabled were allowed to admit into regular schools³⁰⁶.

In 1969, Sri Lanka accepted the policy of integration³⁰⁷, and the Ministry of Education had been given the direct responsibility for planning and conducting special education services and developing integrated programmes. Accordingly, the Ministry has taken steps to establish a dedicated division for this purpose; i.e. the Special Education Branch, which was subsequently amalgamated to form the Non-formal Education and Special Education (NFE&SE) Branch. According to this policy, the students with disabilities have been integrated into regular schools by establishing Special Education Units. Early services were primarily focused on students with visual impairment and hearing impairments. In 1976 integrated programmes for students with intellectual disabilities began. After becoming a signatory to the SALAMANCA Statement in 1994³⁰⁸, and with the adoption of General Educational Reforms proposed by NEC (1997), the Sri Lankan schooling sector has adopted the principles of inclusion to develop a dynamic educational approach that responds to students' diversity. This commitment was further strengthened by the World Declaration on Education for All, the Dakar Framework for Action 2000³⁰⁹. In 2006 United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)³¹⁰ has adopted a major framework on global disability rights. It clearly explained the rights of disabled persons, including the right to get an education, ensuring access to tertiary education, vocational training, adult education, and lifelong learning without discrimination on an equal basis with others.

Currently, most of the regulatory powers related to the provision of special and inclusive education services are derived through the Special Educational Society Act No. 3 of (1999) which covers the rehabilitation of disabled individuals in Sri Lanka by providing educational service, while the General Educational Reforms proposed by NEC (1997) covers the inclusion of children who have disabilities in ordinary classrooms. Further, most of the services offered in special and inclusive education have been provided based on general education policy statements and administrative circulars. However, the above stated Act, policies, and administrative circulars do not go far enough to cater to the needs of providing satisfactory educational opportunities for children with special education needs (SENs).

In Sri Lanka, as happened in many other countries, besides the State, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also have taken a prominent place in giving education to children with disabilities. In addition, private schools also have implemented educational programmes for children with special educational needs. Along with this progressive development, Sri Lanka has enacted a disability law in 1996, Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 28³¹¹, and implemented accompanying sectorial disability regulations. Provision of this Act covers education, employment, rehabilitation, health information and technology, building code, transportation, poverty alleviation, and social security and welfare. Despite these progressive actions, the persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka still face multiple discriminations as the general approach to disability continues to be based on charitable and medical models.

306. Lakshman, H. P. N. (2009, December 2-4). *Special Education in Sri Lanka [Conference Abstract]. Twenty-ninth Asia-Pacific International Seminar on Education for Individuals with Special Needs, Yokohama, Japan.* <https://www.nise.go.jp/cms/resources/content/385/d-292.pdf>

307. Piyasena, K. (2002). *Towards inclusive education in developing countries: the three-phase programme of special education - A unique contribution from Sri Lanka.* Sena Publishers.

308. UNESCO. (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education.* https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/Salamanca_Statement_1994.pdf

309. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action.*

310. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.* Retrieved September 15, 2021, from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

311. *Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 (1996, October)*

1.3. Current Statistics

This section presents the pertinent statistics in relation to the number of children with special education needs in primary classrooms, secondary grades, special units, and special schools in Sri Lanka. As of 2018 data, there were 48,784 children with special education needs attending regular schools; out of this, 24,518 children (1.5%) with special education needs were among the 1,672,350 total population of children in Grade 1-5 (primary classrooms), and 24,266 children (1.0%) with special educational needs were among 2,535,634 total population of children in Grade 6 -13 (in regular Junior, Senior and Upper Senior Secondary schools in Sri Lanka)³¹². In addition, as of 2019³¹³, there are 7,513 students with special education needs accommodated in 704 Special Education Units functioning in national and provincial schools. In addition, there are 2,467 children with special education needs receiving care and education in 29 Assisted Special Schools that are maintained by the State (3) and the non-State organizations (26)³¹⁴. The details are given in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table1: Details of Students in Special Education Units in Sri Lanka

Grade	Total Students	Male Students	%	Female Students	%	Sinhala Medium	%	Tamil Medium	%
Special Education Unit	7513	4553	60.6	2960	39.4	5305	70.6	2208	29.4

Source: Ministry of Education. (2019). School Census Report of Sri Lanka

Table 2: Statistics of Assisted Special Schools by Province and District

Province /District	No. of schools	Students			Teachers		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	female	Total
1. Western	12	688	411	1099	14	216	230
i. Colombo	5	319	184	503	6	104	110
ii. Gampaha	4	259	142	401	8	80	88
iii. Kalutara	3	110	85	195	-	32	32
2. Central	3	104	48	152	7	32	39
i. Kandy	2	78	36	114	5	24	29
ii. Matale	1	26	12	38	2	8	10
3. Southern	4	232	160	392	29	52	81
i. Gall	2	94	48	142	8	20	28
ii. Matara	1	65	50	115	4	22	26
iii. Hambantota	1	73	62	135	17	10	27
4. Northern	1	58	60	118	9	18	27
i. Jaffna	1	58	60	118	9	18	27
5. Eastern	1	33	10	43	1	8	9
i. Batticaloa	1	33	10	43	1	8	9
6. North Western	2	119	85	204	5	27	32
i. Kurunegala	1	60	52	112	2	17	19

312. Ministry of Education. (2018). Annual School Census of Sri Lanka

313. Ministry of Education. (2019). Annual School Census of Sri Lanka

314. Ministry of Education. (2019). Annual School Census of Sri Lanka

ii. Puttalam	1	59	33	92	3	10	13
7. Northcentral	1	53	40	93	7	9	16
i. Anuradhapura	1	53	40	93	7	9	16
8. Uva	2	105	91	196	16	31	47
i. Badulla	1	63	59	122	9	20	29
ii. Monaragala	1	42	32	74	7	11	18
9. Sabaragamuwa	3	86	84	170	12	28	40
i. Rathnapura	1	32	22	54	6	10	16
ii. Kegalle	2	54	62	116	6	18	24
Total	29	1478	989	2467	100	421	521

Source: Ministry of Education. (2019). *School Census Report of Sri Lanka*

1.3.1. Status of children with special educational needs

There has been no formal system to screen children and identify the children with disabilities and do the referrals, and also to document and collate data at the provincial and national level, and as such it has been very difficult to estimate the exact number of children with disabilities in Sri Lanka. UNICEF (2016)³¹⁵ reported that in Sri Lanka approximately about 23.5% of children who are with disabilities in the aged group of 5-14 years are excluded from mainstream education, and amongst those who do attend mainstream schools, participation in educational activity reduces with age; around 55.4% of the disabled population in the age of 15-19 years, and 86% of the disabled population in the age of 20-24 years do not engage in any form of educational activity or vocational training.

There appear to be many limitations and challenges for catering for the children having disabilities, and these include the lack of skilled teachers, lack of appropriate infrastructure facilities in schools, limited scope in curricula, and the unavailability of assistive devices to cater for such students. Moreover, every year, out of the age cohort of Grade 1 admissions into regular schools, 1.07% of children are diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder³¹⁶. In addition, 21.5% of students at the age of 10 appeared to have demonstrated problems in reading, comprehension, and spelling, about 18% of students, especially in Grade 6, were reported to be poor in handwriting, and according to performance tests of the primary school children, their success rates in languages (Sinhala and Tamil) and Mathematics were 37% and 38%, respectively³¹⁷.

The available data indicate that though the policy of the government of Sri Lanka is to provide free education from the primary stage to the first-degree level of university education irrespective of race, religion, socio-economic status, or disabilities, there appear to be many children with disabilities who are still excluded from any form of education³¹⁸. Even for those who were accommodated into formal schools, the performance of such children was poor due to many limitations in educational provisions.

315. UNICEF (2016). *EVERY MIND: Equal Rights to Education for Children with Learning Disabilities in Sri Lanka*. Retrieved September 15, 2021 from <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/every-mind>

316. Attygalle, U.R., Perera, H., and Jayamanne, B.D.W. (2020). *Stigma related to mental health issues – a study among adolescents in Sri Lanka*. *Sri Lanka Journal of Psychiatry*, 11(1), 8–13.

317. Sandarajanie, M. S. V., Jeewandara, K. C., Perera, H., (2016). *Prevalence and correlates of reading and spelling difficulty in 10 year old children in a semi-urban population in Sri Lanka*. *Sri Lanka Journal of Child Health*, 45(3), 193–198.

318. Department of Census and Statistics. (2016). *Child Activity Survey*.

1.3.2. Initiatives taken for promotion of educational services for children with special needs

Though there is a dearth of comprehensive data to examine the actual circumstances of children with special needs, Sri Lanka has put in place well-defined disability-specific legislation, covering many areas. Many administrative circulars have also been issued focusing on facilitating access to education for SENs, teacher training and deployment, and incentive payments for teachers dealing with SENs.

Opportunities provided for higher education: It is noteworthy to mention, from the recent past, more students with disabilities enrolled in universities and other Institutes of higher education. Moreover, the government has adopted a special university admission scheme for children with disabilities but admission under this scheme is still limited only to bio-science, physical science, commerce, and humanities and social science streams of education. Some universities/higher education institutes have commenced programmes to provide assistive devices and provide reasonable accommodation facilities. For example, the Postgraduate Institute of Medicine has adopted accommodation guidelines to cater to the needs of trainees with disabilities. However, these programmes are carried out purely voluntarily, and most efforts were driven almost exclusively by individuals' commitment.

Teacher training to cater to children with SENs: Several initiatives have been taken to train teachers to deal with children with SENs. In the 1970s, a teacher training programme in special education was started by the Teachers' Training College at Maharagama. Thereafter, several National Colleges of Education (NCoEs) in 2006 has commenced the National Diploma in Teaching (Special Education) in both Sinhala and Tamil medium. Furthermore, since 2000, the National Institute of Education (NIE) offers short-term training programmes on inclusive education for regular class teachers and In-service Advisors (ISAs). In addition, the Ministry of Education has taken efforts to offer short-term training programmes aimed at providing basic knowledge of inclusive education through its island-wide network of Teachers' Training Centres. Besides that, the universities too have taken initiatives to provide teacher education programmes in special and inclusive education. For example, the Open University of Sri Lanka offers a teacher professional development programme on special needs and inclusive education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is noteworthy to mention that six visually impaired teachers enrolled in the postgraduate diploma in the special needs education programme offered by the Open University in 2021.

Professional training to cater for children with SENs: Medical Faculty of the University of Kelaniya has established a dedicated department, called the Department of Disability Studies which caters to all current and future graduate-level training needs to train professionals serving persons with disabilities (*e.g. speech therapists, audiologists, and occupational therapists*).

In addition, there exist many special schools mostly run by NGOs, and a few manned by the Social Service Department distributed across the provinces. Besides that, there are few public-private partnerships to improve access to education for children with disabilities. Further, many State institutions often operate on short-term projects with registered NGOs working on disability rights. In addition, some private businesses as a part of their cooperate social responsibility initiatives too have taken steps to recruit people with disabilities who have obtained vocational training certificates/diplomas from State TVET institutions.

1.4. Issues and Gaps

Traditionally, children with SENs are segregated into separate learning environments. This education practice has been established and operated for years and has its benefits, such as the provision of special curricula designed for children with SENs, trained teachers and caregivers, physical facilities, assistive devices appropriate for children with SENs, etc. However, this conventional practice has been changed as of recent times. It is now widely accepted that students with SENs should be included in mainstream schools to maximize their learning experiences. Specifically, the inclusion of SENs into the mainstream of education aims to benefit such children through improvements in their learning outcomes, including their social skills, academic achievements, and personal development.

Nonetheless, the provision of appropriate educational needs for children with special needs has long been a common issue in education in Sri Lanka, particularly when it comes to integration and inclusion. A child is classified as having special educational needs if he/she has a learning difficulty³¹⁹ or disability³²⁰ that makes it more difficult for them to learn than most of the children at their age. They may have problems with academic work, communication, or behaviour. Therefore, students with special educational needs require more assistance and additional services - such as services of trained teachers and caregivers, special facilities such as specialized equipment and assistive technologies, ramps, or elevators for providing access to school buildings.

The issues and gaps faced by the special and inclusive education sector including the suggestions for overcoming those issues and gaps are detailed below.

1.4.1. Early identification of children at risk

Early intervention is the best way to support the development and wellbeing of children with disabilities, developmental delays, or other additional needs. It can help parents of such children to provide interventions to help the development of skills they need to take part in everyday activities. Early intervention is also well known to be effective and productive in helping these children in educational achievements. It helps to improve their potential to become productive adults in the future. If neglected, the right to education is violated and they may end up unproductive and being a burden to their families, society, and the country. It is reported that in Sri Lanka, almost one in six babies is born with low birth weight³²¹. These infants are at a disadvantage for growth, and physical and cognitive development. Even though there is a good primary health care system that has been free at the point of delivery and a sound primary health care approach in place by the Public Health Service of the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka in terms of providing vaccinations, food supplements like *'Thripusha'* for children who are underweight, and monitoring the growth and development of the children, there is no proper screening and referral system and a coordination mechanism among the relevant bodies to facilitate the parents to deal with once a child is identified and diagnosed as disabled. This screening and referral system should effectively integrate with the primary care services provided through the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) system. Thus, many parents of children with disabilities are compelled to keep such children at home without seeking interventions and sending them to schools or special schools. It is very conceivable such children should be identified through midwives, *gramaniladari*, or social service officers for necessary interventions. Further, children with disabilities under the age of 5 are not registered nationally as there is no formal registration system, and hence they are therefore excluded from social protection mechanisms that may be available to assist them. Research studies in this aspect overwhelmingly highlighted the need for strengthening the institutional capacity at every level to identify and then respond to issues specifically concerning children with disabilities.

1.4.2. Identification and assessment of children with special needs for appropriate placement

Presently, in Sri Lanka, children with SENs are receiving their education either in Assisted Special Schools, in Special Education Units, or in the mainstream of general education system of government or private schools. However, Sri Lanka has failed so far to come up with a systematic programme to provide suitable placements for all children with special needs to ensure that every child with SENs is placed in the least restrictive environment according to his/her needs. Referral procedures are mainly facilitated through informal channels, and as such there are no official records of such referrals. This situation raises many issues in providing the facilities and supportive services needed to enhance the learning effectiveness of children with special needs such as curriculum adaptations, alternative

319. A learning difficulty is "a condition that can cause an individual to experience problems in a traditional classroom learning context. It may interfere with literacy skills development and /math and can also affect memory, ability to focus and organizational skills".

320. A disability is "any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them. (participation restrictions)"

321. Jayawardena, P. (2011). Sri Lanka grapples with child malnutrition despite major improvement in the health sector. Retrieved September 15, 2021 from <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2011/11/21/sri-lanka-grapples-with-child-malnutrition-despite-major-improvements-in-the-health-sector/>

evaluation methods, assistive technology, trained teachers, transition, ect.

Despite Sri Lanka's high school enrollment rate, many children with disabilities do not attend schools³²². The limitations of the existing system in dealing with children with disabilities have been highlighted by several studies. Furuta (2006)³²³ raised concerns on the admission of children with SENs into Special Education Units in regular schools. This study reported that as many as 35% of parents/caregivers with children with SENs were denied access to such units. Further, as of the research information, the school admission of children with disabilities is often denied or not sought due to the unavailability of qualified teachers and required infrastructure facilities, coupled with a lack of awareness of parents about the educational facilities available for such children^{324,325}.

On paper, there appears to be a systematic procedure in place to identify the entry competencies of children as they are admitted to Grade 1 as an outcome of the Educational Reforms implemented in 1997³²⁶. It does not appear to operate fully. At the point of entry, the teacher is required to engage with children in a series of specially designed play items and activities to identify each child's capabilities at entry. This will enable teachers to assess the degree of success achieved in the acquisition of age-appropriate competencies and to take corrective measures where necessary. However, this practice does not appear to operate consistently across the school system, and even if it is done, due to various reasons, the children who are identified as having low competency levels are usually kept in the regular classroom without providing proper interventions. Thus, there is a need for adopting an alternative approach to address the above issues. One such approach is the adoption of the Response to Intervention Model³²⁷ which proposes how to deal with the students at risk in schools once they are identified for poor learning outcomes, such as monitoring student progress, providing evidence-based interventions, and adjusting the intensity and nature of those interventions depending on a student's responsiveness.

1.4.3. Learning environment, human and physical resources

1.4.3.1 Learning environment

A positive and conducive learning environment can be created by the teacher in the classroom only when he/she respects his/her students, and arrange /provide learning experiences for children to meet their expectations and accomplish their goals. This principle is equally applicable to normal as well as children SENs. It is universally accepted that a disability can never be a deficiency; it happens so when society fails to create a favourable environment for them to live, learn, and progress. Teachers must never put up an attitude of inequality before the students, especially those who are disabled. They must rather create an inclusive environment in the classroom in which all students feel at home, gather in self-confidence, and be able to develop their innate talents. According to Furuta and Alwis (2017)³²⁸, teachers face stress or dilemmas when balancing classes to meet the needs of both students with and without SENs, and also there were snags in coordination between teachers of regular classes and Special Education

322. Nimisha, M., Kathryn, D. R. D., Lindsay, O. D., (2016). *Special Education Sri Lanka: Snap shot of three provinces. Disability Studies Quarterly*, 36(2). <https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/4388/4310>

323. Furuta, H., (2006). *Present status of education of children with disabilities in Sri Lanka: Implications for increasing access to education. The Japanese Journal of Special Education*, 43 (6),555-565.

324. Furuta, H., (2009). *Responding to educational needs of children with disabilities: Care and education in special pre-schools in the North Western Province of Sri Lanka. The Japanese Journal of Special Education*, 46(6), 457-471.

325. *United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA). (2007). Social inclusion: Gender and equity in education SWAPS in South Asia.*

326. *The Presidential Task Force on General Education (1997). New Education Act for General Education in Sri Lanka. <http://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Towards-a-New-Education-Act.pdf>*

327. *The Response to Intervention (RTI) "model refers to a process that highlights how well students respond to changes in instruction in the classroom. Individual students' progress is monitored and results are used to make decisions about further instruction and intervention. Essentially, schools can use the RTI process to help students who are struggling academically or behaviorally and to identify students who may have learning disabilities."*

328. Furuta, H., Alwis, K. A. C. (2017). *Teaching students with special educational needs in an inclusive educational setting in Sri Lanka: Regular class teacher's view. Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 19(2), 1-18. <https://cice.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/19-2-1-1.pdf>

Units. Further, there was evidence of the existence of negative attitudes towards Special Education Units, and this too has increased the stress among teachers who are serving those units. Abeywickrama, Jayasinghe & Sumanasena (2013)³²⁹ examined the experiences of children with disabilities, their parents, and teachers at the Special Education Units in three government schools in the Central Province, and concluded that impairment-centered views regarding disabilities expressed by both teachers and parents dominated the learning environments in these schools.

1.4.3.2 Human resources

One of the main difficulties in implementing inclusive education is the absence of sufficiently trained teachers to deal with children with SENs. The teachers in the general education system, in general, have not been given sufficient training to work in complex teaching contexts and to respond to the unique needs of all the pupils in their classroom. The number of pupils with SENs studying in general educational settings (Grade 1 -13) has gradually increased over the years, and as of 2018 data, around 48,784 pupils are defined as having SENs attended general schools³³⁰. The shortfall of teachers with competencies in catering for children with SENs has been estimated as approximately 36 per cent³³¹. Even though the NCoEs produce a significant number of trained teachers in special education, there is still a dearth of teachers in this field. This appears to be due to the absence of coordination between the Non-formal and Special Education Branch and the Teacher Establishment Division of the MoE in making a decision with respect to teacher deployment. Research into these aspects revealed that most primary school teachers in Sri Lanka are not adequately trained to teach children with special needs in a regular classroom, and highlighted the need of mandatory teacher training on curricula adaptations which are indispensable for catering the students with special educational needs. Further, these reports too have emphasized the need for the adoption of a teacher-helper model for effective implementation of inclusive education in Sri Lanka^{332,333}. Further, these research reports have highlighted the need for pre-service and in-service training for teachers on inclusive education strategies and philosophy that reinforces teachers' professional ideas of accepting students with SENs.

1.4.3.3 Physical resources

According to Disabled Persons' Accessibility Regulation No. 01 (2006)³³⁴ all new constructions, renovations, and modifications of public buildings and transport must be done in conformity with the prescribed accessibility guidelines, and all existing public buildings must be made accessible to people with disabilities. Protection of Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996 mentioned that it is the responsibility of school building engineers, principals, and education authorities to provide accessible facilities to all schools, classrooms, principal's office, library, playground, laboratories, sanitary places, etc. Furthermore, accessibility is a fundamental component of the UNICEF promoted Child-Friendly School Initiative. Nonetheless, the research study by Keerthirathna, Karunasena & Rodrigo (2018)³³⁵ highlighted that at the design stage of the school buildings, in most instances the building designs do not give adequate priority for disability access. As such most existing school buildings do not provide access facilities to children with disabilities. Moreover, there is a dearth of assistive devices which facilitate access to the curriculum and teaching-learning process for children with special educational needs.

329. Abeywickrama, S. P., Jayasinghe, I. K., Sumanasena, S. P. (2013). *Excluded in Inclusive Schools: Experiences of children with disabilities, their families and teachers in Sri Lanka*. *Disability, CBR & Inclusive Development*, 24(1), 115-129.

330. Ministry of Education. (2018). *Annual School Census of Sri Lanka*

331. Dhanapala, T. D. L. (2009). *Inclusive education as a strategy for achieving the education for all in Sri Lanka [Unpublished dissertation]*. University of the Punjab, Lahore.

332. Alwis, K.A.C., (2012). *A teacher helper model for effective implementation of inclusive education in Sri Lanka*, *SAARC Journal of Educational Research*, 9, 46-59.

333. Alwis, K. A. C., (2015). *Instructions in inclusive classrooms - Sri Lankan experience*. *Journal of Special Needs Education*, 5, 3-26.

334. *Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996*. Ministry of Social Services and Welfare. *The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary)*, No. 1467/15, 17 October 2006.

335. Keerthirathna, W. A. D., Karunasena, G., Rodrigo, V.A.K. (2010). *Disability access in public buildings*. *Proceedings of the International Research Conference on Sustainability in Built Environment, Colombo, Sri Lanka*, 94-104. [http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/20741/1/Proceedings-International_Conference_on_Sustainability_in_Built_Environment_June_2010_\(2\).pdf](http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/20741/1/Proceedings-International_Conference_on_Sustainability_in_Built_Environment_June_2010_(2).pdf)

1.5. Curriculum, Instructions, and Assessment

In Sri Lanka, the school curriculum is centrally designed with a heavy emphasis on imparting knowledge, and it offers little flexibility for local adaptations for teachers to experiment and try out new approaches. As a result of the knowledge-based curriculum, the examinations are also too much content-oriented rather than success-oriented. King (2005)³³⁶ in his report on strengthening special education by creating inclusive schools in Sri Lanka emphasized the importance of the development of inclusive instructional methodologies to support the curriculum across Grade 1 to 13, and across all subject areas. Even though there are several initiatives taken by the Department of Inclusive Education of the National Institute of Education in terms of training of in-service advisors and principals regarding curriculum adaptation for children with special educational needs, it has not yet been widely diffused to school levels.

One of the well-accepted approaches in promoting flexibility in school curricula and teaching-learning is the Universal Design for Learning (UDL)³³⁷ approach, and it offers flexibility in adopting the prescribed curricula, and teaching and learning methods that suit different circumstances and types of learners in such a way to provide equal opportunities for them to succeed. This approach also offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it, and show what they know. The purpose of UDL implementation is to create expert learners; learners who can assess their own learning needs, monitor their progress and regulate and sustain their interest, effort, and persistence during a learning task.

Besides that, as highlighted by Alwis (2005)³³⁸ there were no special assessment strategies or procedures designed for the students with SENs in the mainstream. Therefore, teachers in Sri Lanka are unable to cater to the individual needs of students with disabilities when conducting assessments. Moreover, the large and overcrowded classrooms become barriers to addressing the needs of children with special needs in an effective manner.

1.6. Financing of Special and Inclusive Education

Sri Lanka historically devoted comparatively a small percentage of its government expenditure on education. As estimated, Sri Lanka's public expenditure on education on average from 2010-2018 was 2.1% of its GDP and this is relatively low compared to the average of 4.0% of the GDP of lower-middle-income countries during the same period³³⁹. It is imperative that every institution that provides inclusive and special education is required to have sufficient financial provisions to provide facilities like barrier-free classrooms, acquire assistive devices and acquire/create learning resources for children with SENs. Article 27th of the 1939 Education Ordinance emphasized the provisions of educational facilities for exceptional cases. It covers for the medical inspection and treatment if required of children attending school and for their health and well-being, and the supply of free meals and school books to the children of poor families attending schools, for the education of blind, deaf, defective, and epileptic children. However, as highlighted in Section 1.4.3.3, there is still a dearth of facilities and resources required by schools to accommodate children with SENs. This situation appears to have arisen due to the existing method of fund allocation which is based more on the previous year's expenditure. The current level of financial provisions made by the central government and provincial councils adopting this method appears to be hardly sufficient to meet these additional needs.

336. King, B.S., (2005). *Strengthening Special Education by Creating Inclusive schools.* [Unpublished report submitted to MoE, Sri Lanka].

337. *The UDL Guidelines - a set of tools used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning. These guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities.*

338. Alwis, K. A. C., (2005). *Children with hearing impairment in regular classroom.* *Sri Lankan Journal of Educational Research*, 9(1), 45-69.

339. *World Bank (2021). Government Expenditure on Education - Sri Lanka & Lower middle-income countries.* Retrieved Dec 9, 2021, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=LK-XN>

1.7. Governance and Management, and Quality Assurance

1.7.1. Governance and management

The education service in Sri Lanka is administered by the Ministry of Education of Central Government in liaison with Provincial Councils. The provisions of the Education Ordinance No.31 of 1939 (*as amended by Ordinance Nos. 61 of 1939, 21 of 1945, 3 of 1946, 26 of 1947, Act No 5 of 1951, 43 of 1943, 37 of 1958*), which governs the general education also covers to some extent the aspects special and inclusive education. Apart from this historical legislative dictates, there is no legislation specific to governing the provision of education to the students with disabilities even though, Sri Lanka has ratified almost all international, global declarations that cover special and inclusive education such as The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)³⁴⁰, Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960)³⁴¹, Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)³⁴², Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)³⁴³, World Declaration on Education for All (1990)³⁴⁴, Dakar Framework for Action (2000)³⁴⁵, and Millennium Development Goals (2000)³⁴⁶.

In contrast to the situation in Sri Lanka, many developed as well as developing countries have taken very progressive steps in this regard. For example, Article 39 of the National Education Law of Cambodia (2007)³⁴⁷ states that “disabled learners have the same rights as able learners.” Moreover, disabled learners of either sex have the right to study with able learners if there is sufficient facilitation in the study process, and Article 27 of the Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2009) states that “all students with disabilities have the right to enrollment in public and private educational establishments”, while the Article 28 declares that the “State shall develop policies and strategies which promote inclusive education to the utmost extent and only after that to establish special classes to respond to the needs of students with disabilities”. Nepal recently passed the Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2017 and the Disability Rights Act in 2018³⁴⁸.

Unfortunately, Sri Lanka is yet to put in place such specific legislation and accompanying regulations to give effect to the legal provisions of such an Act. As highlighted by many research studies, this continuing deficiency is one of the fundamental defects that hinder the progressive development in the field of special and inclusive education in Sri Lanka (Smith, 2003³⁴⁹; UNICEF, 2003³⁵⁰; McConkey, 2007³⁵¹; Sumanasena et al, 2008³⁵²; Dhanapala, 2009³⁵³; Abeywickrama,

340. United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf

341. UNESCO. (1990). *Convention Against Discrimination in Education*. <https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/UNESCO%20Convention%20against%20Discrimination%20in%20Education.pdf>

342. United Nations. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. Retrieved October 10, 2021 from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

343. United Nations. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved October 10, 2021 from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

344. UNESCO. (1990). *World Declaration on Education for All*. https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO_World_Declaration_For_All_1990_En.pdf

345. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2000). *The Dakar Framework for Action*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1681Dakar%20Framework%20for%20Action.pdf>

346. United Nations. (2000). *Millennium Development Goals*. <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Handout%207%20-%20Millennium%20Development%20Goals.pdf>

347. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. *Education Law, Kingdom of Cambodia*. <https://www.moeys.gov.kh/images/moeys/laws-and-regulations/48/EducationLaw-EN.pdf>

348. Kafle, B. D. (2020). *Inclusion in Education: Preparing for Challenges by 2030*. [Conference Presentation]. Online Seminar on Inclusive Education in Asia-Pacific region, JCES & UNCESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education.

349. Smith, J. A. (2003). *The concept of Inclusive education in Sri Lankan perspectives*, (unpublished research report).

350. UNICEF (2003). *The State of the World's Children 2003*. <https://www.unicef.org/media/84791/file/SOWC-2003.pdf>

351. McConkey, R. (2007). *Community-based services*. In T. Barron & P. Amerena (Eds), *Disability and inclusive development*, (pp21-68), Leonard Cheshire International.

352. Sumanasena, S. P., Senanyake, S. M., Vithanage, K., Senanyake, M. P. (2008). *Tip of iceberg: Availability of services for children with disabilities*. 11th Annual Scientific Congress, Sri Lanka College of Pediatricians.

353. Dhanapala, T. D. L. (2009). *Inclusive education as a strategy for achieving the education for all in Sri Lanka* [Unpublished dissertation]. University of the Punjab, Lahore.

1.7.2. Quality Assurance

It is well recognized that the quality assurance (QA) mechanisms form an integral aspect of all arrangements and processes of education, including the special and inclusive education system. The QA in general education is conducted through the Quality Assurance Unit of the Ministry of Education. In this regard, there is a Quality Assurance Manual³⁵⁷ that sets the guidelines on national educational standards, and the ISA competency profile to facilitate QA activities at schools and provide QA information to the higher authorities at the provincial and Ministry level. All public schools in all categories had been subjected to a process of QA using the guidelines and procedures prescribed in this QA Manual. However, the above-mentioned QA system in general education does not give sufficient weightage for special and inclusive education. Therefore, there is a need to incorporate QA aspects of the special and inclusive education in the QA framework that is in operation for general education, thus making a common QA framework for both general education and special and inclusive education.

1.8. Data Management and Research

There is a dearth of data and information about persons with disabilities, and this is particularly so concerning children with special needs. There appears to be no proper data management system in operation for special and inclusive education in Sri Lanka, and as such, there is no account on the number of children with disabilities, and the needs of individuals with disabilities in Sri Lanka. The extent of research information generated in the field of special and inclusive education in Sri Lanka is also minimal. Even though there are few research studies in special and inclusive education conducted by several organizations and individuals, there is no common forum to disseminate the research findings. Thus, it is essential that national apex organizations like the National Education Commission and the universities and NIE promote and conduct school-based research in the field of special and inclusive education and create a platform to share and disseminate the research information among the key stakeholders and the public. Information related to a disability must also be disseminated by all forms of mainstream and social media to educate, mobilize and activate civil society and so promote the social acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities³⁵⁸. This shortage of information on individuals with disabilities and their scope of needs also makes social planning a substantial challenge³⁵⁹.

1.9. Conclusion

Special and inclusive education refers to two mutually reinforcing approaches that facilitate learning for students with special education needs who show difficulties in gaining the benefits of regular education. Special education requires support that goes beyond what is usually offered in the regular school for children with SENs. Inclusive education is where students are accepted for who they are, and their individual needs are to be met by providing them with the necessary assistance to succeed and reach their potential by creating a secure learning environment with required facilities, and by providing an accepting, collaborating, and stimulating school environment in which everyone is valued.

354. Sumanasena S P., Senanayake S. M., Vithanage, K., Senanyake. M. P., (2008). *Tip of iceberg: Availability of services for children with disabilities. Proceedings of 11th Annual Scientific Congress, Sri Lanka College of Paediatricians, 73.*

355. Dhanapala, T. D. T. L., Alwis, K. A. C., Thanaraj, T., Anuruddhika, B. G. H., (2014). *Level of preparedness of government school teachers for inclusive education in Sri Lanka. Dissemination Seminar in commemoration of the 11th Anniversary of the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka.*

356. Ellepola, Y. (2016). *Sri Lanka's Invisible Children: The need for inclusive education for children with special needs. Retrieved October 10, 2021 from <https://www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2016/04/25/sri-lankas-invisible-children-the-need-for-inclusive-education-for-children-with-special-needs/>*

357. Ministry of Education (2104). *Our school: how good is it?, Process of Evaluation for Assuring the Quality in Education.*

358. Ministry of Social Services and Welfare. (2003). *National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka.*

359. Japan International Cooperation Agency, Planning and Evaluation Department. (2002). *Country Profile on Disability, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.*

According to the limited research findings in the field of special and inclusive education, it revealed that despite many progressive initiatives taken by the successive governments, there exist many lingering issues and gaps that hinder the progressive development of facilities and improvements in the quality and standards of educational services provided to children with SENs. These include limitations in access to early childhood and regular education system, learning facilities, curricula, and teaching-learning process, human resources, physical resources, financing, governance and management, quality assurance, data management, and research.

The primary reason for most of the identified issues and gaps is the absence of a national level legislative Act or Ordinance specific to the provision of education and allied services to children with special education needs and accompanying regulations that give effect to the provisions of such an Act/Ordinance. This situation has further been aggravated by the absence of clear comprehensive and consistent national policy which shall define sectoral policies, roles and functions of key agencies, and policy directives and accompanied strategic activities, and implementation framework to give an effect to those policies and strategies. Currently, special and inclusive education is supported by the general education-specific legislative enactments and policy directives, and through related administrative circulars, and these do not go far enough to address the specific needs of children with special educational needs. Thus, there is a pressing need for enactment of legislative Act/Ordinance and accompanying regulations, and adopting a national policy and strategic activity framework to define the roles and functions of key agencies, and to ensure the provision of required funds, human and physical resources, and effective coordination among key agencies and implementation and monitoring of special and inclusive education programmes.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

Having completed a comprehensive Status Review, the policy planning team has proceeded to identify special and inclusive education sector-specific 10 core areas and elements and accompanying directive principles based on the guidelines elaborated in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030). This approach is taken, as stated elsewhere, to ensure the policy planning process gives comprehensive coverage across the sub-sector specific core areas and elements while giving due consideration to issues and gaps highlighted in the Status Review that are lingering the progressive developments of the special and inclusive education sector.

The special and inclusive education sector-specific 10 core areas, include: i) Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Early Childhood Care and Education; ii) Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Regular Education System; iii) Learners and Learning Environment; iv) Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Process; v) Quality of Human Resources; vi) Quality of Physical Resources; vii) Financing of Special and Inclusive Education; viii) Regulation, and Governance and Management; ix) Quality Assurance, and x) Data Management and Research.

Core Area – SE & IE 1: Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Early Childhood Care and Education

Policy context

The available statistics on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) of children with SENs show that their access and participation in ECCE programmes are lower than those of normal children. Poor parental awareness, poverty, terrain difficulties, and relative unavailability of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) services for children with special needs, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged have been identified as contributory factors for lower access to and enrolment in ECCE. The SAARC Colombo Statement (2012) refers to the provision of inclusive child-friendly, family-focused services integrating parental support systems and social justice to children with disabilities

and their parents, and better psychosocial development and adjustment to facilitate their enrollment into formal schooling, and thereby promoting the access to Early Intervention Programmes (EIP). The EIPs are a range of different programmes that include various types of therapy and education interventions to help and support children with developmental delays, disabilities, or other specific health conditions. These programmes are expected to help to improve children's development and adaptability, enhance family capability in handling children with disabilities, and increase family and children's participation in society. Presently screening the children for developmental problems with the aim of early detection and referral has been undertaken by the national health programme. However, these programmes have many limitations, especially in the early detection and referral system.

Directive principle

DP 1: The State assures universal access to early childhood education irrespective of race, religion, socio-economic status, and disabilities.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 1.1: Early identification, assessment, and intervention services should be nationally available for the children at risk to ensure their well-being and facilitate the attainment of their potential

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Ministry of Health shall take steps to establish a Network of Child Development Intervention Centres (CDICs) at the provincial level with proper link to national level hospitals such as Lady Ridgway Hospital to facilitate early identification and provisions of needy interventions. The CDICs should be served by a Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) consisting of Paediatricians, Psychologists, Audiologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and Midwives.
 - Core functions of the CDICs are to; i) conduct screening of children at risk for diagnosis and provide interventions, ii) conduct continuous monitoring of the progress of children at risk for prescribed interventions, iii) design and conduct educational programmes to promote the adoption of best practices by the parents, other family members, and caregivers, and iv) provisions of guidance and counselling to families of children with SENs.
- The Ministry of Health should establish a national level Advisory Board under the chairmanship of the Director General of Health with representatives of the Ministries of Education and Social Services and Welfare, Provincial Ministries of Health, National Secretariate for Early Childhood Development (NSECD), and Child Protection Authority to provide directions and guidance to and review and monitor the progress achieved through the network of CDICs.
- The Ministry of Social and Welfare Services shall take steps to review the existing Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes with respect to structure, resources, and linkages with other relevant agencies and introduce appropriate reforms to make it functional and effective.

Policy-SE & IE 1.2: Children with special education needs should be included in early childhood care and development programmes in a manner conducive for such children in achieving the fullest possible social inclusion and individual development

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NSECD, in liaison with the Non-Formal Education and Special Education (NFE & SE) Branch of the Ministry of Education, shall take steps to ensure the enrolment of children with SENs who can cope with normal children into Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Centres/Facilities.
- The NFE & SE Branch of the Ministry of Education working in liaison with the National Institute of Education (NIE) and provincial authorities shall take steps to ensure provisions of appropriate preschool programmes to prepare those children with special education needs to enrol in special education units maintained by the regular school system.
- The NSECD, together with the NFE & SE Branch of the Ministry of Education shall facilitate the NIE in the development of the curriculum, guidelines on curricular adaptation, and instructional material to cater for the needs of children with disabilities enrolled in early childhood development programmes.
- The NSECD, together with the NFE & SE Branch of the Ministry of Education shall promote and facilitate the NIE, Open University of Sri Lanka, National Colleges of Education (NCoEs), and any other established universities to design and conduct education and training programmes to train teachers/teacher assistants/caregivers in sufficient numbers required to deal with children with special education needs.

Core Area – SE & IE 2: Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Regular Education System

Policy context

Since the 1990s, the Government of Sri Lanka has launched a comprehensive set of education reforms designed to promote equitable access to basic education and improvements in learning outcomes. The Children's Charter (1992)³⁶⁰ and the Regulation for Compulsory Education (1997)³⁶¹ provided a solid legal base for the child's right to education. A child with a disability has the right to special care and education and training to help them enjoy a full and decent life in dignity, and achieve the greatest degree of self-reliance and social integration possible. This must be achieved by widening facilities for special and inclusive education. This also includes providing special requirements and a type of education for those with severe disabilities and as well as for the gifted children by doing a proper assessment by a multi-disciplinary team for appropriate placement and necessary services. Since 1997 Sri Lanka has implemented compulsory education regulations and taken several steps to increase access. These measures have borne fruits as indicated by high enrolment figures at the primary level for both boys and girls. However, research studies have shown that there are still certain groups of disadvantaged children such as disabled children, street children, and children in child labour who are yet to enrol in the compulsory education system.

360. Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation & Social Welfare (1992). *Children's Charter*.

361. Regulation on Compulsory Education. *The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (Extra Ordinary)*, No. 1003/5, 25 November 1997.

Directive principle

DP 1: The State assures full equity and inclusion in education where need-based support is available to all students with disabilities to thrive within the education system, regardless of gender, race, religion or social status, geographical location.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 2.1: All children with special educational needs and talents in Sri Lanka should be subjected to an assessment conducted by health care professionals for determining the eligibility for special and inclusive education services and placement decisions

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All Provincial Ministries of Education shall take steps to establish Special Education Assessment Committees (SEACs) at Zonal Education Office level to determine appropriate placements of children with SENs for educational interventions based on the assessment reports made by the Provincial Ministry of Health through the Multi-Disciplinary Teams of the CDICs.
- The SEAC at the Zonal Education Office level should consist of the following representatives:
 - i. Director of Education/Deputy Director of Education/Assistant Director of Education in charge of the subject of Special Education
 - ii. Director of Education/Deputy Director of Education/Assistant Director of Education in charge of the subject of Primary Education
 - iii. In-Service Advisor in Special Education/In-Service Advisor in Primary Education or a senior teacher of Special Education
- School authorities shall take steps as and when required to refer those children who may encounter learning difficulties to the Zonal Education Office and CDICs for necessary interventions.
- The MoE and NIE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to provide provisions for students who demonstrate excellent potential or outstanding performance to take up courses of higher grades and sit for higher examinations after being evaluated and confirmed their giftedness by the Multi-Disciplinary Team of the CDIC (*functioning at the level of Provincial Ministry of Health*).

Core Area – SE & IE 3: Learners and Learning Environment

Policy context

Sri Lanka as a signatory to the international declarations and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention Against the Discrimination in Education (1960), World Declaration for Education for All (1990), Dakar Framework for Action (2000), Millennium Development Goals (2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (2015) is bound to abide by their directives and fulfill its obligations. Besides that, the Constitution of Sri Lanka also guarantees that the State shall foster the children with special education needs to ensure their full development in physical, mental, moral, religious, and social domains, and to protect them from exploitations and discriminations. Accordingly, schools are required to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disabled children are not put at a substantial disadvantage compared to those who are not disabled. A quality learning environment that should consist of conducive physical, psychological, and social factors must be provided to support all children in their learning process regardless of their status. The local community, including the parents, could also play a vital role in fostering and supporting a quality learning environment.

Directive principle

DP 1: Education should pave the way for every individual irrespective of his/her disability, to reach the full potential to make him/her productively employable/engaged in the 'world of work'.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 3.1: All children who are eligible for special and inclusive education in Sri Lanka should be ensured appropriate learning opportunities at the least restrictive environment which facilitates their holistic development

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education together with the Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to issue circular instruction to ensure the school management of all schools take steps to form special education support teams in individual schools or for a cluster of schools.
- School management of all schools shall take steps to engage families of children with SENs and the community in meaningful and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being irrespective of any disabilities that they are faced with.
- School management of every school shall take steps to establish an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP). ATP shall consist of parents, representatives from School Development Societies/Boards, Past Pupils' Associations, and Voluntary or Welfare Institutions that provide special facilities to fulfil the needs of children with SENs. ATP in liaison with the respective *Grama Niladhari*, Community Police, Divisional Secretariat, etc., shall work towards protecting children with SENs from all forms of maltreatment and abuses.
- The Provincial and Zonal Education Authorities should take steps to ensure schools catering for the children with SENs are allocated teachers with the required expertise to deal with such children and provided with

required resources.

- The MoE shall take steps to ensure existing Teacher Training Centres coming under the purview of the Commissioner of Colleges of Education provide necessary advocacy and training regularly for teachers handling children with special educational needs.

Core Area – SE & IE 4: Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Process

Policy context

Sri Lanka adopts the policy of free and compulsory education and it is also guaranteed by the Constitution of Sri Lanka. It has enforced regulations to ensure free education from kindergarten to university and compulsory education to all children, including children with SENs, aged 5-16 years. Nonetheless, several studies have found that the current school curriculum which is centralized and rigid does not offer flexibility to adapt to local conditions. As such, the curriculum rigidities and the current examination system appear to deny the opportunities for general and higher education for the majority of learners with special education needs and disabilities.

Moreover, several research studies highlighted that the teaching methodologies adopted in general education are not modern and innovative, and as implied they are primarily meant for regular students. The assessment systems lack flexibility and are mainly based on traditional assessments methods, and students are still required only to memorize information. Unfortunately, this system and approach do not appear to provide much room for children with SENs. Thus, there is an urgent need to design the curriculum in such a way to provide flexibility and space for adaptation to suit different local circumstances, including the needs of children with SENs. In this regard, the worldwide accepted approach is the adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a way to overcome these deficiencies. The UDL is a way of teaching and learning that helps give all students, irrespective of disabilities, an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it, and show what they know by multiple means of representation (*i.e. give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge*), multiple means of expression (*i.e. provide learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know*), and multiple means of engagement (*i.e. tap into learners' interest*).

Directive principle

DP 1: All students, irrespective of disabilities, must be guaranteed 13 years of school education.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 4.1: All schools irrespective of the type and affiliations should facilitate all students irrespective of disabilities to complete their primary and secondary education and facilitate a smooth transition for tertiary education and/or to the world of work

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE working with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to issue a certificate of completion of schooling by the respective schools to children with SENs to facilitate them to link with the world of work.
- The MoE working with the UGC shall take steps to facilitate enrolment of eligible students with SENs in study programmes in universities, especially for non-professional study programmes, coupled with provisions for special accommodation facilities, accessibility to learning facilities, special teaching aids, and assistive devices.
- The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC), working with all technical and vocational education and training institutions, shall take steps to accommodate children with SENs into appropriate technical and vocational education training programmes.
- The National Council for Person with Disabilities (NCPD) shall take steps to provide special grants to special and regular schools, universities, and TVET institutions that accommodate children with SENs to facilitate provisions of required facilities.
- The NCPD in liaison with relevant authorities shall take steps to put in place legal and administrative regulatory mechanisms to prevent employers from excluding prospective employees purely based on their disabilities.

Policy-SE & IE 4.2: All schools irrespective of the type and affiliations should provide a quality education through appropriate curricula adaptations, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, and resource use to develop the learning abilities of children and young persons with special education needs

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NFE & SE Branch of the MoE shall prescribe the guidebooks for parents for preparing children with SENs to commence primary education.
- The NIE shall take steps to provide flexibility into the school curriculum and provide guidelines to adapt the prescribed curriculum appropriately according to the needs of children with SENs.
- The NIE in collaboration with teacher training centres shall take steps to conduct training programmes for teachers, in-service advisors (ISAs), and principals to update their knowledge and skills about special and inclusive education and on how to adapt the age-appropriate curricula for teaching and training of children with SENs.

- The MoE and NIE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to create a learning environment in all schools that allow learners to engage in learning through multiple means of representation, actions, and expression and engagement, based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning approach.
- The MoE, NIE, and the Department of Examinations (DoE) together with the Provincial Ministries of Education/Provincial Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to ensure that the schools adopt evaluation procedures for children with SENs based on the recommendation of the Education Evaluation Committee of the Ministry of Education according to the needs of students at school and national level assessments, including the introduction of alternative assessment methods, providing additional time and appropriate specialized assistance (such as sign language, scribes, readers, etc.)
- The MoE and NIE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to ensure all schools have access to the equipment and assistive devices required for teaching and learning for the children with SENs.

Core Area – SE & IE 5: Quality of Human Resources

Policy context

Teacher training, provided both at pre-service and in-service levels does not appear to impart the competencies required for catering for students with SENs at the desired level. As per the available data, only 3 NCoEs out of 18 offer pre-service training programmes on Special Education. Out of the university-level programmes, only the Open University of Sri Lanka offers a B.Ed programme in Special Education. Regarding in-service training, only limited opportunities are provided through the programmes conducted by NIE, MOE (Non-formal Education and Special Education Branch and Primary Education Branch through Teacher Training Centres), and by the Provincial Departments of Education to a limited extent through Teacher Centers. Most teacher education programmes are considered poor in terms of quality and effectiveness; they appear to be inadequate in terms of imparting knowledge and skills in recent developments in respective disciplines and pedagogy including the adoption of application of information and communication technology tools and techniques in teaching-learning and assessments processes. The shortage of special education teachers combined with the gradual increase in enrollment of children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms has forced schools to employ teachers without the appropriate competencies and qualifications to cater for such children. Similarly, those who received National Diploma in Special and Inclusive Education from NCoEs are not properly deployed according to the needs of schools. As a result, even the limited number of trained teachers in special and inclusive education appear to be deprived of the opportunity of serving children with SENs.

Directive principle

DP 1: The State ensures the adequacy of pre-service and in-service trained teachers for special and inclusive education.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 5.1: All teachers and support personnel dealing with children with special education needs must be well trained, recognized and rewarded

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NIE and universities shall ensure the curricula of all pre-service and in-service training programmes are revised and aligned to include special and inclusive education teaching-learning practices prescribed by the Universal Design for Learning approach, and also to include aspects such as collaborative and co-operative teaching, curriculum adaptation, differentiated instructions, alternative evaluation methods and tools, assistive technology enhancement, augmentative alternative communication, etc.
- The MoE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to make it mandatory for all teachers to undergo continuing professional development programmes with compulsory modules on special and inclusive education.
- The NF & SE Branch of the MoE shall liaise with universities, institutes of higher education, institutes of teacher education, and other training providers to design and offer programmes/courses leading to graduate/diploma/certificate level qualifications on special and inclusive education.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to ensure all the existing Teacher Training Centres and Teacher Centres coming under their purview to provide a dedicated space for the establishment of resource centres for the continuing professional development of teachers in special and inclusive education.
- The MoE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall design and introduce an appraisal scheme to recognize the teachers who cater to children with SENs and reward them appropriately.

Core Area – SE & IE 6: Quality of Physical Resources

Policy context

There is a powerful social, sustainable, and economic rationale for integrating disability access into the design and construction of school buildings and other facilities for the provision of inclusive education for children with SENs. Children with disabilities have unique needs and these must be provided for them to succeed at regular schools. Specific accommodations catering to the needs of individual children are also required alongside addressing the general accessibility requirements such as ramps, wider doorways, accessible toilets, etc.

However, the existing learning environment, including the location of schools/institutions, buildings, amenities, equipment, and furniture, poses accessibility challenges to learners with special needs and disabilities. It is imperative that for implementing an inclusive curriculum, it is essential that the children with SENs are provided with an appropriate learning environment well resourced with required facilities and devices; for wheelchair users, there should be provisions made to accommodate such students, and children with a disability must be provided with assistive devices to get into school and to the classroom. However, physical barriers within the school environment

are continued to be a problem for children with SENs despite the many initiatives taken and circular instructions issued by the MoE.

Directive principle

DP 1: All education institutions must be equipped with the required infrastructure facilities and teaching resources and aids to cater to students with special education needs.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 6.1: All education institutions should ensure that their physical facilities are constructed in a manner that facilitates the accessibility of children with disabilities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and the Zonal Education Authorities shall ensure the national and provincial schools coming under their purview strictly adhere to the prescribed guidelines issued by the Department of Social Services and Welfare (*through the Gazette Notification 1467/15 of 2006*) while giving due consideration to Eight Goals of Universal Design and Accessibility Continuum (CAST, 2018) in designing school buildings to ensure accessibility of children with disabilities.
- School management of all schools, both national and provincial level, shall ensure that the existing physical infrastructure facilities are modified suitably to cater to the needs of learners with SENs.
- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to include the compliance of the schools with the guidelines issued by the Department of Social Services and Welfare (*through Gazette Notification of 1467/15 of 2006*) and the Eight Goals of Universal Design and Accessibility Continuum as one of the criteria in the school monitoring system.

Core Area – SE & IE 7: Financing of Special and Inclusive Education

Policy context

Sri Lanka has historically devoted a comparatively small percentage of its government expenditure towards education. Sri Lanka's public expenditure on education as an average from 2010 to 2018 was 2.1% of GDP, and this is relatively low compared to the average of 4.0% of GDP of the lower-middle-income countries during the same period. In this low funding system, the special and inclusive education sector appears to receive relatively less priority in terms of allocating required funds to meet a myriad of needs. It is well-conceived that the funding policy together with the compliance of authorities in constructing infrastructural facilities remains as one of the most significant factors determining the success of implementing special and inclusive education. Limited or no access to certain facilities and provisions may hinder equality of opportunity for learners with SENs. Resources for children with disabilities could be in the form of a digital library, braille literature, additional visual resources, hearing aids, assistive technology, etc. Financial resources would also be required to meet the cost of necessary services

to children with SENs, and also for capacity development of teaching personnel involved in inclusive and special education.

Directive principle

DP 1: The State guarantees free education from kindergarten to university education irrespective of disability, geographical location, and ethnicity.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 7.1: Children with special educational needs should be provided with necessary support services and facilities in schools at no cost to parents

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to ensure all schools offering services for SENs are resourced with equipment related to information and communication, and assistive technology required to cater for children with disabilities.
- The State shall take steps to provide tax incentives in the importation of assistive devices required for children with SENs.
- The MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Authorities shall take steps to give recognition for the differential needs of funding for the students with SENs in the annual budgeting process and make special allocations over and above the regular funding to meet the cost of additional needs.

Core Area – SE & IE 8: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy context

Though Sri Lanka is a signatory for many international conventions and accords such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention Against the Discrimination in Education (1960), World Declaration for Education for All (1990), Dakar Framework for Action (2000), Millennium Development Goals (2000) and Sustainable Development Goals (2015), it is yet to take determine efforts backed by suitable legislative enactments to support and foster special and inclusive education. Only through such legal enactment, the MoE /Provincial Ministries and Departments of Education could frame regulations to affect the policies and programmes prescribed and undertaken by the central and provincial administrations.

The governance and management of special and inclusive education at the national and provincial levels are handled by a network of administrative entities established at the central ministry and provincial ministry levels. There is a dedicated administrative division called Non-Formal and Special Education Branch headed by a director for providing leadership for special and inclusive education at the central Ministry. A similar mechanism is established and operated at the provincial ministry level and it is operated under the purview of the directors/deputy directors/

assistant directors and ISAs/coordinators operating at the Department of Provincial Education and Zonal Education Office levels. However, the real delivery of services for children with SEN has to happen at the school level. At present, there are only 704 Special Education Units that have been established across the school system. Thus, there is a dire need for further expansion of the network of Special Education Units and making those units more resourceful in terms of trained personnel, assistive devices, and dedicated equipment.

Directive principle

DP 1: The State is committed to ensuring quality and sustainable services for children with special education needs by enacting an appropriate legislative framework and strengthening the governance and management system at central, provincial, and school levels.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 8.1: Regulation, governance, and management of special and inclusive education services shall be ensured by enacting appropriate legal enactment, improving governance and management of key agencies, and coordination among key partners at all levels while strengthening the delivery of services at the school level

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE in liaison with the Legal Draftsman Department and Social Services Department shall take steps to design and introduce a legislative framework by enacting a suitable legislative Act (such as the Special and Inclusive Education Act) to provide the legal framework to enforce the regulations to cater for the educational needs of differently-abled children.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to establish Advisory/ Consultative Committees on Special and Inclusive Education at the central and provincial levels by inviting scholars and experts, parents/guardians, delegates of related institutions and groups providing assistance to children with SENs to advise, guide, and facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate special and inclusive education services at all levels.
- The MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to monitor the implementation of the special and inclusive education programmes and services provided by the Zonal Education Office and at school levels.
- The MoE together with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Zonal Education Office shall take steps to expand the network of Special Education Units to ensure equitable distribution of such units across the school system and make them resourceful by providing trained personnel, assistive devices, and dedicated physical resources suitable for children with SENs.
- The MoE in liaison with the Ministry of Health, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and Health, and the Department of Social Services shall take steps to establish Resource Centres for Children with SENs at the Divisional Education Office level.

Core Area – SE & IE 9: Quality Assurance in Special and Inclusive Education

Policy context

The quality assurance system for school education that is in operation since 2001 does not appear to give adequate coverage on the quality and standards of the special and inclusive education services provided by the school system. A comprehensive quality assurance framework that includes criteria and standards, and a monitoring and evaluation system is required to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the inclusive and special education policies and programmes. In this regard, an indicator performance monitoring tool shall be developed to track the adoption, implementation, improvements, and consumption of SEN services by the target groups and the general public. Specific activities shall include identification and development of SEN responsive criteria, indicators, and targets, building the capacity of the quality assurance team in relevant aspects of SE & IE - criteria and standards, indicators, framework concepts and procedures, actual field monitoring, evaluation, and interpretation of findings for use in future planning and improvement. Therefore, the need has arisen over time to incorporate the QA aspects of Assisted Special Schools, Special Education Units in state schools, and other State and Non-state institutions that provide special and inclusive education into a common QA framework in operation for general education.

Directive principle

DP1: The State is committed to improving the quality and standards of services provided for children with special education needs by institutionalizing an appropriate quality assurance system

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 9.1: Quality and standards of education and services provided to children with special education needs by the school system shall be monitored by the quality assurance system in general education implemented by the Ministry of Education

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NF & SE Branch of the MoE in the liaison with the National Education Commission (NEC) and the Quality Assurance Unit of the Ministry of Education shall take steps to develop criteria, standards, and best practices for special education units, resource centres, and assisted special schools.
- The NF & SE Branch and Quality Assurance Units of the MoE in collaboration with the Provincial Ministries/ Departments of Education, shall take steps to introduce the quality assurance framework, criteria, standards, and best practices to special education units, resource centres, and assisted special schools to facilitate the institutionalization of quality culture.
- The Quality Assurance Unit of the MoE shall take steps to include special and inclusive education into their regular quality assurance process.

Core Area – SE & IE 10: Data Management and Research on Special and Inclusive Education

Policy context

An up-to-date information management system is a prerequisite for sound management, planning, and evaluation of an education system. A country cannot act efficiently and effectively to enhance the education of children with disabilities unless it has relevant, reliable, and up-to-date data and information. Unfortunately, this is grossly lacking in the special and inclusive education sector. Moreover, the existing research in special and inclusive education is hardly sufficient for the planning for the progressive development of this sector. Evidence-based planning for service provision is hampered by not knowing how many children with disabilities are in the education system and the types and severity levels of disabilities that they have.

Directive principle

DP 1: Policies and interventions for the special and inclusive education sector should be made based on data and evidence.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-SE & IE 10.1: Promote research and data management on special and inclusive education for making evidence-based policy decisions and development plans

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NF & SE Branch of the MoE shall maintain an up-to-date database on children with SENs with the collaboration of the following ministries and departments:
 - Ministry of Health
 - School Census Department of Ministry of Education
 - Census and Statistics Department
 - Registrar General's Department
 - Department of Social Services
 - Other relevant organizations
- The NF & SE Branch of the MoE shall take steps to annually published Statistical Bulletins which provide information on the current status of the education of children with SENs.
- The MoE through the NF & SE Branch of the Ministry shall take steps to commission research in partnership with the NEC, NIE, Universities, and other research organizations, and the research findings of such research should be disseminated through seminars, publications, and by uploading them to the Websites.
- The NEC in liaison with the NIE and NF & SE Branch of the MoE shall conduct research forums at regular

intervals to facilitate sharing information among key stakeholders and the public on special and inclusive education in Sri Lanka.

PART IV- VOLUME VII

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON NON-FORMAL
EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is well known as a country with high enrolment in primary education and a high literacy rate above 92.6% which is higher than anywhere else in South Asia^{362,363}. Education is a state-funded endeavour, granted free of charge at all levels up to university education. It is compulsory for children from age 5 to 16 years. In addition, the government provides free textbooks and school uniforms to all school-going children. A transport scheme at a subsidized rate, a mid-day meal programme for the needy children, and an insurance scheme are some other incentive schemes in operation which are aimed to attract and retain children in school education. The national expenditure on education was estimated between 2.0-3.0 % GDP over the years and it is relatively low compared to the comparable countries, and out of which a larger portion was allocated to general education and to provide the above-mentioned facilities³⁶⁴. The “heavy focus on general education was visible throughout the history considering that the quality of general education determines the capabilities of students entering the tertiary education sector that include both higher education and technical and vocational education”³⁶⁵. In this system, the Non-Formal Education (NFE) sector has been playing a very subservient role to formal education throughout history with limited focus, scope, and funds.

As shown in Figure 1, it has been estimated that due to many reasons such as learning difficulties, examination-oriented education, poverty, and inadequate guidance and counselling well over 245,000 children leave the general education system annually at different points. Out of this group, approximately 72% may join with public and private tertiary education and training system while around 28% may get added annually into the unemployed category, which is often referred to as ‘Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) group. From one perspective, this NEET group is a valuable human resource pool to meet the labour demand of the informal sector of the economy. However, this group also needs skills to engage in more productive employments, particularly in the long run. Furthermore, there is a large group of people, including household women, entrepreneurs, self-employers, daily paid labourers, etc., working in the informal sector who are in need of lifelong learning. People who join formal and informal labour markets may seek training opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills through short-term and flexible training programmes which are not usually provided by the formal education system. Accordingly, educational opportunities that cannot be achieved through the formal education system can be provided via short-term, flexible NFE programmes.

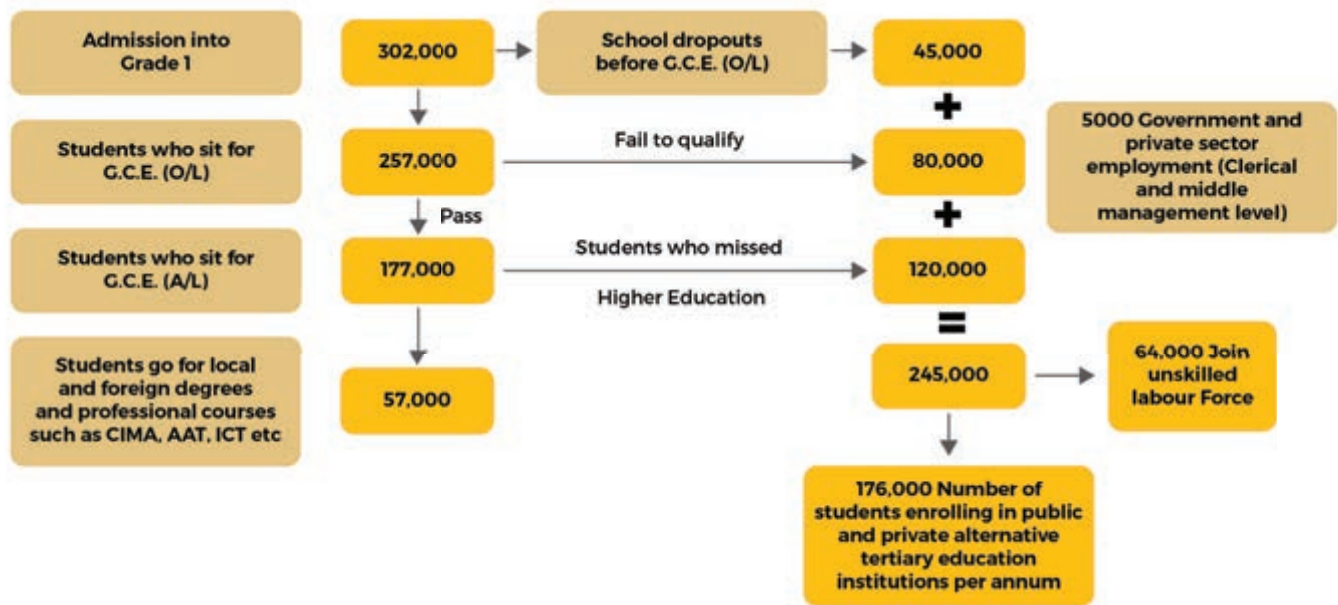
362. Central Bank of Sri Lanka. (2019). *Annual Report*.

363. D’Souza, J., Moore, T.D., (2017). *Education in Sri Lanka: Education System Profiles*. <https://wenr.wes.org/2017/08/education-in-sri-lanka>

364. UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (2018). *Data for the Sustainable Development Goals*, <http://uis.unesco.org/>.

365. Aturupane, H., Sankar, D., Saeki, H., Shojo, M., Glewwe, P., & Deolalikar, A. (2011). *Transforming school education in Sri Lanka: From cut stones to polished jewels*. The World Bank.

Figure 1: Student Progression and Exits at Different Stages of Education (Based on 2004 entry age cohort)



Source: Adopted from NEC. (2018). National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education.

On the other hand, as reported by the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka experiences a high unemployment rate among the youth as high as 4.8 % over the years with figures reporting as high as 20.3 % for the age category of 20-24 years and 10.4 % for the age category of 25- 29 years³⁶⁶. These unemployed youth need career counselling and guidance to choose proper career paths and proper training to become active contributors to the economy of the country. Further, as indicated in the same reports, the life expectancy of Sri Lankans' has increased to 75.5 years which will result in increasing the demand for education and training even at later stages of their lives. These people need education and training to fit into the new demands arising from the knowledge economy. While there are many avenues for post-secondary education other than university education such as TVET, professional education programmes such as accountancy, ICT, business management, etc., there are still a sizable number of youth and adults who need education and training in a more flexible and informal manner. The existing NFE sector could be the most appropriate option for fulfilling such demands.

Previous studies highlighted the significant role that the NFE could play in developing the economy of Sri Lanka³⁶⁷. Further, there is consensus on the importance of the NFE as an effective alternative pathway for addressing the educational needs of various categories of learners and providing quality education for all citizens. Further, a report by the Institute of Policy Studies in 2020 ³⁶⁸ stated that the "biggest casualty of the Covid-19 pandemic is the system of education". That is because education is delivered face to face in a congregation of students in large numbers in limited physical spaces. The severity of the situation has been articulated by this report and it stated "the world's largest educational crisis, interruption to education from Covid-19 can have long-term implications-beyond mere losses in learning." This also confirms the need for a strong NFE system in the country.

Therefore, the existing NFE system in Sri Lanka which has been in a dormant state should undergo revolutionary as well as progressive changes in all aspects to perform its roles and functions fully and effectively. As such, it is imperative that the policies and strategies for propelling the NFE should be agreed upon by the key stakeholders

366. Department of Census and Statistics. (2020). Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey 1st Quarter-2020. Sri Lanka Labour Force Statistics, Quarterly Bulletin, 88,4.

367. Ekanayake, S.B., Ariyaratna, A., Senevirathna, R., & Hettiarachchi, S. (2014). Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education, Research Series No. 10, National Education Commission, Sri Lanka.

368. Institute of Policy Study of Sri Lanka. (2020). Sri Lanka State of the Economy 2020, Pandemics and Disruptions: Reviving Sri Lanka's Economy COVID-19 and Beyond.

and prescribed by the government. It is expected that the Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities on Non-Formal Education proposed herein will set out a policy and strategic activity framework that would foster the effective and efficient management and administration of the NFE system in Sri Lanka.

1.2. Concept of Non-Formal Education

The NFE is a loosely defined term, and hence a considerable diversity can be found in its usage in different settings. The amorphous nature and essence of adult and non-formal education is such that its boundaries cannot be easily demarcated³⁶⁹. For some, it is every learning activity outside the formal education system. In Bangladesh, the term 'Non-Formal Education' is used for the supplementary second chance education provided for youth and adults. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, Non-Formal Education "refers to planned educational programmes for adults, learners, youths and out-of-school-children that aim at improving skills and competencies, outside but supplementary to the formal education curriculum"³⁷⁰. Further, having studied the situation in the Asia-Pacific Region, the UNESCO³⁷¹ concluded "the term 'Non-Formal Education' is currently used to refer to several inter-related concepts, including adult education, continuing education, lifelong education, recurrent education, and community education. However, the usage has rarely been consistent, causing some confusion among practitioners, planners, and theoreticians".

There is a growing interest in the present world to link the NFE to life-long education which will take place throughout ones' life. UNESCO further elaborated this idea as "all learning activities are undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective and it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning context"³⁷².

In relation to life-long learning, the segregation of education into primary, secondary, and tertiary education will not be valid anymore as anybody will learn at any age, anywhere, anytime, according to their own pace. The formal education systems in the world have been experiencing problems and issues and it is imperative that some of these issues could be resolved by introducing a very strong and well-focused non-formal education system. A very recent explanation on this aspect states "lifelong learning is a dynamic process that varies depending on individual skills and motivation for self-regulated, generative learning and on life events that impose challenges that sometimes demand incremental/adaptive changes and other times require frame-breaking change and transformational learning"³⁷³, and this certainly should be the vision of the NFE sector in Sri Lanka.

Ward and Herzog³⁷⁴ have highlighted the constant presence³⁷⁴ of two main features in the NFE. They are, (a) the centralization of the process on the student, as to his previously identified needs and possibilities; and, (b) the immediate usefulness of the education for the student's personal and professional growth. However, in many developing countries, including Sri Lanka, the situation is somewhat different. Using available resources, the State and some NGOs conduct a limited number of programmes through which the participants are encouraged to re-enrol in the formal system to continue their education or to find employment or start self-employment for their living. Student-centered characteristics are not visible and prevalent in these programmes and openness that is expected cannot be maintained due to lack of human and physical resources.

369. Ossai, A. G., Nawalado, E. N. (2014). *Non-formal education in Nigeria tool for Human Resource Development, Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development*. 22,1.

370. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary education. (2015). *The National non-formal education Policy for Zimbabwe: Promoting alternative pathways to increase access and quality education in Zimbabwe*.

371. UNESCO. (1987). *Continuing Education in Asia and the Pacific (Bulletin of the UNESCO principal regional office for education in Asia and the Pacific)*. 28, 213-215. Unipub.

372. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. (2000). *European Communities: A Memorandum of Life-Long Learning*. Retrieved on 5th June 2021 from <https://uil.unesco.org/document/european-communities-memorandum-lifelong-learning>

373. London, M. (2011). *Lifelong Learning: Introduction*. In London, M. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Lifelong Learning (1 ed.)*. Oxford university press. DOI: 10.1093/oxford/9780195390483.013.001

374. Ward, T. W., Herzog, W. A. (1974). "Effective learning in Non-Formal Education program of studies in Non-Formal Education Team Report". Michigan State University.

Several educationists have explained the features of the NFE in comparison with formal education. Rogers (2005)³⁷⁵ made a comparison between formal and non-formal education and highlighted four major characteristics of the NFE, namely, openness, in-life education, lifelong learning, and independent learners.

Table 01: Rogers’s Comparison Between Formal and Non-Formal Education

Formal	Non-Formal
Selective: a strainer, a pyramid, select first and then train; system rejects participants at various stages; once out, cannot get back in; system ends up with very few (elitist); costly	Openness: can get in and out at any time; no prior selection, only self-selection by participants; no rejection of participants; no failures; no permanent dropouts; cheap
Remote from life: a period of all education and no work, followed by all work and no education; takes participants out of life into full-time education; rejects life experience for classroom experience; learn now for future use; curriculum academic, irrelevant, colonial	In-life education; learning to be, not learning to become something different; learning how to cope with living now; uses experience and existing knowledge; relevant curriculum, immediate application; part-time, not full-time, uses indigenous knowledge
Terminal: front-end loading education, ‘banking approach’; sends participants out ‘trained’ for life, fully equipped, no need for more; certified	Lifelong education: education never complete because always coping with new things; not so interested in certificates; admits ‘I don’t know’
Dependent learners: creates dependent learners; learning stops when teachers are not there	Independent learners: creates self-reliant, independent, and continuing learners

Source: Rogers. A. (2005)

In another well-articulated characterization, Dib (1988)³⁷⁶ introduced three main attributes which would lead to success in non-formal education systems. They are: (a) the initial interest level and motivation of students; (b) the quality of educational materials capable of upholding a high student motivation level and effectivity to meet their expectations and needs, and of its global strategy; and, (c) the scheme to provide students with institutional support. These attributes highlight the need for careful planning of the non-formal education followed by adequate execution and control which constitute the basic elements for the organization of non-formal education, and strategies and detailed procedures for the development and utilization of NFE systems. With very diversified and sophisticated NFE systems, many developed countries are heading towards accommodating these characteristics by giving high prominence to the NFE system.-

Some have tried to explain the scope of non-formal education in comparison with formal and informal education systems and proposed the presence of a certain continuity in the transition from formal to non-formal education. Ward, et al. (1974) suggested to “allow formal and non-formal education to continue and develop competitive alternative systems; adopt the formal educational institutions for the non-formal model, or integrate the whole into a broader concept and plan for educational development”³⁷⁷.

However, the complexity of the requirements of the people demands a very robust and multifaceted system that could integrate at least some of the sophisticated characteristics mentioned above. Further, the country has identified the vital role that the NFE could play in improving the vocational and life skills of people thus making them active contributors to the economy of the nation.

375. Rogers, A. (2005). *Non-formal education: flexible schooling or participatory education?* Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-28693-4>

376. Dib, C. Z. (1988). *Formal, Non-Formal and Informal Education, Concepts/Applicability, Cooperative Networks in Physics Education Conference Proceedings* 173. American Institute of Physics, 300-311, <http://techne-dib.com.br/downloads/6.pdf>

377. Ward, T. W. et.al. (1974). “Effective learning in Non-Formal Education program of studies in Non-Formal Education Team Report”. Michigan State University.

1.3. Salient Features of Non-Formal Education in Sri Lanka

In the initial stages of NFE in Sri Lanka, its scope was narrowed down to encompass literacy and vocational aspects only. Formal schooling and its strict regulations in terms of schedule, teaching-learning time, and school calendar are sometimes inappropriate for students in rural, remote, and disadvantaged areas who may have to assist their families in many ways such as being directly involved in income generation activities, looking after siblings and doing household work while the parents are at work. Students who do not attend regularly are excluded from examinations, and this approach could be quite harmful and detrimental for many causing permanent school dropouts. For these reasons NFE emerged alongside the formal education system and have introduced literacy classes for dropouts to catch up on missed learning in school subjects to get them back to school. In addition, there has been a growing need for an alternative system to cater to the rapidly changing needs of people to integrate them into the 'world of work'. Further, non-formal education can be used for empowering people with life skills to become productive caring and considerate citizens of the country.

The NFE is now emerging as an additional formal education avenue addressing many diverse issues confronted by the communities. The concept of non-formal education is well-articulated in the NEC Report (2016)³⁷⁸ which states that "the non-formal education should cover the very wide continuum of educational programmes from flexible learning models to participatory educational programmes for children, youth and adults and highly hand-knitted education and training, tailor-made, to meet particular localized needs". This is also stressed by the report of the Presidential Task Force on Education (2020)³⁷⁹ which states "the non-formal education has also been identified as a prominent sector in the education system. It includes education for all, compulsory education, life-long learning, remedial education, education for the underprivileged, education for the development of quality of life, and programme to eradicate poverty".

However, it is questionable whether the existing NFE sector is capable of incorporating all the above-mentioned aspects when delivering the NFE programmes. With the increasing demands and ever-changing needs of the clientele, the NFE system in Sri Lanka requires an approach that is progressive and innovative that would offer relevant and quality programmes in a flexible mode to cater for the emerging needs and demands of its diverse clientele.

1.4. Evolution of Non-Formal Education in Sri Lanka

In ancient Sri Lanka, the NFE could be found as an integrated component of lifelong learning, passed down to generations from parents to children³⁸⁰. The activities were mostly related to providing training in occupational skills and codes of behaviour, and initiation of trainees into a value system within which the learner himself/herself be sensitized with the social complexities of the community and varied situations that confront him/her in the context of religious practices and social norms³⁸¹. As a result, education was considered as a blend of all formal, informal, and non-formal mechanisms.

A significant milestone in the history of NFE has been the introduction of the **Handessa Scheme**, which concentrated on "the 4 H's; that is the development of personal wellbeing and health, development of the head (intellect), development of the hands (practical skills), development of the heart (aesthetic senses) as being more important for the development of an integrated personality"³⁸². The aims of this scheme were to develop vocational skills and introduce the learner to the 'world of work' which would lead to reducing the formalities in both learning and teaching

378. National Education Commission. (2016). *Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka - Raising the Quality of Education*

379. Presidential Task Force on Sri Lanka's Education Affairs. (2020). *Re-Imagining Education in Sri Lanka*.

380. Ekanayake, S.B. (1990). *Human Resource Development, Action Research Project*. National Institute of Education.

381. Ekanayaka, S. B., Ariyaratne, A., Senevirathna, R., Hettiarachchi, S., (2014). *Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education*. National Education Commission.

382. Silva, M. S. DE. (1969). *An Experiment Education. Education in Ceylon, A Centaury Volume, III, 913-943*

and promoting the integration of both the teacher and student to the development activities of the community. In the 1960s there were some elements of the NFE incorporated into the school system in the form of 'work experience'. However, the aims of those programmes changes could not be achieved fully due to many reasons³⁸³.

The publication of the UNESCO Report "Learning to be" in 1972³⁸⁴ and "Learning: the treasure within" in 1996³⁸⁵ had a tremendous impact on the popularization of the concept of NFE all over the world with no exception to Sri Lanka. The NFE was formally recognized in the 1970s with the establishment of the Janatha Education Branch (later named as the Non-Formal and Special Education Branch – NF & SE Branch) in 1972³⁸⁶ within the Ministry of Education which could also be identified as an outcome of these global trends. In the initial stages, the activities of the NF & SE Branch were limited to offering vocational training opportunities through technical units organized in schools to school dropouts, and conducting a few English language training programmes, community development training programmes, and adult education programmes. The literacy programmes were introduced in the 1980s. The objectives of adult education and community development programmes were stated as "while producing a new generation through our reforms introduced in 1972, it is necessary to provide opportunities for school drop-outs, unemployed school-leavers and unemployable found in the community. In this respect, school as an organization has an important role to play and teachers should be prepared to take over the social responsibilities over and above their traditional roles"³⁸⁷.

The other significant milestones in the NFE sector in Sri Lanka can be summarized as follows:

- The 1981 Education Proposals for Reforms (White Paper) introduced the concept of "Open School" and detailed out its implementation process. The initial aim was to offer learning programmes to those who have left the formal education system³⁸⁸.
- Under the General Education Reforms introduced in 1997, the NF & SE Branch of the MoE was made the 'lead agency for implementing compulsory education regulations and providing education opportunities for out-of-school children³⁸⁹. Further, the appointment of adult education officers at the divisional education office level to organize and supervise general and adult education programmes had also taken place³⁹⁰.
- In 1989, the NIE established a Department of Non-Formal Education with the aim of providing training for the NFE personnel engaged in the provision of NFE and carrying out research on the NFE. However, this Department was closed down a few years later and transferred the resources to the Department of Distance Education³⁸⁸.
- In 1999, two monitoring committees, one at the Ministry of Education and the other at the Provincial Ministry of Education as stipulated in the compulsory education regulations were established. However, these became dysfunctional since early 2000.
- In the late 1990s, the NF & SE Branch of the MoE established the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) across the country. According to the NEC Report (2003)³⁹¹, about 55 centres were in operation in rural and urban

383. Ekanayake, S.B. (1990). *Human Resource Development, Action Research Project*. National Institute of Education.

384. Faure, E., Kaddoura, A. R., Lopes, H., Petrovsky, A. V., Rahnema, M., Ward, F. C. (1972). *Learning to be: the world education today and tomorrow*. UNESCO. George G Harrap & Co Ltd

385. Delors, J. (1996). *Learning: the treasure within; report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century*. UNESCO publishing.

386. National Education Commission. (2016). *Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

387. Ministry of Education. (1978). *Janatha Education Report*.

388. Ekanayaka, S.B., Ariyaratne, A., Senevirathna, R., Hettiarachchi, S., (2014). *Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education*. National Education Commission.

389. National Education Commission. (2016). *Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

390. Ekanayaka, S. B., Ariyaratne, A., Senevirathna, R., Hettiarachchi, S., (2014). *Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education*. National Education Commission.

391. National Education Commission. (2003). *Envisioning Education for Human Development, Proposals for a National Education Framework on general Education in Sri Lanka*.

areas offering literacy, post-literacy, functional literacy, and vocational training programmes. The Non-Formal Education Census Report (2017/18) reported an increase of these centres up to 89³⁹².

- In 2005, the Open School Unit was established at the NIE with a few characteristics of NFE to provide a second chance to those who had left the school.
- In 2006, the NF & SE Branch, MoE conducted a survey on out-of-school children and implemented island-wide programmes to bring the children to school through the NFE Project Officers.
- In April 2016, Compulsory Education Regulations³⁹³ were imposed by the MoE to increase the upper limit of compulsory education to 16 years. According to these regulations, sending children who are within the age limit would be the responsibility of the parents. The Zonal Education Director is expected to identify catchment areas for each school and a School Committee, and a Monitoring Committee should be appointed to facilitate the school attendance under the compulsory regulations.

There have been several review reports published with the intention of streamlining and expanding the activities of the NF & SE Branch of the MoE. However, the progress achieved as narrated in these reports indicates that the activities of the NF & SE Branch and their outputs, and the impact on society have not been up to the expectation. Nevertheless, the NEC Report (2016)³⁹⁴ affirmed that since 1988, the NFE activities have contributed to achieving Universal Primary Education. Moreover, as reported in the Education for All - National. National Action Plan (2000)³⁹⁵ of the MoE, Sri Lanka has achieved much in relation to literacy, skills development, and primary education.

Based on the above information, it could be concluded that the progress of the NFE in Sri Lanka has not been up to the expected level, and therefore, there is an urgent need to speed up the expansion of NFE and diversify the programmes to accommodate the current, emerging and future non-formal education demands of different target groups in the country.

1.5. Types of Stakeholders, NFE Providers, and Issues

1.5.1. Non-Formal and Special Education (NF & SE) Branch of the MoE

The main educational provider in the non-formal sector is the NF & SE Branch of the MoE through its network of Community Learning Centres (CLCs). They are modelled on the concept of Learning Centres developed by UNESCO under its Asia Pacific Programme of Education for All³⁹⁶. Those centres were introduced by UNESCO in 1998 in several Asian countries to promote human development by providing opportunities for lifelong learning to all people in the local community. In Sri Lanka, these centres were established by the NF & SE Branch considering the needs of a particular community, and some of them may become defunct once the needs are fulfilled. Initially, the activities of the NF & SE Branch were limited to offering literacy programmes. But later their activities were broadened to offer vocational training opportunities through Technical Units established in schools to cater to school leavers and to conduct English language training programmes and adult education programmes. Since 2002, the network of CLCs has become the operational hub of the NF & SE Branch of the MoE, and the Provincial Ministries provide funds for instructors for training and supervision, the capital cost of purchasing equipment for learning, and allocation for the reading centres. In 2017, there were 89 CLCs in operation throughout the country (Table 2). As reported by the NF & SE Branch, women's participation was about 6 times more than that of the men (3742 vs 633), in the programmes offered through the CLCs.

392. Ministry of Education. (2017). *Non-Formal Education Programmes. Census Report -2017-2018*

393. Ministry of Education. (2016, April 20). Circular No.1963/30.

394. National Education Commission. (2016). *Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

395. Ministry of Education. (2000). *Education for All. National Action Plan*.

396. Asia Pacific Regional Bureau for Education. (2008). *Community Learning Centers: Country Report from UNESCO*. <http://techne-dib.com.br/downloads/6.pdf>.

Table 2: Number of Community Learning Centers and Number of Participants by Province

Province	Number of CLCs	No. of Participants				
		Female	%	Male	%	Total
Western	13	851	97.7	20	2.3	871
Central	02	44	100	--	---	44
Southern	18	805	66.2	441	33.8	1216
North Western	19	524	97.4	14	2.6	538
North Central	09	199	91.3	18	8.7	218
Uva	08	239	90.2	26	9.8	265
Sabaragamuwa	14	787	94.5	46	5.5	833
Northern	03	221	69.5	97	30.5	318
Eastern	03	72	100	---	----	72
Sri Lanka	89	3742		633		4375

Source: Ministry of Education (2017) *Non-Formal Education Programmes, Census Report*³⁹⁷

As of the Census Report of the MoE (2017), the CLCs of the NF & SE Branch of the MoE has conducted literacy classes in all nine provinces (Table 2). The same report revealed the age categories and the ethnicity of the participants enrolled in the programmes. The majority belonged to the 14-25 years age category and most of them were Sinhalese. In addition, as reported by the NEC (2016)³⁹⁸ the CLCs coming under the purview of the NF & SE Branch of the MoE and by the other NFE providers had conducted diverse training programmes for diverse target groups as listed below:

- Functional Literacy Programmes for children and adults who have not gone to a school.
- Programmes for adults, unemployed youth, housewives, etc.
- Basic education programmes for street children at “Nanasarane” centres.
- Vocational training and entrepreneurship programmes for school leavers.
- Orientation programmes for women going overseas for employment.
- Orientation programmes for out of school children to prepare them for school education³⁹⁸.

In addition, the NF & SE Branch of the MoE conducted classes in prisons and the estate sector as well to fulfil the requirements of two deprived groups³⁹⁷. Further, according to the same report, there were 798 centres, outside the CLCs, operating and conducting short courses to promote self-employment opportunities among the potential target groups (Table 3).

397. Ministry of Education. (2017). *Non-formal Education Programmes, Census report 2017*.

398. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education, National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

Table 3: NFE Centres in operation outside Community Learning Centre Network (2017)

Province	Number of Centres	Number of Participants				
		Female	%	Male	%	Total
Western	84	3,888	93.8	259	6.2	4,147
Central	12	65	100	-	-	65
Southern	177	3,354	88.6	432	11.4	786
North western	138	3,179	95.7	143	4.3	3,322
North Central	25	763	94.0	49	6.0	812
Uva	122	2,495	90.3	267	9.7	2,762
Sabaragamuwa	215	3,890	93.5	271	6.5	4,116
Northern	16	352	68.2	164	31.8	516
Eastern	09	145	66.5	73	33.5	5,218
Sri Lanka	798	18,131	91.6	1,658	8.4	19,789

Source: *Non-Formal Education Programmes, Census Report – 2017*

The existence of a large number of NFE centres as high as 798 across the country outside the CLCs network suggests that there is a growing demand for NFE programmes in society. This also highlights the need for further strengthening the CLCs network of the NF & SE Branch by providing necessary human and financial resources to fulfil its primary function to provide education to those who are in need, according to their interest, at any place and at any time they prefer.

1.5.2. Open School Unit of the NIE

The Open School Unit (OSU) at the NIE was established in 2005, and its main objective is to provide open and distance education programmes for those who could not accomplish their secondary education, to improve the literacy level of learners, and to conduct personality development programmes to inculcate good values and practices that are needed for a successful day to day life³⁹⁹. The OSU of the NIE conducts its programmes for needy people through its network of 25 centres using modules specifically developed for the purpose with the support of part-time teachers. The NEC Report, 2016 described this approach as ‘formal education programmes conducted in a non-formal set up by the Open School’ to support those who lost education due to armed conflicts and other deprivations⁴⁰⁰. The Open School programme received the UNESCO Literacy Award in 2015 and an Honourable Commendation Award from Asia-Pacific, UNESCO for its dedicated work towards literacy education.

A research study conducted by the Open School (2017-18)⁴⁰⁰ revealed that the majority of students following the Open School programmes were between 10-20 years of age, unmarried and unemployed and had school education up to a substantial level (6-10 level - 38.99% and up to G.C.E. (O/L) - 15.59%).

399. National Institute of Education. (2019). *Evaluation Report of Open School Programmes- 2017-2018*.

400. National Education Commission. (2016). *Raising the Quality of Education. National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka*.

1.5.3. Other providers

The Women's Bureau, the National Committee on Women, and the Children's Secretariat are the other main institutions involved in NFE activities. Entrepreneurship programmes and skills development workshops are conducted for women by the Women's Bureau and Pre-school Training Programmes and Home-based Early Childhood Development Programmes are conducted by the Children's Secretariat⁴⁰¹. In addition, the National Youth Council, the Ministry of Social Services and Welfare, the Department of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, and the Open University of Sri Lanka are some other public organizations offering Non-Formal Education programmes to the general public.

As reported by the NEC Report (2014)⁴⁰² there are several National and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and donor agencies who play a significant role in NFE. Sarvodaya Sangamaya, Sanasa Campus, Christian Children's Fund, etc. are the few local NGOs that conduct NFE programmes with the aim of developing vocational and life skills needed in real-life situations and facilitating attitudinal changes of the target groups. Besides these local NGOs, there are some international organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF, and INGOs such as Save the Children and Redbarna also play a vital role in the sphere of NFE in Sri Lanka.

1.6. Conclusion

In Sri Lanka, the NFE sector has been playing a subservient role in providing education and training to needy people. At one time, formal education was considered as the panacea for many problems in the education system. However, it was proven unsuccessful in providing solutions to many problems. This fact indeed has overwhelmingly endorsed the need for a strong and well-organized NFE system for the country. The present, the NF & SE Branch of the MoE, Open School of the NIE and several other State and non-State NFE providers conduct literacy programmes, vocational training programmes and community development training programmes, etc., by applying different approaches to fulfil the demand arising from the general public. However, it is regrettable to state that there is no well-defined national policy framework for the NFE sector in Sri Lanka at present to guide and promote the establishment of its place and maintain the overall integration and coordination among all NFE providers and liaise with the formal education sector. Further, the NF & SE Branch with its existing CLC network is considered as the lead agency does not appear to function well due to many limitations faced. Therefore, a need has arisen to strengthen the central role of the NF & SE Branch of the MoE to regulate, promote, guide, and coordinate the NFE activities of provincial, zonal and divisional levels, and also to liaise with other providers of NFE.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

As stated in other sections, the policy proposal and recommended strategies are formulated in accordance with prescribed guidelines given in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030). Backed by the comprehensive Status Review given in Section 1, the policy planning team has proceeded to identify NFE sector-specific 08 core areas and accompanying directive principles as elaborated in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030). This approach is taken, as stated elsewhere, to ensure the policy planning process give comprehensive coverage across all core areas and elements of the NFE sub-sector while giving due consideration to issues and gaps highlighted in the status review that are lingering the progressive developments of the non-formal education in Sri Lanka.

401. Perera, D.A. (2002). *Implementation of Non Formal Education in Sri Lanka. Research Series-10. National Education Commission.*
402. Ekanayaka, S.B., Ariyaratne.A., Senevirathna, R., Hettiarachchi, S., (2014). *Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education. National Education Commission.*

These 8 core areas include, i) Regulation, and Governance and Management, ii) Access, Equity and Inclusiveness, iii) Learners and Learning Environment, iv) Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes, v) Teaching-Learning Process, Assessments and Quality Assurance, vi) Patriotism, Civic Consciousness and Life Skills vii) Quality of Human and Physical Resources, and viii) Financing of Non-Formal Education.

Core Area – NFE 1: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy Context

Research studies on special and Non-Formal Education (NFE) has clearly emphasized the need for having a clear well-defined policy framework for the NFE in Sri Lanka for establishing its place and promoting overall integration and coordination of NFE activities⁴⁰³. At present most of the NFE activities are operated in a disjointed and disorganized manner. Many factors appear to have contributed to the present situation. The absence of national-level recognition of the importance of NFE, absence of national policy, institutional framework, and regulations, and inadequacy of national-level leadership and coordination coupled with an inadequate understanding of the value of the NFE and skewed interpretation of NFE are few such contributory factors. The NEC Report (2003)⁴⁰⁴ too has highlighted the need for making the NF & SE Branch of the MoE as the lead agency of NFE to give leadership, directives and funds, and to affect the coordination among different NFE providers thus bringing more synergy and avoiding duplication and wastage of resources, and enhancing the quality and relevance of NFE activities.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of setting the national policy and the institutional and regulatory framework for non-formal education.
- DP 2: A national-level body, with well-defined powers and functions, shall regulate, guide and monitor the governance and management and activities of all the NFE training institutions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 1.1: National policy and institutional and regulatory framework for non-formal education must be developed and adopted

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with the NEC and in liaison with Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to formulate the national policy and institutional and regulatory framework for regulating and fostering the activities of the NFE sector. The proposed institutional and regulatory framework for the NFE Sector is presented in Annex I, and with the roles and responsibilities of the key institutions, committees, and personnel are given in Annex II.

403. Ekanayake, S. B., Ariyaratna, A., Senevirathna, R., & Hettiarachchi, S. (2014). *Study on the Development of Special Education and Non-Formal Education. Research Series No. 10. National Education Commission.*

404. National Education Commission. (2003). *Envisioning Education for Human Education Development, Proposals for a National Policy Framework for General Education in Sri Lanka.*

- The MoE shall take steps to establish a National Committee on Non-Formal Education chaired by the Secretary, MoE and with representation from the NEC, NIE, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services and Welfare, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs etc., and local level NGOs, and shall take steps to lay down the development strategies, facilitate integration, collaboration, and monitoring of the NFE activities of the country.
- The MoE shall take steps to upgrade the present NF & SE Branch to a Department status, called the Department of Non-Formal and Special Education (*Department of NF & SE*) by combining areas of adult education, life-long education and special and inclusive education to function as the national lead agency work in liaison with the NEC, NIE, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, and other State and non-State NFE providers.
- The NIE shall take steps to upgrade the Open School Unit to a Department status to give due importance to NFE and to perform its role more effectively and efficiently.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall take steps to work closely with the proposed Department of Open School of the NIE to ensure the complementarity of their activities and to achieve synergy.
- The MoE through the Department of NE & SE shall take steps in liaison with the proposed Department of Open School of the NIE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education to establish and operationalize the institutional and regulatory framework for the NFE sector as outlined in Annex I and Annex II.
- The Department of NF & SE in liaison with the NEC shall take steps to prescribe minimum standards and guidelines for establishing and registering, and operating NFE training centres (*This activity is detailed under the Core Area-NFE 5; Policy NFE 5.2*).
- The Department of NF & SE in liaison with the NEC shall take the responsibility of establishing review, monitoring, and certification system for the NFE training centres (*This activity is detailed under the Core Area-NFE 5; Policy NFE 5.2*).
- The MoE should take steps to provide adequate funds and human resources to the Department of NFE & SE to implement its activities effectively as the lead agency of the NFE sector.
- The proposed Department of NF & SE of the MoE, in consultation with the NEC, NIE, and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to develop a Manual of Operation on Non-Formal Education to explain the duties and functions of all stakeholders involved in the NFE activities and to provide guidelines and codes of practices for CLCs and Open Schools.
- The Department of Open School of the NIE, in collaboration with the Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall take steps for developing guidelines for curricula and instructional material for NFE programmes, providing in-service training for trainers, monitoring the implementation of the NFE programmes, and also take steps to conduct research on NFE.

Policy-NFE 1.2:

Devolve the implementation of the Non-Formal Education programmes to the Provincial Administration while the Centre takes the responsibility of setting the policy, regulations, guidelines, curricula and undertaking monitoring and certification

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE shall take steps to transfer the responsibility of manning the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) to respective Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and transfer the NFE Project Officers' cadre also to the respective Provincial Administrations through appropriate establishment procedures.
- The Provincial Ministry/Department of Education shall take steps to establish an NFE Unit under their purview and assign human and physical resources to streamline and strengthen their activities of the NFE sector in the respective Provinces.
- The Provincial Department of Education shall take steps to establish the Provincial Coordinating Committee on Non-Formal Education chaired by the Director to promote, integrate and monitor the NFE activities in the respective Provinces. The other members of the Committee shall be the Zonal Directors, Divisional Directors, NFE Project Officers in the respective Provinces and Zones, and Divisional Offices, and representatives from other State and non-State NFE providers in the respective provinces. The Coordinating Committee on NFE shall have meetings regularly and review the progress of activities relating to NFE.
- The NFE coordinating officers (Director or Deputy Directors) Directors of the Provinces, in liaison with the Zonal and Divisional Officers and of NFE Project Officers should collect data on the NFE at the zonal and provincial levels and feed them into the Central Data Management System maintained by the Department of NF & SE of the MoE.

Policy-NFE 1.3:

The Ministry of Education shall strengthen the NFE sector to function in parallel with the formal education sector while maintaining close collaboration between the two sectors

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education through the Zonal and the Divisional Offices shall promote coordination between the NFE Project Officers and school administrations to identify the children who have already dropped out and also who are likely to be drop out and promote their participation either in NFE programmes or direct them back to school education.
- The Divisional Director of Education in consultation with the Supervision Committee of Compulsory Education (*as prescribed by the MoE Circular No. 1963/30*) shall take the responsibility for ensuring the smooth transition of children from the NFE programmes to school education with a strong follow-up and monitoring mechanism to facilitate the retention and the learning process of such children.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE in liaison with the Provincial Department of Education shall develop a mechanism to offer certificates for those who complete the NFE programmes to facilitate the continuation of their schooling, or enrolling into the technical and vocation education and training (TVET) programmes, or facilitating their entry into the formal and informal job markets.

Core Area – NFE 2: Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness

Policy Context

Though Sri Lanka has enacted compulsory education legislation and achieved high enrolment rates in primary (98.5%) and junior secondary (88%) education⁴⁰⁵, there still exist wide disparities in the pattern of access to secondary education⁴⁰⁶. In addition to school dropouts and school leavers at different stages, there are many other categories – such as disadvantaged and marginalized children such as street children, children from low-income families, children in children’s homes and probationary centres, children with special education needs - who are in need for an alternative pathway to engage and progress in education. Over and above, the unemployed youth and adults are also in need of alternative forms of education and training to become active contributors to the economic development of the country. Nevertheless, the existing network of CLCs that is coming under the purview of the NF & SE Branch of MoE offering NFE programmes are sparsely distributed (total 89), and as such, it is able to fulfil the demand for NFE only partially. In addition to that, a part of the demand for NFE is met by the 25 centres operated by the Open School Unit of the NIE. As there is demand, in addition to CLCs and Open School Units, there are many State and on non-State centres offering NFE programmes running outside the CLC network (estimated as 798 centres operating outside the CLC network)⁴⁰⁷. However, the relevance and quality of the NFE programme offered by both the State and non-State NFE providers including those that are conducted by the CLCs of the NF & SE Branch and Open School Units of NIE are relatively unknown, and they lack wider recognition as they do not lead to the award of a certificate of completion that has a value to gain entry into the formal school system or TVET programmes or in the employment market. Besides that, the NFE Programmes targeting women and working and non-working adults are also very limited. Moreover, the traditional mode of delivery used by the NFE sector also limits access to many people living in very remote and rural areas.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State assumes the responsibility of ensuring “Education for All”.
- DP 2: The State assures equity and inclusion in education where need-based support is available to all learners to thrive within the non-formal education system, regardless of gender, race, religion or social status, geographical location, or disabilities.
- DP 3: The State promotes the non-formal education programmes targeting adults, women, displaced or marginal communities, and those who wish to engage in life-long learning.

405. Ministry of Education. (2017). *Non-formal Education Programmes. Census Report -2017*.

406. Aturupane, H., Sankar, D., Saeki, H., Shoji, M., Glewwe, P., & Deolalikar, A. (2011). *Transforming school education in Sri Lanka: From cut stones to polished jewels. The World Bank*.

407. Ministry of Education. (2017). *Non-formal Education Programmes. Census Report -2017*.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 2.1: Broaden the coverage and expand opportunities for non-formal education while ensuring equity and inclusiveness

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department NE & SE of the MoE in liaison with the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to expand the CLC network and strengthen the capacity of CLCs to identify the training needs, and design and offer a wide range of programmes to serve the needy groups (*i.e. women, adults, youth, school leavers, etc.*) to promote life-long learning.
- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education through Zonal and Divisional Offices and CLC network shall expand their programmes to children and adolescents to facilitate the completion of unfinished schooling through the NFE Programmes and offer certification of completion, and facilitate the continuation of their schooling and/or entering into TVET institutions or entering into the formal and informal labour markets.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Department of Open School of the NIE shall conduct national TV and radio programmes in liaison with the Provincial Education Departments and Zonal Education Offices to increase awareness of the public on NFE programmes.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Department of Open School of the NIE shall carry out need analysis surveys annually to identify the changing needs of different target groups in the community and the results should be shared with the State and non-State NFE providers to accommodate those identified training needs in their annual training programmes.

Policy-NFE 2.2: Non-formal education sector should closely liaise with the technical and vocational education and training sector and institutions to ensure resource sharing and to gain recognition for non-formal education training programmes through the National Vocational Qualification Framework

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, in consultation with the National Committee on Non-Formal Education and the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) shall draw up the standards for CLC programmes to seek and obtain recognition under the National Vocational Education Qualification Framework.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, and TVEC together shall take steps to develop and adopt a system for certification of non-formal education programmes to ensure the NFE certification as a pre-vocational qualification for enrolling into formal programmes offered by the TVET institutions and training centres
- The NFE Unit of the Provincial Ministry/Department of Education and the Zonal and Divisional Education Offices shall closely work with TVET institutions and training centres of the respective areas in implementing the NFE programmes.

Core Area – NFE 3: Learners and Learning Environment

Policy Context

Learners who are seeking non-formal education are different from those who are following formal education. Some do not have the basic primary education whereas some may lack basic learning skills (*i.e. functional literacy, IT literacy, environmental literacy, etc.*) to fulfil the requirements for further education. Further, the learners in the NFE sector belong to different age groups and their requirements for education/learning might vary from one another, and the “adults need education of different sorts to be able to form an intelligent and sympathetic society in which the adults and youth will be happy to play their respective roles”⁴⁰⁸. The reasons for opting for NFE is also different from one another. Studies have shown that one of the determinants of non-schooling is the chronic poverty faced by the families, and in most of these families, the parents are not usually interested in their children’s education. Therefore, they do not encourage children to attend schools without interruption. In some instances, most of the children in poor families are forced to engage in income-generating activities without concentrating on their schooling. In addition to those factors, there are many instances where students drop out of schools due to inherent and acquired learning difficulties.

As regards the creation of a conducive environment, a desirable interaction should happen between the NFE sector and formal general education sector, and also with the technical and vocational education sector and also with other key sectors of the country – such as health, agriculture, environment, etc. Unfortunately, this interaction does not exist in most instances. For example, sharing resources, particularly those that are available in formal education sectors (*such as general education and TVET institutions*) for NFE training, accommodating the school dropouts after completing the NFE programmes back to school or into TVET programmes/courses, collaborative efforts in providing NFE programmes for enhancing the awareness of the community in areas like health, agriculture, environment, micro-enterprise development and water and sanitation, etc., do not exist in most instances⁴⁰⁹. It is also well recognized the importance of NFE in minimizing social problems such as conflicts within communities and families, and issues such as teenage pregnancies, drug addiction, communal violence, environmental destruction, etc. Further, there is a great need for increasing the awareness of families about family health and nutrition, personal hygiene, etiquette, cleanliness, the psycho-social wellbeing of the family members and creating a healthy and conducive learning environment for children within the family. The expertise and resources available in other sectors/institutions such as health, social services, environment, agriculture, civil defence or police, etc., could be drawn to design and offer programmes aiming to address such needs and objectives. As such, the NFE sector needs to work in greater collaboration with multiple sectors to draw the resources available in those sectors to cater for the multitude of needs of the community.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Learners must be guided through the NFE programmes about the options available in learning pathways and career opportunities to ensure every individual chooses the best learning pathway to reach the full potential to make him/her productively employable in the ‘world of work’.
- DP 2: Education of the NFE programmes must be offered in a flexible manner using a variety of delivery methods with multiple entry and exit points.
- DP 3: The learners of the NFE programmes must be guided throughout the learning process to equip them with

408. Ministry of Education. (1979). *Towards Relevance in Education*.

409. National Education Commission. (2016). *National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka - Raising the Quality of Education*.

the necessary competencies to succeed in their personal lives within a rapidly changing society.

DP 4: Learners of the NFE programmes must be provided with necessary awareness of moral and ethical norms, personal hygiene, etiquette, interpersonal relations, social cohesion and ethnic harmony, and their role in preserving the environment.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 3.1: Formal and non-formal education sectors and programmes must integrate at all levels of learning to fulfil the requirements of learners

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE working through the Department of Open School of the NIE, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, school communities, and TVET training institutions/centres shall encourage and facilitate all State and non-State NFE providers to offer diverse and need-based NFE programme targeting young out-of-school children, adolescents, youth and adults.
- The Provincial NFE authorities together with schools and religious institutions in the area and government service institutions such as MoH office, Police, *Samurdhi* office, *Gramaniladhari* office, etc., shall take steps to conduct awareness programmes through the CLS network for all categories of the general public to improve their quality of life by helping to address social issues, family related issues, health issues, and the other issues relating to livelihoods at a convenient time in flexible modes.

Policy-NFE 3.2: Non-Formal Education training providers must provide employment- or livelihood-oriented training activities to the communities in the respective catchment areas enabling people to gain basic knowledge, skills, technical, and social skills to facilitate and encourage them to engage in productive activities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE together with the Department of Open School of the NIE, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education and in liaison with other State and non-State organizations which provide services in health care, agriculture, environment protection, water and sanitation, etc., shall take steps to assure the incorporation of short-term attachments to industry, business, service and agriculture sector organizations targeting the development and/or updating of employability/livelihood skills of the participants of the NFE programmes.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE together with the Department of Open School of the NIE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to ensure that all NFE programmes offer compulsory practical training components to ensure the trainees acquire the skills required to succeed in modern society such as ICT skills, communication skills, leadership skills, 21st-century skills, etc.

Policy-NFE 3.3:

The Non-Formal Education sector together with the formal education sector should enhance family and community relationships to provide a healthy learning environment for learners

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The CLCs together with the schools in catchment areas shall introduce activities such as clubs, societies, Shramadana, tournaments, new year celebrations, religious ceremonies, etc., to promote interactions among people and families and build healthy relationships within and among families and between families and the community, and to promote ethnic harmony and social cohesion.
- The CLCs together with schools in the respective catchment areas shall offer short term programmes/ courses for community members to educate them on moral and ethical norms, essential life skills (*such as interpersonal skills, teamwork, analytical and conceptual skills*), and create greater awareness on personal health and hygiene, etiquette and cleanliness, and environmental conservation and enrichment.
- The CLCs shall take steps to promote its role as a catalytic centre to provide a multitude of community training programmes and services to foster the socio-economic advancement of the community.

Core Area – NFE 4: Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes

Policy Context

The research evidence is rare to ascertain whether the NFE programmes offered by the NFE providers such as CLC network of NF & SE Branch of MoE, Open School Centres of NIE, and other State and non-State providers NFE are rationally and systematically designed to cater to the community needs, and attract and maintain continued participation of deprived and disadvantaged communities such as school drop-outs, street children, displaced children, etc., and whether such programmes/courses are updated continuously to cater to the rapidly changing needs of the lifelong learners. Further, it appears that there is no review system in operation to review and update the training programmes offered under the purview of the present NF & SE Branch of MoE and Open School Centers of NIE. Further, it is very conceivable that the NFE sector cannot offer a common curriculum like the formal education sector as the needs of target groups vary from one community to another. Lack of trained personnel to develop interactive modules and non-availability of the modules for NFE training centres to use whenever needed have also been highlighted as problems faced by the NFE sector.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The design and development of NFE curricula and teaching/training guides shall be a State responsibility.
- DP 2: The content and delivery of NFE programmes should undergo periodic evaluations and continuous monitoring and modifications to suit the intended purposes and requirements of the diverse target groups.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 4.1: The curriculum design of non-formal education training programmes must allow sufficient flexibility for the trainers to adapt it to suit the training needs and for learners to choose programme/courses to suit their needs and preferences

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of Open School of the NIE shall function as the lead agency for the design and development of curricula for NFE programmes/courses.
- The Department of Open School of the NIE in collaboration with the Department of NF & SE of the MoE and the Provincial Ministries / Departments of Education shall take steps to develop appropriate modular curricula for different study programmes/courses.
- The Department of Open School of the NIE shall develop and provide Teacher/Trainer Guides on the application/adaptation of prescribed curricula to suit the needs of different target groups.
- The Department of the Open School of the NIE, in consultation with the Department of NF & SE of the MoE, and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall conduct training programmes to NFE providers on the design and development of quality and relevant learning material and resources for learners and on the pedagogies applicable for different age groups.

Policy-NFE 4.2: Curricula of NFE programmes and courses/modules must be subjected to regular monitoring and revision to maintain the quality and relevance

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of Open School of the NIE in liaison with the Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to maintain relevance, quality and flexibility of curricula of NFE programmes/courses through regular monitoring of the implementation of the curricula by State and non-State NFE providers and the trainees' outcomes.
- The Department of Open School of the NIE in collaboration with the Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to conduct regular need assessment surveys and research on the NFE to identify the training needs of the diverse target groups.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE in liaison with the Department of Open School of the NIE shall take steps to provide training for trainers/resource persons of all NFE training providers/centres of both the State and non-State on the application prescribed curricula and also for adapting them to meet the needs of different target groups.

Policy Context

Teachers in the NFE set-up as in the case with the formal education sector are mostly relying on the conventional pedagogical approach where the teacher controls the teaching-learning process with heavy reliance on face-to-face instructions, coupled with practical classes. This practice has to be changed to align the teaching and learning process for the adult-focused teaching approach (andragogy) that relies more on independent, self-directed, and cooperative learning. The reasons for the heavy reliance on the conventional pedagogical approach would be that most teachers who work in the NFE sector are drawn from the formal education sector as part-time instructors, and as such, they lack specific training to work with adult learners. It is imperative that the strong emphasis placed on conventional teacher-centred teaching and learning coupled with rote-learning and memorization by the students should be changed to a more learner-centred, problem-oriented, activity-based approach in which higher-order cognitive skills and soft skills such as creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, etc., are imparted. Further, in order to assess the learning outcomes, a strong weightage should be placed on formative assessments and practical-based evaluations rather than written evaluations.

Though many NFE programmes are offered by diverse organizations, such as CLCs of NF & SE Branch of the MoE, Open School Unit of the NIE through its regional centres, and by several ministries and departments and NGOs through their diverse modes of operation for different target groups, there is no mechanism to assure the quality of such programmes, and hence no mechanism for certification/accreditation of such programmes. This deficiency must be addressed as most of the NFE trainees, particularly the school dropouts and leavers wish to seek their upward mobility and continuation of learning through the formal general education system as well as through the TVET system.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The teaching-learning process should embrace as much as possible learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning so as to promote experiential/authentic learning.
- DP 2: Assessment and certification of students' achievements should be based on practical-based formative assessments instead of written summative assessments.
- DP 3: The State assumes the responsibility of putting in place a quality assurance and certification system to ensure the quality and relevance of NFE programmes/courses.
- DP 4: All NFE centres and programmes must be subjected to regular review and monitoring to ascertain the degree of compliance of the NFE centres and programmes/courses with prescribed standards, guidelines and codes of practice to ensure the quality and relevance of NFE programmes/courses.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 5.1: The Non-Formal Education programmes should be offered by adopting modern teaching-learning and assessment methods, and the students' outcomes should be certified by offering a valid certificate

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All NFE providers (*Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Department of Open School of the NIE, Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education, other State and non-State providers*) shall take necessary steps to incorporate student-centered, activity-based methods in the teaching-learning and assessment process.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE together with the NIE through its Open School Department shall take steps to conduct training programmes for trainers of the NFE training centres operated by the State and non-State NFE providers to familiarize themselves with the modern teaching-learning and assessment methods and tools including the adoption of electronic and digital media such as TV, radio, print and online, and social media platforms appropriate for NFE programme delivery.
- All NFE Providers shall conduct assessment processes of the NFE programmes in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of Open School of the NIE and the issue of certificates of successful completion with the endorsement of the NFE Coordinating Committee at the Provincial Ministry/Department of Education.

Policy-NFE 5.2: Develop and implement a quality assurance system to assure the quality and relevance of the NFE programmes/courses

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall take steps to issue regulations and guidelines to all Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education to implement a compulsory registration of all State and non-State NFE providers and training centres with the respective Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education.
- The Department of NF & SE of MoE in liaison with the NEC, QA Branch of MoE, Department of Open School of the NIE, and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall prepare and issue minimum standards for the establishment and registration of all State and non-State NFE training centres.
- The Department of the NF & SE of the MoE in liaison with the NEC, QA Branch of MoE, Department of Open School of the NIE, and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to design and develop standards and guidelines and codes of practices and review and certification system for the NFE programmes offered by State and non-State organizations and take steps to implement the review and certification/accreditation process.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, in collaboration with the Department of Open School of the NIE shall develop and maintain model Community Learning Centres and model programmes at suitable central and regional locations (*preferably through the public-private partnerships*) to set the standards for other State and non-State NFE training providers.

Core Area – NFE 6: Patriotism, Civic Consciousness and Life Skills

Policy Context

In a multi-ethnic society like Sri Lanka, its citizens must need to respect their place of birth and its culture and value system. Further, they should respect all ethnic communities/groups and respect each other's ethnic, religious and cultural practices and values. Even though general education is expected to give sufficient emphasis on those aspects in the school curriculum, the unhealthy transformation that has occurred with emphasis on exam-oriented education has prevented the schools to implement them in full spirit. Therefore, there is a growing need for inculcating a wide spectrum of values among school dropouts and school leavers, and among the general public such as civic consciousness, empathy, respect for others, etiquette, courtesy, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, responsibility and accountability, pluralism and equality, social cohesion, and ethnic harmony, and life skills that are required to succeed in life.

Further, Sri Lanka needs citizens with strong personality traits to contribute steadily to the economic development of the country. However, many Sri Lankan adults and youth are regularly experiencing psychological and emotional problems as a result of economic, social, cultural, and family problems that are continuously being impinging on them. As a result, many of the youth and adults of low-income groups lack self-confidence, determination, and perseverance to manage day-to-day problems by themselves which affect badly on their participation in the national economy.

Directive Principles

DP 1: Non-Formal Education must be used as a platform to instill patriotism and civic consciousness and impart life skills among people in communities.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 6. 1: All Non-Formal Education programmes should focus on the promotion of patriotism and civic consciousness, and imparting life skills among people in communities

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, in collaboration with the Department of Open School of the NIE shall take steps to promote/conduct discussions, seminars, forums, videos, dramas, competitions etc., via TV/radio and social media focusing on the promotion of civic consciousness, nationalism and patriotism, and ethnic harmony and social cohesion.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, in collaboration with the Department of Open School of the NIE shall promote integrating compulsory activities (*such as group projects/assignments, case studies, etc.,*) into NFE programmes/courses conducted by CLCs, Open Schools and other NFE training providers aiming at developing human values such as teamwork, empathy, respect for others, democratic spirit, the spirit of service, respect for public property, etc., in all citizens.

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE in collaboration with the Department of Open School of the NIE shall design and introduce course modules into NFE programmes to impart life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, resilience, self-confidence, and vision for life.

Core Area – NFE 7: Quality of Human and Physical Resources

Policy Context

There is no proper mechanism available for recruitment, training, and promotions of NFE project officers, instructors and other staff involved in the NFE activities. Due to a lack of trained and experienced personnel, the NFE sector mostly relies on part-time instructors to conduct the programmes. Further, there are only 187 NFE Project Officers to conduct the NFE activities covering all the educational divisions (303). Though there were cadre vacancies, no steps have been taken to fill the existing vacancies. The absence of in-service training opportunities and career progression for the personnel involved in the NFE activities is another problem faced by the NFE sector. The absence of interaction and cooperation among various organizations involved in the NFE activities is also another limitation faced by the NFE sector. In addition, the limited infrastructure facilities available at the Community Learning Centres also hinder their activities⁴¹⁰. Although permanent physical facilities may not require to run the NFE training centres, there should be provision to hire suitable facilities, as and when required.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State considers teachers and trainers as the heart of the teaching-learning process of the non-formal education sector as in the case with other sectors, and ensures the provision of adequate opportunities for quality professional development for all categories of teachers/trainers.
- DP 2: The State ensures the provision of non-formal education opportunities irrespective of geographical location and student numbers through appropriately resourced training centres/facilities.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 7.1: Promote recruitment of graduates to the Non-Formal Education sector and provide them with suitable training at induction and a clear pathway for career progression

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall work with the Department of Management Services and National Salaries Commission to revisit the decision taken not to fill the vacancies of NFE project officers, and take necessary steps to fill the existing vacancies, and also to create an additional cadre of NFE Project Officers, to allocate at least one NFE Project Officer per Divisional Education Office level.

⁴¹⁰ Ministry of Education. (2017). *Non-formal Education Programmes. Census Report-2017*

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE in consultation with the NIE shall develop a recruitment criterion to recruit graduates into the NFE Project Officer cadre to facilitate the effective conduct of the NFE programmes.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE in liaison with the NIE, shall design, develop and conduct suitable induction training programmes for newly recruited NFE Project Officers.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall take steps to provide opportunities for in-service training and continuous professional development programmes to all categories of staff in the NFE Sector.
- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall appoint NFE Project Officers to Zonal and Divisional Education Offices to streamline the NFE activities in the respective administrative areas.
- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall monitor the activities of the NFE Project Officers assigned to Zonal and Divisional Education Offices.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall take steps to develop a suitable promotion scheme and career progression pathway for all categories of staff in the NFE sector.

Policy-NFE 7.2:

Delivery of the non-formal education programmes should be done through close coordination with formal education providers to ensure full utilization of available training resources

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, the Department of Open School of the NIE and the other NFE providers shall deliver the NFE programmes using existing NFE networks, school network, TVET institution/centre network, etc., to assure coordination and optimum utilization of resources at national and provincial levels.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE shall maintain strong linkages with the other State and non-State NFE training providers to avoid duplication of activities and wastage of resources.
- The Department of NF & SE shall invite all the NFE training providers to participate at provincial level Co-ordinating Committee meetings and the nominated representatives to participate at the National Level Coordinating Committee and Steering Committee.
- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall maintain a separate fund for the NFE activities to provide funds to NFE Project Officers to rent/hire the training facilities/places, if required, and to acquire required resource material to facilitate the conduct of the NFE training programmes.

Core Area – NFE 8: Financing of Non-Formal Education

Policy Context

The annual expenditure on education was estimated at around 2.0 % GDP over the years and it is relatively low compared to the comparable countries. Out of this limited funding, a larger portion is allocated to general

education^{411,412}. In this system, the non-formal education sector has been playing a very subservient role in the education sector throughout history with limited focus, scope, and funds. The insufficiency of monetary allocations to carry out NFE programmes has been one of the main limiting factors identified by the officers attached to the NF & SE Branch of the MoE and the Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education.

Directive Principles

DP 1: The State assures the responsibility of funding the non-formal education programmes.

DP 2: The State encourages true philanthropic private and community participation in non-formal education by providing financial/tax incentives within a conducive regulatory framework to operate as not-for-profit educational institutions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-NFE 8.1: Ensure the provision of sufficient funds for the NFE Sector

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The MoE together with Provincial Ministries of Education shall take steps to increase the annual allocation of government funds to the Department of the NF & SE, and the Provincial and Zonal/Divisional level NFE training units substantially.
- The Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall take steps to strengthen CLCs by providing required resources such as trained personnel, modern IT equipment, and other facilities by direct funding as well as through corporate sector partnerships.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE, and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall develop national plans for the NFE activities to strengthen the non-formal education provisions and promote synergy among State and non-State NFE providers.

Policy-NFE 8.2: Public and private partnerships must be promoted in the provision of NFE programmes

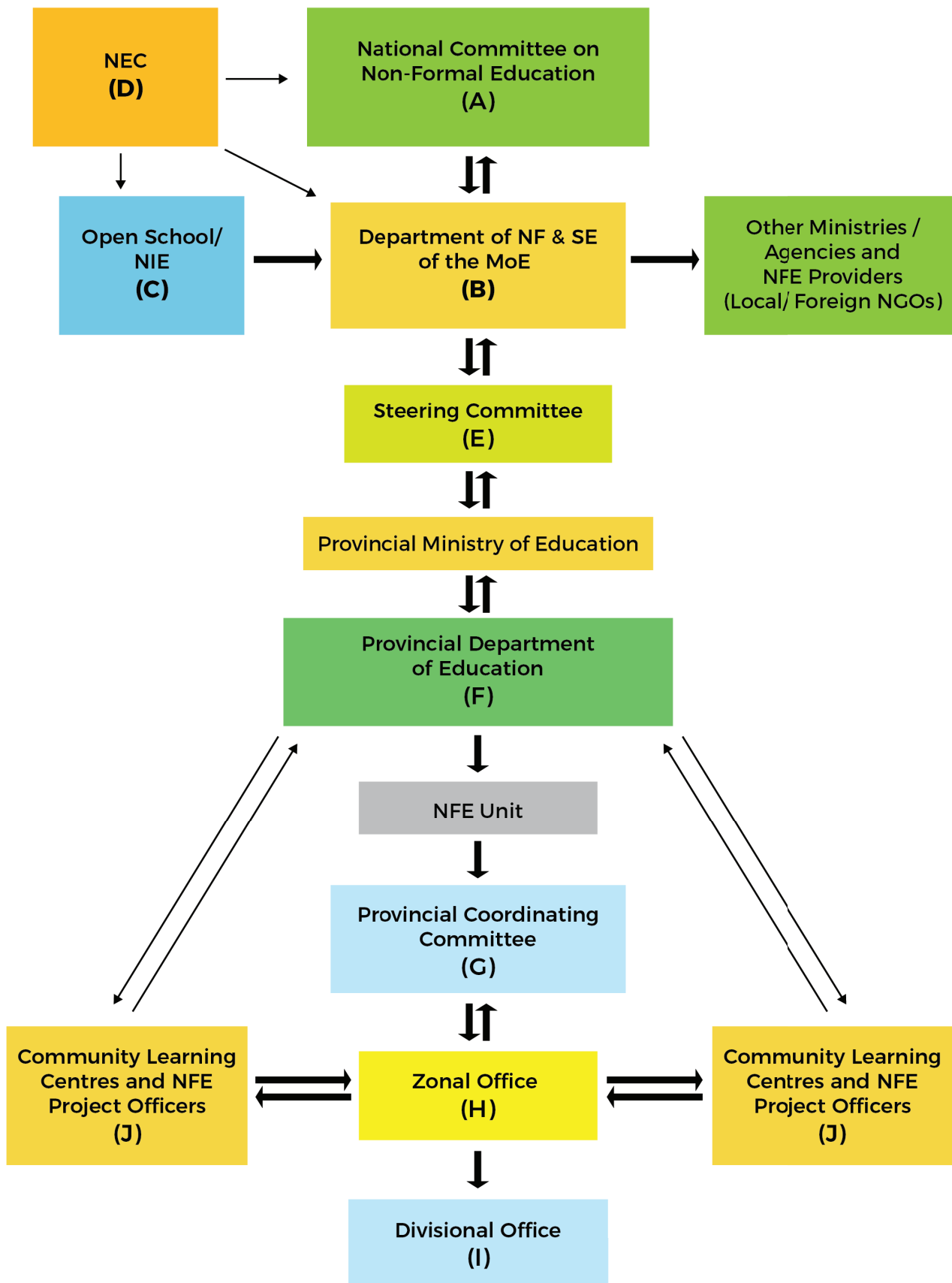
Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall seek the assistance of private organizations to offer NFE training programmes for the unemployed youth and adults.
- The Department of NF & SE of the MoE and Provincial Ministries/Departments of Education shall encourage the private sector to provide apprentice training placements, and, if possible, to offer employment opportunities for the participants after completion of the apprentice training.

411. World Bank. (2013). *The World Bank Annual Report*

412. UNESCO Institute of Statistics. (2018). *Data for the Sustainable Development Goals*, <http://uis.unesco.org/>.

Annex 1: Proposed Institutional and Regulatory Framework for the NFE Sector



Source: Author's Illustration

Annex 2: Composition, Roles and Responsibilities of Departments / Committees and Implementing Agencies

(A) National Committee on Non-Formal Education

Composition

- Secretary/MoE (Chairman)
- Chairman/NEC
- Director-General/NIE, and
- Representatives from Dept. of NF & SE (Convener), DDG/ Alternative Education, Director/Open Schools, Director/Teacher Education of NIE, other NFE providers namely the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Services, Ministry of Public Services, Provincial Councils and Local Government, National Secretariat for Early Childhood Development (NSECD), Department of Probation and Child Care Services, National Youth Council, and other relevant government agencies.

Functions

- Provide general directions for the NFE sector on the basis of National Policy on NFE.
- Review and approve strategic plans and annual action plans and review the progress of implementation of the approved plans by the key national and provincial authorities and Open Schools and CLCs.
- Facilitate coordination and collaboration among State and non-State NEF providers.
- Facilitate sharing of expertise, training facilities, learning resources, etc.
- Discuss issues and problems of the NFE sector and provide solutions for common problems & issues.

(B) Department of NF & SE of the MoE

Functions

- Key national department /agency responsible for regulating, fostering, guiding and monitoring of NFE sector.
- Develop a Manual of Operation for NFE to detail out the powers and functions of key players – MoE, Dept. of NF & SE, Department of Open Schools of NIE, Provincial Ministry and Department of Education, Zonal and Divisional Education Offices and NFE Project officers and CLCs.
- Develop strategic plans and annual action plans for the NFE sector in liaison with the Provincial Departments of Education and facilitate the implementation of the annual plans in collaboration with provincial authorities.
- Liaise with the Department of Open Schools of the NIE in developing curricula of NFE programmes/ courses.
- Develop minimum standards for the establishment and registration of CLCs/ NFE training centres in consultation with the NEC, Department of Open Schools of the NIE, and Provincial Authorities.
- Conduct promotional programmes through print and electronic media to create awareness of NFE programmes among the target groups and the public.
- Conduct regular need analysis surveys and undertake commissioned research.
- Establish and maintain a national level database and management system.
- Establish and maintain model CLCs and conduct model NFE programmes/courses.

- Design and implement quality assurance system for NFE sector in liaison with the NEC and the Quality Assurance Unit of the MoE.

(C) Dept. of Open Schools of the NIE

Functions

- Develop curricula for NFE programmes/courses including the guidelines for curricula adaptation, monitor implementation and undertake revisions of curricula at periodic intervals.
- Conduct training programmes for teachers/instructors/NFE Project Officers of the NFE sector.
- Design and conduct NFE programmes/courses through Open Schools in liaison with the Dept. of NF & SE and CLCs.
- Develop and conduct TV/Radio programmes and innovative models for teaching and learning in NFE with the adoption of ICT-based tools and applications.
- Engage in research on NFE.
- Collaborate with other local and international agencies/institutes linked to NFE.

(D) National Education Commission

Functions

- Assist the Dept. of NF & SE of the MoE to prepare minimum standards for the establishment and registration of CLCs/NFE training centres operated by the State and non-State NFE providers.
- Design and develop a quality assurance and accreditation system for the NFE sector in liaison with the Department of NF & SE, Quality Assurance Unit of the MoE, and Open Schools of NIE and provincial NFE authorities.
- Provide technical assistance to the Department of NF & SE of MoE in implementing the quality assurance and accreditation system for the NFE sector.
- Assist the Department of Open School of the NIE to develop curricula, instructional manuals and guidelines for NFE programmes.
- Assist the Dept. of NF & SE of MoE to develop a Manual of Operation for NFE to explain the power and authorities of the Departments of NF & SE of MoE and Open Schools of NIE, responsibilities of Provincial Ministry/Department of Education and Provincial, Zonal, Divisional Education Offices, NFE Project officers and CLCs.

(E) Steering Committee at the Department NFE & SE of the MoE

Composition

- Director/Department of NF & SE (Chairman)
- Director of the Department of Open Schools of the NIE
- Directors of the Provincial Departments of Education
- Deputy Directors or Asst. Directors of Zonal Education Offices
- Representatives from other relevant Departments/Branches/Units of the MoE and other ministries

Functions

- Review and approve Strategic Plans and Annual Action Plans for the NFE sector.
- Monitor implementation of Annual Action Plans of the NFE sector by provincial-level authorities.
- Monitor the NFE activities conducted by the national and provincial level agencies.
- Discuss the problems and issues of Provincial, Zonal, and Divisional Offices in implementing NFE activities.
- Discuss issues and gaps of the NFE sector and design reforms and remedies required for addressing the identified issues and gaps.
- Regular review & monitoring of NFE programmes operating at the national and provincial levels and prepare reports to the National Committee on Non-Formal Education.
- Discuss any other matters relevant to the NFE sector.

(F) Provincial Dept. of Education

Functions

- Functions as the lead agency for the implementation of NFE activities within the Province.
- Liaise with the NF & SE of the MoE in preparing Strategic Plans and Annual Plans on NFE activities.
- Allocate funds to Zonal and Divisional Offices, and CLCs.
- Implement NFE programmes through Zonal and Divisional Education Office, and CLS network of the Province.

Director

- Supervision, monitoring and guiding the functions of Zonal and Divisional offices and CLCs.
- Reporting progress of the NFE activities to the Provincial Ministry/Department of Education and the Department of NF & SE of the MoE.

Deputy Director

- Empowering Zonal/Divisional Officers to implement regulations and guidelines applicable to the NFE sector.
- Design programmes for Zones/Divisional Officers considering the community and target group needs.
- Design programmes for youth and adults and empower NFE Project Officers to implement such programmes.
- Supervision, monitoring and guiding the functions of zonal and divisional offices and CLCs.
- Supply data and progress reports to the Provincial Department of Education.

NFE Project Officer I

- Assist the Director and Deputy Director to plan NFE activities and supervising the implementation of such activities by the CLCs.
- Update the NFE data system.

(G) Provincial Coordinating Committee at the Provincial Department of Education

Composition

- Provincial Director of Education (Chairman)
- Director/Dept. of Education, Directors of Zonal and Divisional Education Offices, Provincial Coordinator of NFE Project Officers, representatives from the Provincial Department of Health, Social Services, and Probation and Childcare Service, and representatives of State and non-State NFE Providers

Functions

- Review progress of NFE activities conducted by the Zonal and Divisional Offices through CLCs network and by other State and non-State NFE training providers.
- Coordination of NFE of activities conducted by the State and non-State NFE training providers at the provincial level.
- Monitor progress of activities that are undertaken at Zonal and Divisional levels and by the NFE Project Officers.
- Solving issues and problems encountered at provincial, zonal and CLC levels.
- Support the Department of NF & SE to conduct need analysis surveys.
- Collect and collate relevant data and feed into the national data management system of the Department of NF & SE of MoE.

(H) Zonal Education Office

Functions

- Functions as the lead agency for the implementation of NFE activities within the Zone.
- Liaise with the Provincial Department of Education in preparing annual plans on NFE activities.
- Implement NFE programmes through the Divisional Education Office and CLS network of the Zone.

Deputy/Asst. Director Education

- Plan NFE programmes according to the needs of the Zone.
- Empower divisions, schools and the community to implement compulsory education regulations.
- Plan youth and adult NFE programmes and allocate funds.
- Supervision and monitoring of NFE programmes conducted by the Divisional Offices through CLCs.
- Supply data and progress reports to the Provincial Dept. of Education.

Project Officer II

- Coordination of NFE activities of the Zone.
- Update the data system on NFE and related aspects.
- Assist the Zonal Directors Office in implementing NFE programmes.
- Monitor the functions of the CLCs.

(I) Divisional Office

Functions

- Assess the needs of youth and adults and design and present the programmes to Director/Zonal Office for approval for implementation.
- Supervision and monitoring of activities conducted by the CLCs.
- Provide data and progress reports to the Zonal Office.

NFE Project Officer III

- Function as the officer-in-charge of the CLCs in the Divisional Area.
- Work in liaison with the School Development Committees to identify dropouts/out of school students and assist them to re-join the formal schools or enrol in NFE training programmes and/or in vocational training programmes offered by the TVET institutions.
- Identify NFE training programmes according to the needs of the youth and adults in the respective administrative areas and implement them through CLCs.
- Liaise with the relevant authorities in implementing the planned NFE training programmes.

(J) Community Learning Centres

Functions

- Functions as the grassroot level NFE training delivery points.
- Conduct NFE programmes approved by the Zonal/Divisional Authorities to cater for the needs of the community of the geographical location and catchment area.
- Conduct awareness programmes for the community on NFE activities offered by the CLCs.

PART IV- VOLUME VIII

**POLICY PROPOSALS AND
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC
ACTIVITIES ON INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL EDUCATION**



1. STATUS REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

International schools (IS) have become an important cohort of the national education system in Sri Lanka. These are defined as “schools that provide education to any national from the age of 5 years to 18 years (*both years inclusive*) according to a foreign or local curriculum in the medium of English or any other foreign language, invested and operated by the private sector”⁴¹³.

At present, these schools are registered as investment projects under the Board of Investment (BOI) and/or incorporated under the Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (*Business Names Registration Ordinance 8 of 1938 & 7 of 1987*).

1.2. Global Context

The emergence of international schools is more of a recent phenomenon. Today, most major cities of many countries have at least one good international school, if not several. Since of late, Asia has dominated the growth of international schools. Sri Lanka and the neighbouring countries have witnessed significant growth in this sector during the last decade⁴¹⁴.

In 2000, there were approximately 2,500 international schools in the world catering close to million students; mainly expatriates. Currently, there are over 10,000 international schools teaching well over 5 million students catering mainly to the locals. By 2027, the prediction is for over 16,000 international schools worldwide that would cater to over 10 million students, and Asia is expected to account for over 50% of all international schools worldwide. There appear to be many possible reasons for the phenomenal growth of international schools. Globalization and the opening of the economies worldwide have contributed to the expansion of the middle and the upper-middle-class sectors of the society that possess increased wealth and have higher expectations. This particular segment of society is also increasingly exposed to what happens in the developed world and naturally want their children to receive an education that will prepare them for the globalized world. The demand for international schools is further fuelled as the Governments in most of these countries are struggling to meet these rising expectations of the parents for quality education, and international schools appear to be one of the attractive options for most affluent parents.

1.3. Sri Lankan Context

The first international school in Sri Lanka, the Overseas Children’s School was inaugurated in 1958 to cater to the educational needs of the children of the diplomatic community⁴¹⁵. Since the adoption of the open economic policies in the late 1970s, many international schools came into operation with the approval of the Bol and registered with the Registrar of Companies, under the Companies Act No. 17 of 1982.

Permission to establish Colombo International School (CIS) was granted subject to certain conditions, such as a) enrolment of students must be restricted to those over 14 years in the case of non-Sri Lankans and those over 18 years in the case of Sri Lankans; b) employment of expatriate staff must be subjected to the approval of the Ministry of Education; c) institutions must be registered as a company after obtaining prior approval of the Ministry of Education for the Memorandum and Articles of Association; and d) progress reports must be submitted when called for to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

Further, in 2004, the Management and Quality Assurance Unit of the Ministry of Education has prescribed a set of

413. National Education Commission. (2019). Report by the sub-committee on the registration of international schools.

414. ISC Research. (2020). Retrieved November 09, 2020, from <https://www.iscresearch.com>

415. National Education Commission. (2003). *Envisioning education for human development: Proposals for a national policy framework on general education in Sri Lanka*.

criteria for international and English medium fee-levying private schools, and the conditions on which they shall operate.

Management and Quality Assurance Unit of the Ministry of Education (2004)⁴¹⁶ gives the criteria for international and English medium private schools.

These criteria include;

1. Criteria to decide the type of the school and grades,
2. Criteria to decide the suitability of human resources (*principal's qualifications, number of teachers, teachers' qualifications, academic and non-academic support staff, etc.*),
3. Criteria to decide the suitability of physical resources,
4. Particulars of management,
5. Performance of students,
6. Community relationships,
7. Welfare activities,
8. Particulars of financial resources and expenditure and
9. Procedure to be followed for accreditation.

Under 9, the following are listed;

- i) The Management and Quality Assurance Unit will issue application forms based on the above criteria on the request of schools when the Ministry of Education calls for applications for accreditation.
- ii) The Ministry officer teams will visit schools to examine the accuracy and reliability of the information provided through the application and will decide the suitability for accreditation.
- iii) In case of a deficiency of requirements, the school will be offered a grace period to complete revealed deficiencies.
- iv) The authority regarding acceptance or rejection of accreditation is vested with the Secretary of Ministry Education, and in cases of rejection, the relevant school authority may submit an appeal.

Though the Ministry of Education issued the above-mentioned circular letter in 2004, the letter itself has also stated that prevailing legal impediments imposed by the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (*Supplementary Provisions*) Act No. 8 of 1961 may not allow the full implementation of the prescribed quality assurance procedure. As such the prescribed regulatory framework for quality assurance has never been implemented. Moreover, because of this legal impediment, many private schools offering only the local curriculum have emerged under the category of international schools, and they appear to operate only with the registration under Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (*No. 8 of 1938 & No. 7 of 1987*). Thus, in the absence of a steadfastly imposed regulatory framework, it appears that the international school sector has expanded in an unregulated manner over the past few decades.

416. Ministry of Education. (2004). *Ministry Circular Letter-Ins/1/2004 Quality Assurance of Schools/ Criteria for accreditation of international and English medium private schools.*

1.4. Current Statistics and Status

As of the information available at the MoE⁴¹⁷, there exists three categories of international schools: i) schools following an international curriculum (*Edexcel or Cambridge*); ii) schools offering both international and local curricula; and iii) schools offering local curriculum only. Almost 50% of the international schools are in the Western Province, and another 17.5% are in the Central Province. It is also noteworthy that one-fourth of the international schools are in the Colombo District.

According to the Ministry of Education data sources⁴¹⁷, as of 2018/2019, there were 395 International schools catering for well over 143,123 students, with a teacher population of 13,731. In terms of the number of students per school, out of the 386 schools for which data were available, there was one school with more than 5,000 students, three with 2,501-5,000, and another nineteen with 1,001-2,500 students. At the other end, there were 250 schools with students between 100-1,000. Further, 113 schools had less than 100 students. As the number of students increased, the student-teacher ratio has also increased.

Out of the 395 schools, 147 schools have no information about the curricula that they use. It is noteworthy that, out of the schools of which data was available, 143 schools were using the local curriculum, with another 59 local and international curricula. There were several other categories of schools; one school each using local curriculum and teaching religion of Islam, local curriculum and Arabic curriculum, local curriculum, and Christian education, and two schools using Arabic curriculum only.

1.5. Issues and Gaps

Reports and research in the area of international schools are very scanty. Nonetheless, there exist few research reports. The information emanating from these limited reports together with the widely held public opinions on this sector are discussed below.

Gunasekera (1995)⁴¹⁸ argued for international schools for Sri Lanka by listing seven advantages that the writer claims can be offered by a 'good' international school. The writer also defends the allegation that the international schools propagate an 'elitist subculture' by reminding that such allegations were also levelled against private schools in the past. Similar views were expressed by Jenkins, et al (2005)⁴¹⁹. They stated that the increasing presence of 'international schools' could re-create the duality of the education system that existed during the colonial period in Sri Lanka. Hence, they argued for careful monitoring of the spread of the 'international schools' in Sri Lanka to facilitate the positive effects, and to prevent the negative effects influencing the process of change. Adding to a similar positive point of view, Wettewa (2016)⁴²⁰ stated that while public schools are segregated along the linguistic and religious divides, the international schools due to their all-encompassing nature tend to play a more significant role in fostering pluralism. She also stated that "English proficiency and ICT skills allow for a competitive edge in neo-liberal times while grounding oneself in the local culture is of paramount importance for education to be truly international".

Contrary to the above, few others argued that international schools have created a negative influence in terms of the socio-economic context. Kularatne (1995)⁴²¹ argued that as the international schools cater only for a minute

417. Unpublished Data.

418. Gunasekera, G. (1995). *The case for international schools*. *Shiksha: Journal of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education*, 28-30.

419. Jenkins, K., Berman, J., & Jenkins, B. (2005). *A Proliferation of Self-described 'International' Schools in Sri Lanka: A Response to Globalisation. Paper presented at the Questioning Best Practice in Education: Benefits and Disadvantages, Debates and Dilemmas, 33rd Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society, Novotel Pacific Bay Resort Coffs Harbour.*

420. Wettewa, V. (2016). *Postcolonial emotionalism in shaping education: An analysis of international school choice in Sri Lanka*. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 15(1), 66-83.

421. Kularatne, W.G. (1995). *Economics of international schools*. *Shiksha: Journal of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education*.

affluent group of Sri Lankan society, and as such these schools could reinforce and aggravate the disparities in existence between the different socio-economic classes of the country. A similar negative viewpoint was expressed by Gunawardena (1995)⁴²² based on information gathered during visits to 3 international schools, claiming that those three schools, were not uniform in physical facilities, teaching-learning resources, human resources, and education provisions except the medium of instruction which was English. This report further claimed that when the number of foreign students in a school was large, the fees levied on students were comparatively high. Gamage (2011)⁴²³ argued that while the children who can access international education, are provided relief, for the majority of children who are deprived of quality education, international schools are not an affordable option.

Further, many educationists and administrators contended that as the international schools operate in the general education sector only with the registration of Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (No. 8 of 1938 & No. 7 of 1987), the requirements to be fulfilled by many such schools are limited to the conditions stipulated in the Companies Act or Business Names Registration Ordinance, even though the purpose of establishment of such schools is to provide quality early childhood, primary and secondary education for students in the country.

1.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on limited information, it could be stated that there exist 395 international schools in the country, catering for approximately 150,000 students, and this segment is now widely perceived as an integral part of the education system in Sri Lanka. However, all these schools function as business entities with registration with the Registrar of Companies under Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or with the Department of Business Registration under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (*No. 8 of 1938 & No. 7 of 1987*), and without any formal registration with or supervision of the Ministry of Education. These schools differ in types of offerings with respect to curricula, the number of students, physical and human resources, and the quality and the standards of education provisions. Nonetheless, it is very conceivable, that the international school sector should now be considered as a significant component of the national education system, and as such, they should be integrated into the mainstream education system by providing formal recognition, and by bringing them under the government regulation and quality assurance and accreditation mechanism. In view of that, the international schools must be guided to comply with the prescribed national education goals, national learning competency framework, and best practices and standards. Therefore, there is a timely need to develop and implement an appropriate regulatory and quality assurance and certification system to ensure these international schools adhere to government regulatory requirements and guidelines, adopt the prescribed national education frameworks, best practices, and standards, and subject themselves for periodic quality assurance and accreditation process.

2. POLICY PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

The Policy Proposals and Recommended Strategic Activities are formulated in accordance with the guidelines prescribed in Part III of NEPF (2020-2030). Backed by the comprehensive Status Review given in Section 1, the policy planning team has proceeded to identify international school education sector-specific 8 core areas and accompanying directive principles as elaborated in Part III of the NEPF (2020-2030). This approach is taken, as stated previously, to ensure the policy planning process gives comprehensive coverage across all core areas and elements while giving due consideration to issues and gaps highlighted in the Status Review that are lingering the progressive developments of the international school education sector.

422. Gunawardena, C. (1995). *Visits to three international schools*. *Shiksha: Journal of the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Education*, 23-28.

423. Gamage, S. (2011). *Internationalization (privatisation) of school education in Sri Lanka: An analysis of the differing discourses and the impact on society*. *Modern Sri Lanka Studies: A Journal of the Social Sciences*, 3(1), 25-412.

These 8 core areas include: i) Regulation, and Governance and Management; ii) Medium of Instruction and Curriculum; iii) Learners and Learning Environment; iv) Teaching-Learning and Assessment; v) Personality Development and Civic Consciousness; vi) Human Resources; vii) Physical Resources; and viii) Quality Assurance and Certification. Each core area contains policy context, directive principles, and proposed policy proposals and recommended strategic activities.

Core Area – IS 1: Regulation, and Governance and Management

Policy Context

At present all international schools are registered as investment projects under the Board of Investment and /or then incorporated under the Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (No. 8 of 1938 & No. 7 of 1987). And these schools are not registered with the Ministry of Education, and hence are not monitored by any authorized agency. As such the requirements to be fulfilled by many such schools are limited to the conditions stipulated in the Companies Act or Business Names Registration Ordinance, even though the purpose of the establishment of such schools is to provide early childhood, primary and secondary education for students in the country.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State recognizes international schools as a part of the national school system.
- DP 2: The State assumes the responsibility of laying down the required legislations and regulations pertaining to registration and monitoring and certification of international schools.
- DP 3: All international schools must provide access to students from all ethnic and religious denominations.
- DP 4: All international schools must teach national languages and religions covering Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.
- DP 5: The State would not allow any schools to be established in line with religious denominations.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 1.1: All international schools are considered as an integral part of the national education system and shall come under the government of regulation and monitoring, and quality control

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Until the required amendments are enacted to the existing Acts relating to education or enactment of a new Education Act, the Ministry of Education with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers shall take steps to establish a Specified Authority for International School Education (SAISE) for the regulation and overseeing the matters related to of international school education sector.

- The Specified Authority for International School Education shall be guided by an Advisory Committee (*such as Advisory Committee for International School Education-ACISE*), chaired by the Secretary of Ministry of Education, and consisting of appointed members by the Minister of Education, including the representatives from international schools, Board of Investment, and Chamber of Commerce (*International Schools*).
- The Specified Authority for International School Education shall formulate and issue regulations and guidelines pertaining to registration and management of international schools, specifying the following:
 - All international schools shall comply with government prescribed national education policy, regulations, and guidelines.
 - All international schools shall comply with governance and management guidelines prescribed by the Specified Authority.
 - All international schools must be committed to managing the enterprises, not solely as profit-generating entities.
 - All international schools shall provide access to students from all ethnic and religious denominations.
 - All international schools shall teach national languages (*Sinhala and Tamil*) and religions covering Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and any other religions as appropriate.
 - No international school shall operate only on a particular religious or ethnic line.
 - All international schools must get parents involved in school affairs and activities.

Core Area – IS 2: Medium of Instruction and Curriculum

Policy Context

In the absence of any requirement to come under regulation and supervision of any local regulatory agency, the international schools appear to follow their own procedures. Almost all schools adopt English as the medium of instruction and cater mainly to local students, and many do not appear to recognize the value of teaching national languages (*Sinhala and Tamil*), religion, culture, and values and traditions.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: The State allows English as the medium of instruction in international schools from Pre-school, and from Grade 1 to 13.
- DP 2: All international schools must offer opportunities for Sinhala-speaking children to learn Tamil and Tamil-speaking children learn Sinhala.
- DP 3: All students attending international schools must be guaranteed 13 years of school education (*including pre-schools*).
- DP 4: All international schools offering national curriculum must adopt the National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) prescribed by the National Education Commission (NEC) and National Curriculum and Teacher Guides and Textbooks prescribed by the National Institute of Education (NIE).

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 2.1:

The State requires all international schools while using English as the medium of instruction to teach the national languages

Recommended Strategic Activities

- Specified Authority for International School Education must prescribe regulations requiring the following:
 - Allow English to be the medium of instruction from Pre-school, and from Grade 1 to Grade 13.
 - Offer two national languages, Sinhala and Tamil with provisions be made available for Sinhala-speaking children to learn Tamil and Tamil-speaking children to learn Sinhala.

Policy-IS 2.2:

The State requires all international schools to comply with the national policy of 13-year guaranteed education and the specified curriculum requirements

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Specified Authority for International School Education shall take steps to prescribe regulations requiring the following:
 - All international schools must guarantee 13 years of school education for those enrolled and make it compulsory for those schools that do not offer upper senior secondary/collegiate level education to have an agreement with those schools which offer the collegiate level of education to accommodate the transfers.
 - All international schools offering the national curriculum must adopt the NEC prescribed National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF) and NIE prescribed national curriculum.
 - All international schools must ensure that the curricula offered, whether local or foreign, are aimed to promote the acquisition of cognitive and psychosocial skills while imparting knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, patriotism, ethnic cohesion, social harmony, and unity in diversity.
 - All international schools which are adopting currently 12 years of education would be granted a grace period for transition to 13 years of education.

Core Area – IS 3: Learners and Learning Environment

Policy Context

The importance of readiness of learners for academic pursuits and provision of a conducive learning environment – in terms of space, safety, cleanliness, guidance, and resources to explore and acquire knowledge and skills - is well recognized. It is a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information resources in their guided pursuit of learning goals and problem-solving activities.

Though many international schools appear to comply with all of the above conditions in an adequate manner, some schools appear to lag behind in the provision of a conducive environment and optimizing learners' welfare and wellbeing.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Learners must be healthy, well prepared mentally, and motivated to seek education to reach the full potential to make him/her productively employable in the 'world of work'.
- DP 2: The learning environment must be well resourced, clean and well kept, safe, protective, and gender-sensitive.
- DP 3: Learners must be guided throughout the learning process.
- DP 4: Flexible education must be provided for learners to choose their learning pathways/streams of education, and thereby customize their career paths in life according to their talents and interests.
- DP 5: All international schools must forge a multi-partite alliance among students, teachers, parents, and alumni and reach out to the community around the schools to develop mutually beneficial interactions and promote wider community acceptance.
- DP 6: International schools must function as an integral component of the general education system in all affairs – national examinations, sports, and other regional and national competitions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 3.1:

All international schools shall ensure learners are healthy, well prepared mentally, and motivated to seek education to reach the full potential to make them the wholesome and productive persons

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All international schools shall take steps to offer counselling programmes on child health and nutrition in liaison with the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) of the area and educate parents as well as students on best practices on personal hygiene, cleanliness, etiquette, and nutrition.
- All international schools shall take steps to establish and operate academic counselling and career guidance and counselling services; the academic counselling service must guide and assist students to overcome any learning difficulties that they may encounter, and career guidance and counselling services must guide the students on the options they have as regards streams of upper secondary education and post-secondary education and career opportunities.

Policy-IS 3.2:

All international schools must provide a learning environment with adequate and well-managed learning resources and common amenities, and study and recreational areas

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Specified Authority for International School Education shall prescribe norms and standards for learning resources, and common amenities and conduct regular monitoring of international schools to ensure compliance with the prescribed standards.
- All international schools shall comply with prescribed standards and guidelines for educational facilities as specified by the Specified Authority with respect to – place, space, resources, and maintenance.
- All international schools shall establish and maintain in-house facility maintenance and safety units and services.

Policy-IS 3.3:

All international schools must promote education through a multi-partite alliance among students, teachers, parents, and alumni, and move towards becoming a part of the national school system with the concurrent promotion of links with the community

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All international schools shall establish an institutional mechanism to promote the multi-partite alliance of students, teachers, parents, and alumni in school affairs.
- All international schools shall take steps to establish formal links with the Provincial, Zonal, and Divisional Education entities to submit their students for inter-school events and competitions, including regional and national events and competitions.
- All international schools shall take steps to devise mechanisms to reach out to the community around the schools to develop mutually beneficial interactions and promote wider community acceptance.

Core Area – IS 4: Teaching-Learning and Assessment**Policy Context**

Teaching-learning and assessment are key to learning, and it must be done in the most optimal manner adopting modern educational technologies. The teaching and learning methods have been changed drastically with the constant modernization and adoption of technology-enhanced education. As such international schools must be savvy of all modern educational technologies including the adoption of technology-enhanced education. Moreover, the teachers of international schools must be kept abreast with modern teaching-learning and assessment tools and procedures.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All teaching-learning and assessment must be conducted by adequately qualified and trained teachers.
- DP 2: The teaching-learning process must emphasize conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning for examinations.
- DP 3: The teaching-learning process must embrace as much as possible learner-centered and activity-based teaching-learning methods to promote experiential/authentic learning that enables the learner to construct her/his knowledge and skills through active participation in the teaching-learning process.
- DP 4: Evaluation and certification of students' achievement should be based on both formative and summative assessments that are designed to ensure validity and reliability.
- DP 5: The teaching-learning and assessment process should conform to best practices and quality standards prescribed by the Specified Authority and the Quality Assurance Agency.
- DP 6: All international schools must offer the opportunity for those students preparing for the local syllabus to appear for G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations.
- DP 7: Children and youth should be educated to keep themselves safe from internet threats.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 4.1:

All international schools must ensure teaching-learning and assessment are conducted by qualified and trained teachers abreast with modern educational technologies

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Specified Authority for International Education shall prescribe the minimum qualifications for the teaching staff for different school grades of teaching and the requirements of post-recruitment/in-service training.
- All international schools shall comply with the guidelines prescribed by the Specified Authority in teacher recruitment and in-service training requirements.
- All international schools shall promote the adoption of the blended mode of teaching-learning approach with the extensive use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-based applications and tools along with the provision of adequate opportunity for students to engage in hands-on learning and open-ended exploration using ICT applications while guiding them to keep themselves safe from internet threats.
- All international schools shall adopt both formative and summative assessments to assess student performance.
- All international schools that offer local curriculum shall prepare students adequately for G.C.E. (O/L) and G.C.E. (A/L) examinations.

Core Area – IS 5: Personality Development and Civic Consciousness

Policy Context

Personality encapsulates the uniqueness in a person or an individual that separates him/her from others, and personality development is a process through which one could improve positive or progressive traits of his/her disposition. It is the general belief that these aspects of students are not adequately addressed by the present education system, which solely addresses the development of cognitive skills while giving lesser importance to the personality development of students. Very rarely the students are groomed for positive personality traits, except what they acquire from parents, peers, and Sunday schools. Further, the existing general education system and examination process appear to promote rote learning, and in addition, the school children are further being groomed by the prevailing 'tuition culture'. Such mechanical and superficial learning facilitated in a highly examination-oriented system fails to bring about a person with an integrated personality, who possesses critical thinking skills, social skills, and personal skills that are a must for a successful personal and work life.

Since the employers look for school-leavers with a wide array of positive personality traits and soft skills; positive outlook and initiative, communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving skills, ability to work independently, willingness to learn, ability to work under pressure, etc., the schools must take an extra effort in promoting personality development.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Education shall facilitate all-round personality development by promoting cognitive, physical, and psychosocial development of children from early childhood to the adult state while promoting behavioural, emotional, social, and spiritual maturity.
- DP 2: Education shall impart psychosocial/life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and resilience.
- DP 3: Religious education should focus on making students aware of core aspects of all religions (*comparative religion*) in addition to teaching students' professed religion.
- DP 4: Education shall instil nationalism and patriotism to promote affection towards Sri Lankan history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 5.1:

General education irrespective of the type of provider must be aimed to train high-quality human resources imbued with emotional, social, and spiritual maturity, and values, morals, and ethics

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All international schools must ensure the following aspects:

- All levels of general education provided by the international schools shall include an age-appropriate personal development programme that runs as a strand from Grade 1 to 13, aimed at providing academic, intellectual, and practical training to imbue students with emotional, social, and spiritual maturity, and the students should be encouraged to maintain a portfolio of learning that showcases both the work within the said strand and the work within the core subject areas that promote emotional, social, and spiritual development and imbue children with values, morals, and ethics.
- All international schools shall promote complementary teaching-learning activities (*i.e. group assignments, project work, quiz competitions, creative work, etc.*) to help students to develop their problem-solving, reasoning, critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, and collaborative abilities.
- All international schools shall promote both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities such as the establishment of student societies/circles/clubs to promote students to engage in a multitude of activities that are focused on promoting positive attributes such as leadership, initiative, teamwork, sharing, etc.
- All international schools shall offer formal taught courses/modules and programmes focusing on making students aware of core aspects of all religions (comparative religion) in addition to teaching students' professed religion.
- All international schools shall take steps to offer programmes, activities, and events built into the school's annual calendar to instil nationalism and patriotism to promote affection towards Sri Lankan history, culture, and knowledge systems and traditions.

Policy-IS 5.2:

All subjects taught must include learning experiences to impart life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and resilience

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All international schools shall ensure that each level of general education adopts outcome-based, student-centered teaching-learning and assessment, and promotes the development of life skills such as communication, cooperation, teamwork, leadership, managerial and entrepreneurial skills, and resilience supplemented through co-curricular activities.
- All international schools shall provide career information and career counselling services, and organize and conduct programmes to promote the soft skills development of students through the Career Guidance and Counselling Units.

Core Area – IS 6: Human Resources

Policy Context

With the progressive growth and modernization of education, the conventional role of the teacher in school education has transformed significantly. The conventional mode of conveying knowledge, developing skills, and cultivating

aptitudes have become outdated. With the application of child psychology, educationists began to recognize the centrality of the child in the educational process. Research has shown that children learn by using all sensory organs and student-centered learning activities provide a better learning opportunity. Today, child-centered, and activity-based educational technology has become generally accepted as the way to promote learning.

Therefore, the modern-day teacher should understand and appreciate the uniqueness of each child and be able to enrich learning by facilitating engagement of pupils in learning, promoting cooperation among pupils, creating, and managing a rich learning environment, assessing learning achievements, diagnosing learning difficulties, and taking remedial measures and managing records and preparing reports regarding progressive development of pupils. In addition, the teacher has to undertake mentoring and counselling, resolve students' conflicts, make students engage in extra-curricular activities, and communicate with parents to maximize learning.

In addition, the teacher, while functioning as a professional who is thorough with the subjects, well versed in educational theory and practice, is required to abide by a code of ethics and conduct, and be an example to the students in particular and the society in general. As such, the teacher as a professional must be equipped with an institution-based higher education and training before being recruited into the teaching service. While in service, he/she has to be given opportunities for continuous professional development and career advancement.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: Teaching staff must have the minimum required qualifications and training, and experience.
- DP 2: Teacher recruitment, promotions, and deployment must be fair and transparent.
- DP 3: Teachers and teaching-support staff must be provided with adequate opportunities for in-service, continuing professional development training, and career progression.
- DP 4: Conducive working environment and service conditions must be provided for teachers, teaching support staff, and other service personnel.
- DP 5: Students must be provided with quality auxiliary services through student counsellors, career guidance personnel, sports instructors/coaches, and health care workers.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 6.1: Teaching staff must have the minimum required qualifications, training, and experience

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Specified Authority for International School Education shall prescribe regulations specifying the minimum professional/educational qualifications for teacher recruitment and promotions.
- All international schools shall adhere to and comply with minimum requirements prescribed by the Specified Authority in recruiting teaching staff.
- All international schools shall adopt fair and transparent teacher recruitment, promotions, and deployment system and procedures.

- All international schools shall offer all teaching staff adequate opportunities for continuing in-service, professional development, and career progression.
- All international schools shall provide a conducive working environment and service conditions, and promote professional standards of teachers, academic support, and service personnel to ensure the delivery of quality education and services.
- All international schools shall provide quality auxiliary services for students through student counsellors, sports instructors/coaches, career guidance personnel, and support staff.
- All international schools shall take steps to prescribe a Code of Ethics and Practices for all categories of staff and ensure strict adherence to the prescribed norms and practices.

Core Area - IS 7: Physical Resources

Policy Context

Any education institution shall put in place appropriate physical resources required to create a conducive learning environment and facilitate effective teaching-learning and assessment. Further, such a facility should be located in a safe area to ensure the physical and health safety of children. These facilities must provide ample space for children to interact, study, play and socialize with fellow students. The basic requirements include well-ventilated and spacious classrooms; well-equipped laboratories; workshops/activity rooms; libraries; computer facilities; etc., and common amenities that include, running water, sanitary facilities, and other requirements such as sick rooms and first aid kits, playgrounds, telephones and electricity, student hostels and staff living quarters. These facilities must also be well maintained.

Though many international schools appear to satisfy most of these requirements, there exists evidence about the gross inadequacy of physical resources in some international schools.

Directive Principles

- DP 1: All international schools must ensure the provision of minimum requirements of teaching-learning facilities – adequately resourced classrooms, laboratories, activity rooms, libraries, etc., as required.
- DP 2: All international schools must ensure the provision of required common amenities – running water, electricity, restrooms, sick-rooms and first aid kits, sports facilities, etc.
- DP 3: All international schools must ensure the provision of a technology-enhanced teaching-learning environment.
- DP 4: All international schools must ensure the provision of facilities where possible to accommodate students with special needs in an inclusive environment.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 7.1:

All educational institutions must provide adequate learning facilities and a conducive learning environment that facilitates the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development of children

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The Specified Authority for International School Education must prescribe standards and guidelines on physical resources, specifying the following:
 - Minimum requirements of teaching facilities – adequately resourced classrooms, adequately equipped laboratories, activity rooms, libraries, etc.,
 - Minimum requirement of common amenities – running water and electricity, restrooms, sick-rooms, first aid kits, sports, and recreational facilities, etc.
- All international schools must comply with the requirements of physical resources as specified by the Specified Authority.

Policy-IS 7.2:

All educational institutions must provide technology-enhanced teaching-learning and assessment to promote student-centered and blended teaching and learning coupled with facilities to cater to students with special needs

Recommended Strategic Activities

- All international schools, irrespective of geographical location and student numbers must be provided with ICT facilities with adequate connectivity manned by competent personnel to facilitate the use of technology-aided teaching, learning, and assessment.
- All international schools, irrespective of geographical location and student numbers which accommodate students with special needs must be equipped with the required infrastructure and teaching facilities required to cater to such students. If it is not possible, such students should be channelled to an institution where such facilities are available.

Core Area - IS 8: Quality Assurance and Certification

Policy Context

Quality is a concept that has made inroads into every sphere of life including education. The term is defined in two perspectives; customers' perspective and specification-based perspective. In education, the term quality has been attributed multiple meanings such as 'exceptional' or "excellent", "fitness for purpose" and "enhancement" or "improvement", reflecting different ideological, social, and political values of diverse stakeholder groups.

Nevertheless, it is universally accepted that a formalized quality assurance system for any level or type of education

is desirable to ensure the quality and relevance of education provided by any institution. In addition to giving confidence to the public about the quality and standards of the education institution and its offerings.

Though some international schools may be subjected to quality audits by their international partner institutions/agencies, many international schools at present do not have a formalized quality enhancement and assurance system, driven by an international or local agency. As such the quality of education offered by such institutions is not assured, and the public does not have a positive perception of the quality and standards of education provided by such international schools.

Directive Principles

DP 1: All international schools must adopt nationally prescribed best practices and quality standards and guidelines in the provision of education.

DP 2: All international schools must seek certification/accreditation from a State designated Standards and Certifying /Accreditation Agency.

Policies and Strategies

Policy-IS 8.1:

All international schools are required to abide by the nationally prescribed regulations, standards and guidelines and shall be subjected to review by the national quality assurance and accreditation system

Recommended Strategic Activities

- The NEC as mandated by its Act and in liaison with the Specified Authority for International School Education shall formulate and implement a quality assurance and accreditation system for all international schools with well-prescribed quality criteria and elements, best practices, and standards, coupled with an objective assessment system.
- All international schools shall foster the concept of quality and make efforts to internalize quality culture within the institution by internalizing the NEC prescribed best practices and standards.
- Specified Authority for International School Education shall make it mandatory for all international schools to seek certification/accreditation from the Quality Assurance Council of the NEC.

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**IV කොටස – V වැනි වෙළුම : පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය
පිරිවෙන අධ්‍යාපනය පිළිබඳ විශේෂඥ කමිටුව**

- අතිපුජ්‍ය ගංකුනේ අස්සප්පි මහානායක ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- අතිපුජ්‍ය ත්‍රිකුණාමලේ ආනන්ද මහනායක ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- පුජ්‍ය බලංගොඩ සෝභිත නායක ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- පුජ්‍ය විශ්‍රාමික මහාචාර්ය නවගමුවේ ඊවන ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- පුජ්‍ය වලස්වැවේ ආචාර්ය නායක ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- පුජ්‍ය මහාචාර්ය කොන්දසේනන්ද ආනන්ද නායක ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
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- පුජ්‍ය වටිනාපහ සෝමානන්ද ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
- පුජ්‍ය මහාචාර්ය මැදගොඩ අහයතිස්ස ස්වාමීන්ද්‍රයන් වහන්සේ
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- මහාචාර්ය අසංග තිලකරත්න මහතා
- කේ. ඒ. තිලකරත්න මහතා (කමිටු සම්බන්ධීකාරක සහ කෙටුම්පත සංස්කාරක)

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