

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION



NATIONAL REPORT



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

SRI LANKA

August 2004

1. The Education System at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century-An Overview

The Sri Lankan education system has made significant advances after the control of the system was devolved to the elected representatives of the people during the mid-twentieth century. The introduction of free education from the kindergarten to the university, the expansion of the school system to cope with the rising demand for education, curricular changes and infrastructure developments with state funding enabled the system to make wide strides thereby ensuring universal access to education. This trend was continued with much vigour during the post-independent period. The education reform process initiated with the implementation of the Special Committee Report in 1943 has been fortified with the subsequent reforms of 1960, 1971, 1981 and finally with the comprehensive package of reforms introduced in 1997.

1.1 Major Reforms and innovations introduced in the education system at the beginning of the Twenty first century

The reforms in general education formulated on the recommendations of the National Education Commission and then reviewed by a Task Force on Education appointed by the President were published in 1997. Reforms relating to primary education were pre-tested as a pilot programme in one of the districts in the country in 1998 and extended to the other districts in 1999.

Secondary level reforms were introduced in 1999 at grade six levels and at senior secondary level also from 1999. This phase of curricular reforms were concluded by 2003.

The main objectives of the reforms were,

- (i) Extending educational opportunity
- (ii) Improvement in quality of education.

The successes achieved under these reforms are reviewed in the subsequent paragraphs.

(a) The legal framework of education.

The constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in its Chapter on, 'Principles of State Policy' lays down that,

'The state is pledged to establish in Sri Lanka a democratic Socialist Society, the objective of which include the complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels'

Sri Lanka is also a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ratified the convention on the Rights of the Child that have recognized the Right to Education as a basic human right.

The existing legislative framework comprises the Education Ordinance of 1939, the subsequent amendments to that ordinance and a number of acts enacted to set up various supportive bodies.

Another important constitutional amendment that led to far reaching effects on the management of the education system has been the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which created the Provincial Council System. Under this piece of legislation most of the functions performed by the Central Government have been devolved to the Provincial Authorities.

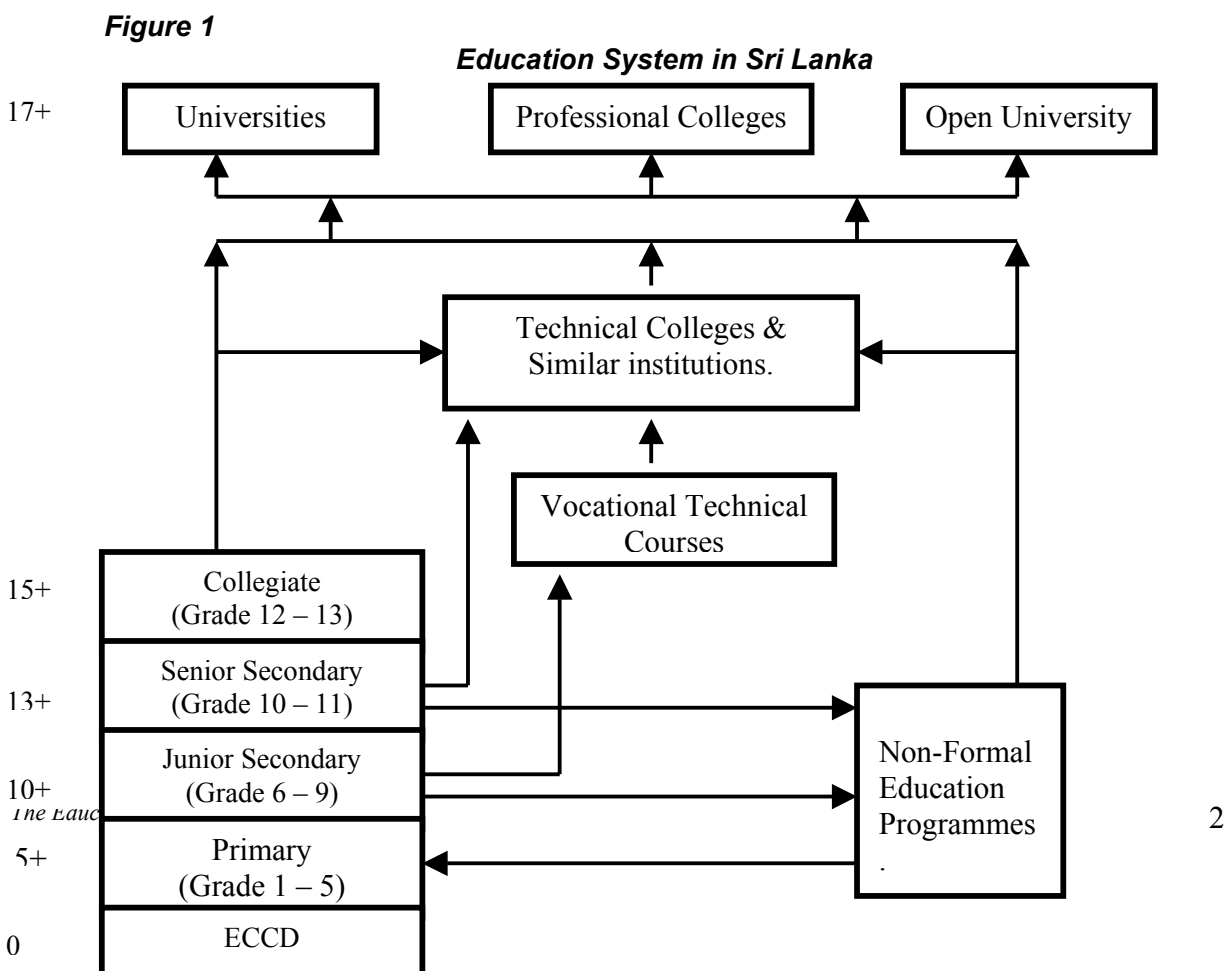
The Compulsory Education Regulation enacted in 1997 under the education reforms is yet another piece of legislation, which filled a gap, that existed for over half a century. Under this legislation enrolment and attendance of children between the ages of five to fourteen years was made compulsory and attendance committees were established at school level to monitor on the attendance of pupils.

(b) The Organization, Structure and Management of the Education System

As mentioned earlier education is a shared function between the centre and the provinces. The Central Ministry is responsible for National Policy, National Plans, and the management of National Schools, which are 323 in number, Teacher Education, higher education, and the maintenance of standards in all schools including quality assurance.

The Provincial Councils are responsible for the management of all provincial schools and pre-schools. The Provincial Councils have the authority to legislate by statute on the subjects that have been allotted to the provinces. Funds to the provinces come mainly through government grants given through the Finance Commission. They also can raise revenue from local sources. The province could recruit teachers subject to rules laid down by the Central Ministry.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible both for general education and higher education. The Minister of Education is vested with the executive authority for the implementation of policy on education and is accountable to the government. At present the subject of education is under the President of the country.



The Secretary to the ministry is the Chief Executive Officer and is accountable to the Minister and the President for the implementation of policy. There are Additional Secretaries, Deputy Directors General and Directors as Heads of Departments responsible for the key divisions in the ministry.

There are also other national level institutions functioning under the Ministry, which are responsible for specific functions. These are

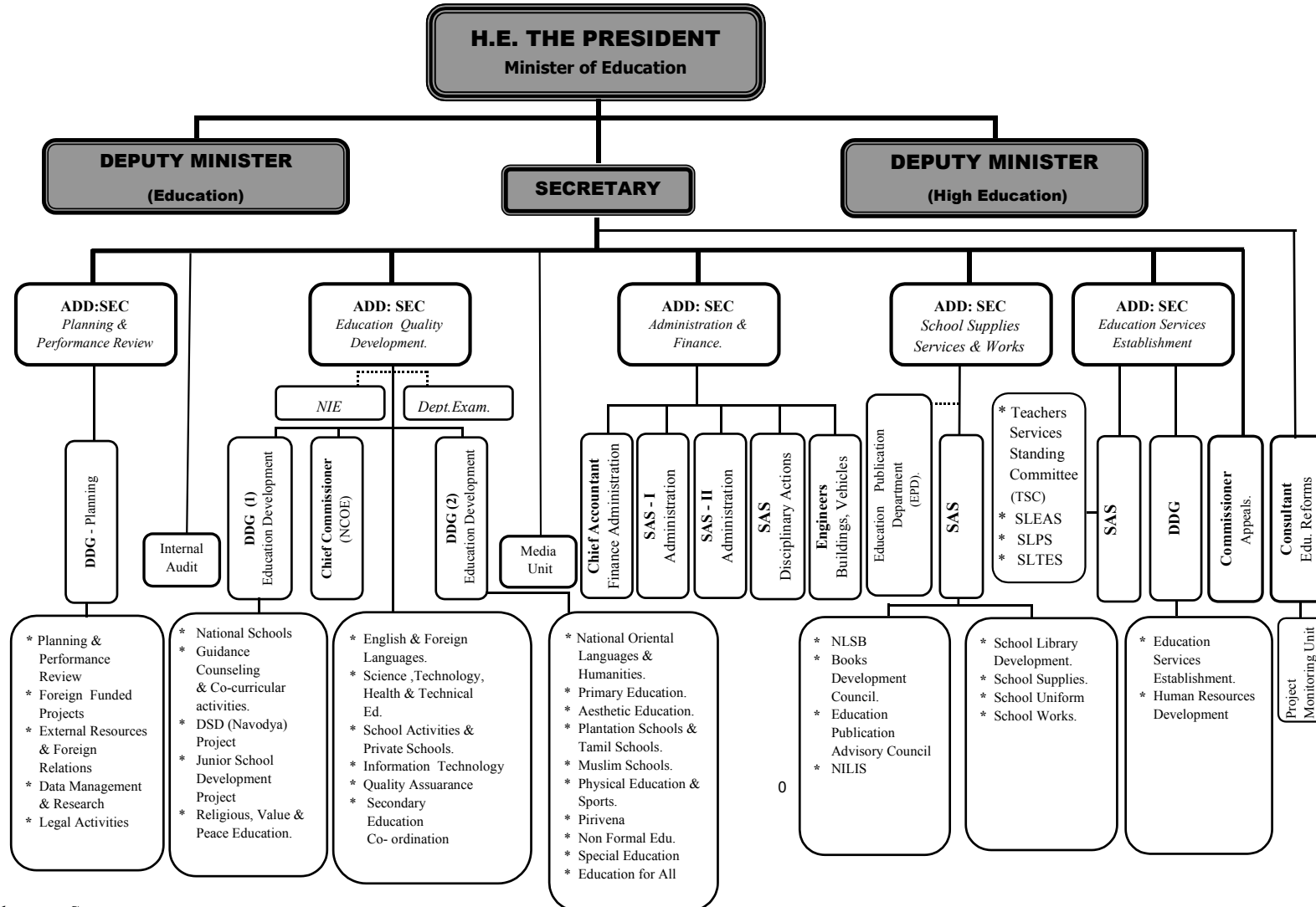
- The Department of Examinations and National Testing Service responsible for conduct of national examinations.
- The Department of Educational Publications responsible for the publication and distribution of textbooks.
- The National Institute of Education (NIE) responsible for the Development of national curricula, training of teachers and research in education.
- The National Library Services Board charged with the responsibility of library development in the country.

Figure 2.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

GENERAL EDUCATION SECTOR

Effective from 19th April 2004



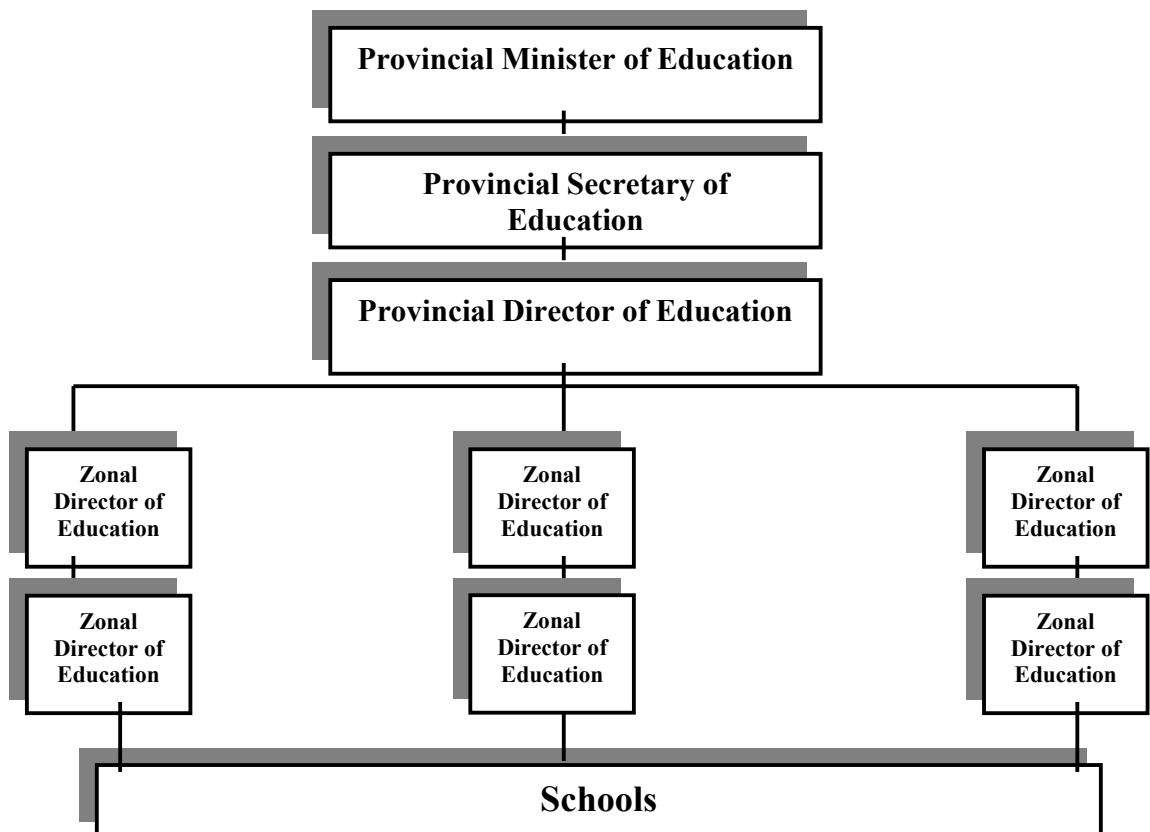
There are eight Provincial Councils to which power and authority has been devolved under the constitution. The Provincial Ministry of Education in each province is responsible for the management of schools in the province. Actual work is carried out by the Provincial Department of Education, which is the technical arm of the Provincial Education Ministry.

An elected representative to the Provincial Council is appointed as the Minister in charge of education. The chief executive officer of the Provincial Ministry of Education is the Provincial Secretary of Education. The Provincial Education Department is under a Provincial Director of Education.

A Province is divided into a number of Educational Zones depending on the extent of area and the number of schools in each province. The zone is under a Zonal Director of Education, which is really the office that is closest to the school. Management functions relating to implementation of policy is carried out at this level. A zone also has a number of divisions looked after by a divisional officer. The Provincial Organizational Structure is given in figure 3.

Figure 3.

The Provincial Organizational Structure



The total number of schools managed by the government in 2003 is 9790 out of which 323 are National Schools under the Central Ministry and 9467 schools are managed by the provinces. The schools are classified according to the type as follows.

Type 1AB - Schools with classes up to GCE (A/L) in all streams including Science

- Type 1C - Schools with classes up to GCE (A/L) in Arts and Commerce streams
 Type 2 - Schools with classes from Grade 1 to Grade 11, ie. GCE (O/L).
 Type 3 - Primary Schools Grades 1 to 5

Table 1

Schools Teachers and Pupils in Sri Lanka – 2003.

Province	No. of Schools					No. of Teachers	No. of Pupils
	1AB	1C	II	III	Total		
Western	148	251	688	293	1380	37063	863207
Central	73	287	527	592	1479	26735	530136
Southern	90	232	558	254	1134	25990	519915
North Eastern	117	258	628	824	1827	25408	623769
North Western	67	253	646	270	1236	24062	470304
North Central	28	133	352	266	1236	12489	262053
Uva	38	150	373	270	831	14335	290442
Sabaragamuwa	45	189	495	395	1124	18954	381859
Total	606	1,753	4,267	3,164	10,247	185,036	3,941,685

Source : School Census – 2003.
 Ministry of Education.

Education in Sri Lanka is predominantly a State run venture. The private sector in general education is very small. There are only 78 private schools compared to 9790 schools in the government sector. A new set of Private schools that have come up which are designated as International Schools impart education in the English Medium.

(C) Curricular Policies, educational content, teaching and learning strategies

Schools are expected to follow the National Curriculum prepared by the National Institute of Education. However there is adequate provision for local variations, particularly in the lower grades as there are no constraints imposed by the demands of National level examinations.

According to accepted national policy the duration of the curriculum cycle is eight years. However minor changes are carried out if and when necessary. The span of general education comprising 13 years of schooling is divided into the following stages:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| i. Primary. | Grades 1-5 |
| ii. Junior Secondary | Grades 6-9 |
| iii. Senior Secondary | GCE (O/L) 10-11
GCE (A/L) 12-13 |

At primary level the key subjects are taught separately while other areas are integrated around Environmental Studies. Accordingly the subjects in the Primary curriculum are:

- Mother Tongue
- Mathematics
- Religion
- Environment related activities

In addition Activity-Based Oral English is promoted through conversational / situational approaches by the class teacher.

The span of five years in the primary stage is further divided in to three key stages.

grades 1 & 2	-	key stage one
grades 3 & 4	-	key stage two
grades 5	-	key stage three

The competencies that each pupil should attain at the end of each key stage have been identified and grouped into two categories the essential learning competencies and desirable learning competencies. At key stage one the mode of learning is primarily play and activities. In key stage two there is a mix of play, activities and deskwork. In key stage three there is greater emphasis on deskwork.

At the Junior Secondary level the curriculum is organized on a subject basis, but grade six provides for the transition from primary to secondary.

The common curriculum at the junior secondary stage comprises

- First Language (Mother Tongue)
- Second Language (English)
- Second National Language
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies & History
- Religion
- Aesthetic Studies
- Health & Physical Education
- Practical & Technical Skills
- Life Competencies

At this level too, learning through simple projects and practical work is emphasized. Another feature is the introduction of School Based Assessment (SBA).

At Senior Secondary level in GCE (O/L) grades the common curriculum is followed with variations in certain subject areas such as Aesthetics and Technical Subjects. The students offer 8 to 10 subjects at the GCE (O/L) examination.

At GCE (A/L) stage the students are generally streamed according to their wishes and aptitude based on performance at GCE (O/L) examination. There are three main streams, Science, Commerce and Arts. A student takes three subjects from a list of subjects available under each stream. In addition they are expected to sit a Common General Paper and a paper in General English. Students also complete two projects, one, an individual project and the other a group project.

(C) Objectives and principal characteristics of current and forth coming reforms.

Although quantitative wise Sri Lanka has many creditable achievements still there is a percentage of children from marginalized groups who are out of the school system. It is necessary that all children in the age group 5 – 14 are enrolled in schools. Also it is contemplated to increase the upper limit of schooling to 16 years. In the area of equity, too,

education has been a key agent of social change. Education has been the principal ladder for upward mobility. In future these objectives would be pursued with much vigour.

Promotion of quality will be the priority area.

1.2 Major Achievements

(a) Access to education

The enlightened social development policies followed by Sri Lanka since independence and the establishment of a wide network of schools spread throughout the country has enabled very high levels of participation in education compared to other developing countries. At present 98% of children in the age cohort of five years of age enter the grade one classes. Overall participation in the primary stage is 96%. However although the span of compulsory education according to law is 14 years the drop out rates from grade six onwards are higher than in the primary stage. It has been noted that in an age cohort 17% drop out when it reaches grade 9 ie 14th year. This works out approximately to 10% of the children in the age group 5-14 years who are not attending schools.

The reasons for the non-participation of this group of children are complex and broadly described as socio-economic, the principal factor being poverty. There are also additional factors such as family break ups, migration and mothers leaving for foreign countries as housemaids. Also the long-standing conflict in the Northern parts of the country has disrupted families and about 50,000 children are estimated to be in refugee camps. The rebel group too continues to recruit children in this age groups as combatants. Child labour is another problem.

(b) Equity in Education

The government taking over the responsibility of education has contributed in a large measure in enhancing equity in education. Free Education is given in all government and government assisted schools and also up to the first-degree levels in universities, free textbooks, free schools uniforms, subsidized transport are provided and children in grade one classes where malnutrition has been prevalent are provided with a nutritious meal. The deserving students from low-income families are also provided with bursaries to meet their other expenses, which are continued up to university level. These are in addition to a widespread social safety net including free health services, poor relief and many other subsidies.

The national curriculum is delivered in all schools and the teachers appointed by the government who have had a professional training are deployed in all schools. There is a conscious policy in favour of disadvantaged areas and schools, which is implemented through initiatives such as the "Navodya" School Project, the primary school development project and the plantation sector school development project.

(C) The Quality of Education.

Educational reforms in Sri Lanka during the last three decades has mainly been concerned with the improvement in the quality of education, especially, making the curriculum more

relevant to the needs of the country. The need for such a change has been intensified due to the large number of educated youth who are looking for white-collar employment. In the seventies of the last century this situation has been described as the " mismatch between education and employment". Many attempts were made to stream children at the end of primary or basic education stage to academic, technical and vocational streams. However these proposals were not acceptable to a public who had seen in the past that academic success had led to social mobility. Now efforts are being made to provide a practical element to general education through the development of competencies.

The economic structure of the country is also changing with the adoption of liberalized economic policies. A country that was depending primarily on agriculture is marching towards industrialization and the growth of service sectors. In this context what is necessary is a work force who are trainable and who could adapt to changes in a constantly changing environment.

In this scenario current education reforms are aiming at developing general skills required by the employees in the private sector. The following paragraph quoted from document on "Linkages between Education and Employment" aptly summarizes the current needs.

'An inquiring mind ability for analysis and reasoning the application of knowledge to practical problems and a problem solving approach, knowledge and interest in contemporary social and economic developments in the country, capacity for leadership and team work, a work ethos with values of productivity and discipline imparted through appropriate learning experiences in suitable technical / vocational subjects, and most important good communication skills, both oral as well as written, even in the mother tongue , not to mention English'.

(Study of Education – Employment Linkages, Marga Institute, September 1992)

Such a transformation can be brought about by changing the methodology of teaching and learning rather than through the content of education. Of course that does not discount the importance of Science & Technology in the modern context. But use of activity based learning techniques such as project work, assignments, discovery methods etc. will sharpen the general skills of students.

The current reforms as well as future innovations will be directed with this objective in view.

(d) Content of Education.

In keeping with the broad objective of education being the total development of personality of the child the curriculum comprises a broad area to provide a good general education, greater attention would be paid to the imparting of Scientific, Mathematical and Technological knowledge, development of communication languages skills in the national languages as well as the international language ie. English, and promotion of values through the humanities and the co-curriculum. Considering the need for peace and social harmony in the backdrop of the ongoing ethnic conflict concepts on democracy and peaceful resolution of conflicts will be integrated into all subjects in the curriculum. Use of Information Technology as a tool for improving the quality of education will receive an important place in the curriculum.

- (e) Policy dialogue, partnerships and participation by Civil Society in the process of Educational Change.

National Policy on Education is formulated on a consideration of the recommendations made by the National Education Commission. The Commission makes its recommendations after due consideration of opinions of the general public, Civil Society and political parties obtained through public consultations. Education is a part of the national debate in the Parliament, the national media, and professional and non-governmental organizations. Thus there is a wide discussion on issues before a certain policy initiative is accepted for implementation.

1.3 The main problems and Challenges facing the education system at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century

As a result of the social development policies adopted by the government Sri Lanka has achieved higher levels in quality of life, which has contributed to a decline in fertility rates. This is mainly due to the education of woman, which has delayed marriages and limited the number of children in a family. This is an advantage for policy makers in education, as the country need not invest heavily in basic infrastructure and funding could be diverted for quality improvement programmes.

As stated earlier although access in the primary stage is creditable, at the secondary stage participation rates have to be improved. Getting the last 10% of children in the compulsory span of schooling to the school system is a challenging task. Positive intervention programmes need to be adopted to achieve the goal of universal basic education.

Secondly, the learning achievement levels of pupils need further improvement. Studies that have been carried out as well as analysis of examination results show that the standards in learning achievement are inadequate. A strategy for enhancing learning achievement needs better teachers motivating the marginalized groups of children, better-equipped classrooms using modern technology, supportive supervision programmes and greater rapport with the community and the parents.

Thirdly equally important as learning achievement is the need to develop general competencies, which would stand in good stead when these children go out to the wider society to be productive citizens. These are the qualities that the private sector employers expect today. Similarly inculcation of values and the concept of learning to live together are of high priority in the context of the prevailing violence in society.

The importance of acquiring competency in a foreign language, namely English in the context of Sri Lanka has been recognized in society. It together with Information Technology will enhance ones' chances of obtaining employment and it is essential for moving to the higher echelons in the government sector or the private sector.

Today with the development of Information Technology enormous opportunities are available to make use of this technology for the improvement of the quality of education. This requires greater resources and during the last two decades as the country had to spend on defense to contain Northern conflict the resource allocation for education has been dwindling. Although during the last two years a peace agreement has been in force,

the government still has to maintain the defence structure and also invest considerably on the reconstruction of war-damaged areas. The need for further funding is a major constraint for provision of quality inputs.

2. Quality Education for all Young People: Challenges, trends and priorities

2.1 Education and Gender Equality

Sri Lanka is strongly committed to the policy of gender equality in education as enshrined in Article 27 of its constitution. Moreover, following international conventions that seek to guarantee gender equality in education have been ratified by Sri Lanka.

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW – 1979).
- Convention on the Rights of the child (CRC – 1989).

Education sector in Sri Lanka is mindful of the Millennium Development Goals in relation to the elimination of gender disparity in education. As a conscientious effort to promote gender equality in education, the Ministry of Education has trained the national and sub national level education planners in developing gender responsive Education For All plans. A gender sensitive Five Year Plan for Primary Education (2000 – 2004) and a gender responsive medium term secondary education plan (2004 – 2008) have been formulated. The process is underway to produce a medium term Primary Education Plan for the period 2005 – 2008 with focus on gender equality social inclusion.

Major Concerns

(a). Equality in Access

As a result of the policy of providing free education from grade one to the university level, Sri Lanka has achieved impressive improvement in gender equality in access to general education. Table 1 illustrates the progress achieved in improving access in a gender responsive manner.

Table 2

Education Participation Rate by gender in 1963, 1981 and 1991

Age Group	1963		1981		1991*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
5 – 14	76.7	72.0	83.7	83.6	88.3	87.4
15 – 19	43.3	36.6	41.2	42.7	37.5	42.6

* Excluding the North & East of Province.

Source - 1963 - *Census of Ceylon, Department of Census and Statistics.*
 1981 - *Census Report, Department of Census and Statistics.*
 1991 - *School Census – Ministry of Education.*

Participation rate in the primary and Junior Secondary grades (5-14 age group) indicates a steady increase for both males and females while a declining trend for males is depicted in the Senior Secondary grades (15-19 age group).

It is worth noting that gender parity has almost been achieved in student enrolment in primary education, junior Secondary education and G.C.E. (O/L) grades of the senior secondary education, as illustrated in Table 2.

However, the percentage of boys in G.C.E. (A/L) grades in 2003 is 43.6 % as against the percentage of 56.4 % for girls. Gender equality is not evident in G.C.E. (A/L) stage.

Though the overall percentage of boys in GCE (A/L) is lower than that of girls, the percentage of boys in science and commerce streams are higher as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Percentage of Males and Females of total enrolment in general education by grade span – 2002 & 2003

Grade Span	2002		2003	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1 – 5	51.1	48.9	50.9	49.1
6 – 9	50.7	49.3	50.7	49.3
10 – 11	49.4	50.6	49.4	50.6
12 - 13	43.6	56.4	43.3	56.7

Source - *School Census – 2002 & 2003, Ministry of Education*

Table 4

Percentage of Males and Females in GCE (A/L) by Stream - 2003

Stream	Male	Female
Science	52.1	47.9
Commerce	51.1	48.9
Arts	34.7	65.3
Total	43.6	56.4

Source: *School Census 2003, Ministry of Education*

Seventy nine percent of schools that provide science stream in GCE (A/L) is concentrated in 14 of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka. Girls in the deprived districts lack access to science education as most of them are reluctant to travel long distance to schools where science stream is available in GCE (A/L) classes. They tend to enroll in close by schools where only the arts stream is available. The policy of providing education with gender equality has not been fully translated into reality in terms of GCE advanced level.

Completion Rate

The overall completion rate for primary and secondary in 2001 is 97.6 and 83.0 respectively. When this rate is disaggregated by gender more boys than girls drop out before completing junior secondary that ends in grade nine. As stated in Table 5, a higher percentage of girls complete primary education and junior secondary education. Of the children enrolled in grade one, 98.3 % and 86 % girls complete primary and junior secondary respectively while the completion rate of boys for same is 96.9 % and 79.1 %.

Table 5

Completion Rate for Primary and Junior Secondary by gender - 2001

Stage	Male	Female	Overall
Primary	96.9	98.3	97.6
Secondary	79.1	86.3	83.0

Source: Planning Division, Ministry of Education, 2001

Table 6 reveals the inter district disparities in completion rates for primary and junior secondary. Of the 25 administrative districts in Sri Lanka primary completion rate of more than 95 % is observed for boys in 18 districts and for girls in 21 districts. This rate is 72.1 for girls in one district (Vavuniya) and for boys 82.1 and 80.8 in the two districts, Vavuniya and Mannar respectively.

With regard to completion rate in junior secondary, the highest completion rate of 96 is observed in the district of Galle. Another 13 districts have a completion rate between 85.1 and 95 for girls while only 3 districts have the same percentage for boys. Nine districts show a completion rate between 55 and 75 for boys while 4 districts are with the same rate for girls. The district of Vavuniya shows the lowest completion rate for boys (56.2) and girls (52.9)

The districts with lower completion rates are in the rural and plantation districts, which have been historically disadvantaged.

Table 6.

Completion Rate for Primary Education and Junior Secondary Education by district and gender – 2001

Completion Rate	Number of Districts			
	Primary		Junior Secondary	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
95.1 - 100	18	21	-	1
90.1 - 95	4	2	2	5
85.1 - 90	2	-	1	8
80.1 - 85	1	1	6	5
75.1 - 80	-	-	7	1

70.1 - 75	-	1 (Vavuniya)	4 (Mannar, Mullativu, Trinco, Polonnaruwa)	4 (Ampara, Trinco, Batticaloa, Puttalam)
68.1 - 70	-	-	2 (Ampara, Nuwara Eliya)	-
60.1 - 65	-	-	1 (Puttalam)	-
55.1 - 60	-	-	2 (Vavuniya, Batticaloa)	-
50.1 -55	-	-	-	1 (Vavuniya)

*Note: Names of the districts with lower completion rate are given
Source: School Census 2000 & 2001 /Ministry of Education*

Measures taken :

- Policy of providing a primary school within 2 km from the residence of any child and providing a school having classes up to G.C.E.(O/L) within 4 km from the residence of any child has been implemented with only a few exceptions.
- Provision of free text books from grade 1 to G.C.E.(O/L), free school uniform to all school children, subsidized transport to children and mid-day meals to children in schools in selected locations.
- Provision of 10,000 bursaries every year to talented children from low-income families to support their transition to secondary education.
- Enforcement of Compulsory Education Regulations for children aged 5 – 14 with effect from January 1998.
 - School Attendance Committees.
 - School Attendance Monitoring Committees.
- Establishment of literacy centers under non-formal setting.
- Capacity building of NIE with UNICEF assistance to examine the curriculum and textbooks from a gender perspective and providing support to develop more gender sensitized educational material.
- Safe drinking water and separate toilets for girls and boys are provided in schools.
- Girls and boys are encouraged to participate in extra curricular activities on an equal footing.
- Teachers are sensitized on gender issues during the pre-service and in-service training.

(b). Management of Education

- More than 70 % of the teachers are females. There is a need to achieve gender balance in the teacher service.
- There is no barrier for women to participate in professional development programmes.
- Salary and other benefits such as fellowships are provided without and discrimination based on gender.
- Proportion of women in managerial positions has improved in recent years.

2.2 Education and Social Inclusion

The Net Initial intake rate in grade one of the primary education stage is 96.7%. About 3.3% of children reading the official age of entry to grade one is excluded from formal education. The retention rate is 97.6% in primary education and 83.0% in junior secondary education, which terminate at grade 9. The lowest retention rate is in the Vavuniya District with 77.1% for primary and 54.5% for junior secondary.

Drop out rate beyond primary education is higher in rural districts, plantation districts and deprived pockets in urban areas.

It is estimated that 15% of school going age children are excluded from schooling.

The majority of children excluded from formal education belongs to the following categories.

- Children of poor families in rural, plantation areas and urban deprived pockets.
- Street children
- Orphans
- Disabled
- Children dwelling in coastal areas.
- Children in probation centres.

In addition to this scenario persistent for a long time, the ethnic conflict resulted in a war in the North & East province of Sri Lanka for the last two decades has rendered children in this province and in the border districts displaced and refugees.

Nearly one million people are internally displaced. It is estimated that one third of the IDPs are children. About 175,000 persons of IDPs are living in government welfare centres. At least 75% of these living in welfare centres are women and children.

A recent survey carried out by the North & East provincial Ministry of Education reports that nearly 94,000 school going aged children are out of school. About 50,000 of them are in the 5 - 14 age group.

Surveys have been carried out by the education authorities to identify the children falling into these vulnerable groups. Several NGO's and donor agencies have also carried out field surveys to identify the children who are excluded.

Major challenges

- Extreme poverty of parents of excluded children. Children are employed to supplement the family income. The opportunity cost for education is very high in these families.
- Illiteracy of parents who do not value education.
- Failure of the education system to provide social mobility in disadvantaged pockets.
- Dominance of anti social elements that offer more attraction to children and parents. Majority of schools in these vulnerable pockets is not attractive and the community does not perceive them to be of any use.
- Schools in the distant and disadvantaged areas are understaffed.
- School attendance committees and school attendance monitoring committees expected to be established under compulsory education regulation have not been established in these areas.
- Parents in these locations who could afford send their children to urban schools and these schools have become very small schools delivering a substandard education to the disadvantaged children. It is noteworthy that 28% of the schools in Sri Lanka has fewer than 100 students on roll in each school. Admission to grade one in these schools are on decline. As illustrated in Table 7, no child was admitted to grade 1 in 170 of this category of schools in 2001. This trend expanded to 183 schools in 2003. The number of schools that admitted only one student to grade one increased from 96 in 2001 to 131 in 2003.

Two hundred and thirteen schools admitted only two students in their grade one class in 2003 as against 148 such schools in 2001.

The 104 schools that did not admit any student to grade one in 2001 have classes only up to grade 5. They will not have a single student on roll in 2006 and will be closed down. The potential for dropout in the primary is also very high in the other 829 schools, which enrolled 5 or fewer students in grade one in 2003. No attempts have been made to carry out probing studies in the catchment areas of these schools that cater to the children of marginalized population.

Table 7

Admission to grade one – 2001 & 2003

Number of children admitted	2001		2003	
	Grade span of school		Grade span of school	
	1 - 11	1 – 5 or 8	1 - 11	1 – 5 or 8
0	66	104	75	108
1	18	78	32	99
2	37	111	60	153
3	43	104	75	133
4	75	153	100	181
5	76	174	105	155
6	85	138	121	170
7	109	156	149	171
8	109	176	127	155
9	112	127	155	112

Source: School census 2003

- Disparity in teacher deployment has led to a situation that the schools which cater to the vulnerable have a persistent acute shortage of teachers. As shown in Table 8 , 1501 schools in rural and plantation areas and 63 schools in deprived urban pockets had 4 teachers or less per school in 2003.

Table 8

Schools by availability of teachers – 2003

Availability of	Number of schools	Total
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teachers	Urban	Rural & plantation	
1	-	150	150
2	-	374	374
3	-	471	471
4	63	506	569

Source: School census - 2003

Issues and Problems

Upgrading of classrooms and provision of toilets and safe drinking water has not been adequately implemented.

- Teachers have not been appropriately trained to make them competent in adopting the curriculum to the local needs in order that learning by children in school is perceived to be relevant by the community.
- Teaching learning methods adopted in those schools are mostly traditional and out dated.
- Supervision and support from the education authorities is very minimal in some places.
- Lack of an adequate number of teachers with training to identify the needs of disabled children and teach them.
- Special measures to encourage and enable the disabled children to participate in activities outside the classrooms are not adopted.
- Reliable information is not available to ascertain the number of disabled children in the country. Though it is reported that there is a significant number of children with disability in the North & East province owing to the effects of war, these children have not been enrolled in schools.
- There is no systematic programme to identify disabled children and enrol them in schools.
- Research studies on special education have not been carried out to help design effective programme.

Special Measures taken

The Ministry of Education supports special schools that cater to the educational needs of severely handicapped children who cannot be admitted to normal schools. There are 34

registered special schools that receive government assistance. In addition there are some special schools run by NGOs.

Moreover, disabled children are provided with appropriate educational facilities in normal schools through integration and inclusion. Every effort is taken to keep a disabled child in the normal class in line with the principles of inclusive education as agreed upon at the Salamanca Conference in 1994. Disabled children who need special individualized care are admitted to special education units established in schools selected according to the needs. Special Education unit at the National Institute of Education prepares education materials for children with special education needs, and provide training for teachers. The Ministry of Education has a special unit to monitor and coordinate activities related to special education.

The non-formal education unit in the Ministry of Education is charged with the responsibility of identifying out of school children and providing them with alternate opportunities for education.

Literacy centers in disadvantaged pockets have been established to address the needs of children either not enrolled in any school or dropped out from school. A significant number of students are transferred from these centers to formal schools every year.

Community Learning centers has been established to service the education needs of children who drop out from schools and those who cannot be enrolled in formal schools. Special programmes for street children have been implemented in selected locations.

Moreover Compulsory Education Regulation in relation to children aged 5 to14 years has been in force since January 1998. School Attendance Committees at village level and School Attendance Monitoring Committees at administrative divisional level were expected to be established to ensure enrolment of all children reaching official entry age in schools. Project Assistants have been appointed at administrative divisional level to co ordinate the programmes for children not enrolled in schools. Children in conflict-affected areas are included in special programmes with the assistance of donor agencies to ensure the inclusion of displaced children, refugee children and orphans in formal education and alternate educational provisions. Child friendly School programme has been introduced in selected disadvantaged administrative divisions with UNICEF assistance to prevent exclusion of children from disadvantaged communities. In conflict-affected areas in the North and East province targeted programmes such as Catch Up Education for children who lost schooling as a result of internal displacement are conducted to provide second chance to such children. Nearly 30,000 children have benefited under this programme with UNICEF assistance while about 14,000 children benefited with assistance from Germany.

Psycho Social counseling programmes have been initiated in the schools in the North and East to support children affected by posttraumatic disorder.

2.3 Education and Competencies for life

The education history of Sri Lanka is replete with attempts made time and again at redefining the objective and functions of secondary education in order to transform the education system to be responsive to the emerging local scenario in the global context.

The National Education Commission when published the proposals for general education reform in 1997 took note of the ideas expressed by the Delores Commission of UNESCO and expressly stated that the proposed reforms are in conformity with these ideas. Currently, eleven years of education from grade one to GCE O/L is without any selection for specialized streams.

The National Education Commission has identified a set of general competencies that should be acquired by all children. The curriculum has been formulated to achieve these competencies. The methods of learning in the primary stage are activity based and in the secondary stage it is project based. However, a lot more has to be done to change the attitudes of teachers.

(a) Flexible Learning opportunities and life skills development

The junior secondary stage curriculum has introduced life competencies as a subject and practical work and work on small project as an important element. Activity rooms were proposed to be established in schools to enable students to learn by doing things by themselves, using simple tools and learning simple techniques. In the curriculum for secondary senior stage of GCE O/L, technical subject is included as a core subject to help students continue learning of life skills. Practical work has been made compulsory in the GCE A/L curriculum. It was proposed by the 1998 reform that links be developed between the school system and the vocational and technical training system to provide flexible learning opportunities to students. Career guidance and counseling has been introduced at this stage in order to provide advice to students to enable them to select avenues most suited to their capabilities. Community Learning Centers have been established under Non-formal sector to provide flexible learning opportunities and life skills development to children not being able to attend school.

The recent proposals by the National Education Commission includes changes in the secondary education curriculum in order to improve the life competencies of students.

The current Practical Technical Skills subject area in grades 6 to 9 will be re structured and renamed as Technical Skills which cover the areas namely Graphic Arts, Computer Literacy (IT), Elementary Technology, Agriculture and Food Preparation.

With regard to the Technical subjects in the secondary education curriculum for grades 10 & 11 (GCE O/L), the National Education Commission observed that majority of schools lacked equipment for the meaningful study of technical subjects and that two of the options are not relevant to the learning needs of students. The NEC has proposed the inclusion of 8 subjects as options of which a student can select one. The irrelevant options have been deleted and the current options in the subject named Technical Skills/ Design & Technology are: Information Technology, Agriculture, Food Technology & Home Economics, Business Studies, Crafts, Construction Trade, Motor Mechanism and Electrical Work. The study of these subjects offers diversification facilitating the entry of students to different vocational and technical training or to employment.

(b) Acquiring a common basis of human values

The schools are expected to play an active role in promoting moral, ethical and spiritual values. Value Education encompasses the moral and spiritual values, ideas and concepts derived from the religion followed by an individual that has a bearing on the commitment to personal and social behavior.

The totality of experience provided by the curriculum implemented in schools should promote the inculcation of values in students. This should not be viewed as a separate subject.

Issues

- 1) The popular view among teachers that value education is the sole responsibility of the teachers who teach religion.
- 2) Religion is considered to be taught as a subject to be offered by students in public examinations.
- 3) Religion as a subject in the school curriculum has assumed a secondary role in the eyes of teachers, students and their parents on account of the prime importance accorded to the subjects such as English, Science and Mathematics.
- 4) The chase for certificates and qualification needed for securing employment has eroded the enthusiasm of teachers to encourage non-examinable moral and ethical behavior and appreciation of human values among students.
- 5) The time allotted for the teaching of religion (two periods a week) is shorter than that allotted for the other subjects.
- 6) Teachers have ceased to perform the role of transmission of values. They are preoccupied with the duty of covering syllabuses and preparing students success at public examinations at different grade levels.

Measures taken to improve the acquisition by students of common basis of human values:

Aims of education articulated in the education reforms introduced in Sri Lanka afforded a pride of place to the inculcation of values. These values have been expressed in different words at different times.

Education reforms introduced during the colonial rule defined values as *"moral and intellectual competency to fill offices of trust"*

The Special Committee on Education in 1943 stated that the general aims of education should be preparation for life in its material and spiritual aspects with particular emphasis on moral development and mental discipline, culture with character and efficiency. The White Paper in 1966 pronounced that education should develop the attitudes, qualities of character and sense of responsibility of the citizens to ensure a broad national outlook.

The view that religious education should replace teaching religion as a subject has been popularized. Teachers have been sensitized to assume the role of communicator of value at all times they come into contact with students. It has been stressed that any subject taught by a teacher should become the medium through which teacher and students establish cultural contact.

It has been realized that a curriculum per se for value education cannot be developed and as such it should permeate the whole range of the school curriculum in a comprehensive and integrated manner. The teachers are being educated on adopting practices conducive to inculcating values in students. Schools are guided in fashioning the day to day activities in schools to initiate and innovate programmes aimed at cultural and moral development of the school community.

Religion and aesthetics have been introduced as subjects in the curriculum for junior stage and senior stage GCE O/L to facilitate the inculcation of values in students. In addition, it was proposed that concepts relating to peace education, national harmony, democratic principles, human rights, gender equality and environmental conservation be built into the other subjects in the curriculum as appropriate. Education for conflict resolution and special activities related to peace education have been introduced in schools.

With a view to 'promoting a sense of belonging and patriotism and a Sri Lankan identity rooted in the country's rich tapestry of culture and respecting and sharing these diverse cultures and to meeting the immediate need for social cohesion through learning to live with others in harmony respecting the diversity of cultures in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society with sensitivity to differences, preventing and resolving conflict through discussion and rejecting violence' the National Education Commission has recently proposed the following changes in the secondary education curriculum.

- Introduction of History, Civics and Geography as separate subjects in grades 6 to 9 to replace environmental studies in grade 6 and social studies in grades 7 to 11.
- Integration of generic skills such as critical thinking, initiative, problem solving, team work and human values in the content, activities and teaching-learning experiences.
- Introduction of a new subject called Technology with 6 options and practical components in grades 12 & 13 (GCE- AL)

A firm proposal also has been made to provide IT facilities to secondary schools within the next three years in a phased manner.

2.4 Quality Education and the key role of teachers :

Globalization which is affecting the economy, culture, and information at an unprecedented rate provides both a challenge and an opportunity to education systems all over the world. The need for re-engineering of education and schooling thus coming to the fore has to deal with a number of factors out of which one most crucial is the teacher.

To be successful in the aforementioned task of re-engineering, it is essential for any country to recruit the most capable into the teaching profession, provide them with quality pre-service initial teacher education, use effective mechanisms for their deployment, and ensure opportunities for them to upgrade their knowledge and skills continuously over the full length of their professional career. To attract the most able to the teaching profession and retrain them in service, governments have to take steps to improve the status and

motivation of teachers through better salaries and working conditions, improved autonomy and responsibility, and promising career pathways that contribute to the enhancement of their professionalism as well.

Parliament Act No.30 of 1986 paved the way for the establishment of Colleges of Education for pre-service teacher education in Sri Lanka. This enabled capable young people who have passed GCE (A/L) examination to be attracted to the teaching profession. The three-year National Diploma in Teaching offered by the Colleges has two-year institutional period and one-year internship period. Seven years after inception, in 1993, nine Colleges of Education were seen to function in the country with 276 staff members, 2714 full-time students, and 1163 interns engaged in the one-year school programme.

The increasing demand for teachers aggravated by high attrition rates of early 1990's required a substantial number of new teachers to be recruited to the system annually. A public employment-restructuring scheme introduced in 1992 further increased the problem by bringing about a massive, unexpected reduction in the qualified teacher numbers. The need for teachers thus approximating 10,000 per year allowed the variety of entry paths that existed to the system to continue to the future as well. People with varied qualifications entering the teaching profession likewise, prohibited full benefits to be reaped from the investment on pre-service teacher education.

Preliminary investigations conducted for teacher education reforms of 1997 brought to light the inappropriate distribution of teacher education institutes across the country and the poor condition of physical and human resources available to them. Nearly half of the 25 districts had no teacher education institute, while two districts had four or more. A decision, therefore, had to be made to establish a number of new Colleges and refurbish some existing Colleges to ensure at least one suitable College per province. The same reform proposals advocated the GCE (A/L) qualification with initial pre-service teacher education as a prerequisite for teacher recruitment. Although this policy decision controlled the practice of teacher appointments on irrelevant qualifications, the need for graduate teachers to teach in GCE (A/L) classes and actions of some Provincial Councils to meet their teacher deficits in an ad hoc manner did not allow the policy to be enforced in full. All this has not yet guaranteed the most capable people to the profession.

Pre-service teacher education thus becoming an essential requirement in recruiting non-graduate teachers to the system, made redundant the 16 Teachers' Colleges and the large-scale Distance Teacher Education programme of the National Institute of Education (NIE) that provided initial teacher education to practicing teachers. Recognizing the importance of Continuing Teacher Education, the same reforms also paved the way for the establishment of 100 Teacher Centres so that each educational zone of the country had at least one Teacher Centre. The purpose of this new initiative was to provide short-term, non-residential continuing teacher education to upgrade teacher skills at least once in every seven years. Identifying the need for residential continuing teacher education of a longer duration, a decision was also made to retain some of the Teachers' Colleges as Teacher Education Institutes. Improvement of physical facilities of the restructured in-service teacher education institute as well has now provided adequate facilities and suitable atmosphere for both initial and continuing teacher education.

Studies conducted for teacher education reforms of 1997 also brought to notice the outdated curricula of teacher education institutes that had little relevance to schools. This necessitated a conscious effort to be made to re-orient these curricula and associated

teaching methodologies to transform the learning-teaching process in schools. In view of this, a large-scale curriculum diversification was initiated in year 2000. The number of specialization courses of Colleges, originally at seven, was increased up to 25. Religion covering Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Catholicism, Aesthetic Education covering Art, Music, Dance and Drama, Mother Tongue covering Sinhala and Tamil, Technical Education covering four technical subjects were newly introduced with Social Studies and Library and Information studies. Special Education and Western Music are two courses added very recently. Keeping in line with the new assessment procedure introduced to schools, a new evaluation scheme was also proposed for the Colleges. This brought down the weight given to external evaluation from 60 to 40 percent requiring the staff to focus more upon internal assessment and evaluation. The general component of this curriculum attempts to meet felt needs in the areas of international language, second national language, computer literacy, practical and technical skills, Sri Lankan culture and life competencies. Subjects such as mother tongue, religion, aesthetic education, health and physical education are also included here to help prospective teachers to develop a balanced personality. Introduction of timely and important areas such as guidance and counseling has also strengthened the professional component of the course.

Considering the changing role of teacher from transmission and transaction to transformation, a conscious effort is now being made to bring about a pedagogical change as well. Competency –based, student-centered and activity-oriented learning-teaching materials are now being developed to facilitate this move. Quality improvement of the internship programme is also attempted with special training to internship school principals and mentors. As a measure of helping new recruits to the system to grow continuously through self-evaluation and development, aspects such as reflective practice and action research are also introduced. Moreover, attempts are made to systematize quality inputs to Colleges by adapting the norm based, unit cost resource allocation mechanism (NBUCRAM) that was introduced to schools sometime again.

Institutional provision of teacher education in the past was expected to meet educational needs of the country by contributing to academic, professional and personal growth of teachers and enhancing their professional status. Implementation of disjointed policies and programmes in mid 1990s, however, brought to light that a large number of teacher education institutes were functioning in the country according to their own agendas. A National Authority on Teacher Education (NATE) was established in 1997 to address this issue of uncoordinated development of teacher education. The role expected of this institute was to advise on policy and coordinate, monitor and accredit teacher education programmes. NATE thus established, took some time to get off the ground, had functions that overlapped with other institutions, failed to achieve its objectives, and ceased to function by year 2002. Its powers were so wide that it could have succeeded only as an autonomous institution outside the Ministry with linkages to Universities, the NIE and other initial and continuing teacher education institutes.

The teacher education network of Sri Lanka today, consists of the NIE, four University Faculties/ Departments of Education, 17 Colleges of Education, four Teacher Education Institutes, 100 Teacher Centers and 30 Regional English Support Centres (RESCs) that had been there for sometime to provide in-service continuing teacher education for English teachers of the system. In addition to these, some of the universities and the NIE have their own regional centres to offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes on an island-wide basis. These programmes help meet current and emerging needs of the system by

providing opportunities for both aspiring and practicing teachers of the country to acquire qualifications in education.

The expectation in 1990s was to strive for a professionally qualified, all-graduate teacher cadre. Although the situation is such, only 26.7 percent of the teachers today are graduates and only 16.5 percent of them have professional qualifications. Even though this brings to light that the expectation is still unmet, the crash programmes of the 1990's have increased the percentage of non the graduate teachers with professional qualifications up to 84.2 percent.

Continuing teacher education is provided to meet national and local needs of the education system and facilitate career development of practicing teachers. These programmes, adopting a thematic approach, attempt to develop knowledge and skills of teachers in new content areas introduced by education reforms. Efforts are also taken to inculcate attitudes required by teachers to be successful in their jobs, and improve their proficiency in IT and English that are needed for curriculum implementation. Teacher Centres, assigned with the responsibility of continuing teacher education, are attached to the Colleges of Education for academic purposes and to the zonal education offices for administrative purposes. Although such Centres with extensive reach have the potential to promote reform implementation, some of them located 100km away from the Colleges, and having to meet the needs of a clientele of over 2000 teachers only with a centre manager in most cases have not seen to perform their role to the expected level.

The massive recruitment that led to a rapid growth of teacher numbers in late 1980s, however, did not solve the problem of geographical shortages and surpluses of teachers and the mismatch observed in teacher numbers for subjects such as Mathematics, Science and English. The marked difference in teacher numbers that exist in Sinhala and Tamil medium schools also demonstrated over staffing in the former and understaffing in the latter. Recruitment of teachers, over and above attrition, further minimized the contribution of the education budget to quality improvement of education. School enrolment declining by one percent per year and the student teacher ratio (STR) remaining well below the international norm could have been used to reduce the demand for new teachers and rationalize teacher numbers. Both also could have been used to increase the support for those teachers that were in service.

Large-scale recruitment of the past also confounded planning for the supply of trained teachers. Distribution of professionally qualified teachers today demonstrate both inter and intra district disparities. Around 30 percent of the teachers in some districts are graduates while in others this is only 15 to 21 percent. There are certain districts where twenty to thirty percent of graduates have professional qualifications. The percentage of teachers without professional qualifications, which is 15 percent island wide, increases up to 20 to 27 percent for some districts. All this requires action to be taken for an equitable distribution of both professionally qualified graduate and non-graduate teachers.

Recruitment and distribution of teachers to meet the needs of schools has been a perennial problem in Sri Lanka with negative effects of the quality of education. The ready reckoner used since early 1980's, took into account the size and type of school in determining the approved teacher cadre. This system, however, brought about a major staff inequity in remote areas of the country and a mismatch in teacher numbers for certain special subjects. Teacher deficits today are found in almost all districts for Primary English. Except for two districts exist for the full span of the school curriculum implemented in the Tamil medium

and subjects of the GCE (A/L) offered in both Sinhala and Tamil media. Identifying that the ready reckoner formula had not been applied successfully since 1989, the government in 1995 took steps to re-establish its use by increasing links between teachers cadre and salary allocations to provinces.

Government has also introduced certain incentives to persuade teachers to take up appointments in uncongenial schools willingly. However the most effective incentive in this regard is the payment of a cash-allowance. This option is also being pursued by the government.

Circular No 95/11 enacted a national policy for teacher transfers. This introduced a transfer scheme that was nationally controlled and responsive to school needs. The practice of appointing newly trained teachers to areas of greatest need was retained by this policy. The policy also established a service requirement, which compelled teachers to serve all types of schools in the country. Inter provincial teacher transfers too were allowed to get rid of teacher surpluses and deficits. With limited opportunity to enforce even public service regulations, such as vacation of post, this national policy also could be implemented only with political bias.

General education reforms of 1990's proposed a Teachers' Service Commission to be made responsible for recruitment, deployment, promotion, and working conditions of teachers. The Sri Lankan Teachers' Service set up in 1995 in place of this Commission reduced the multiplicity of grades available for teachers to five and formulated a scheme of salaries for them. Reforms of 1990's also emphasized the importance of the quality and efficiency of the teaching community in achieving the expected outcomes of education. To ensure quality, a carefully structured teacher appraisal system was proposed to be made mandatory for transfers, promotions and selection of teachers for scholarships and training. This scheme although developed and expected to be in operation from early 2003 has been modified after consultations with Trade Unions and is ready for implementation.

The success of education rests largely on what happens in schools and the function of school personnel as change agents. Although this makes professionals of teachers and their competence commitment crucial to excellence in education. This requires the motivational level of teachers to be increased and maintained at a high level through proper selection, pre-service education, fair deployment, promotion, transfer and exposure to continuous development through a variety of local and overseas training programmes. Teachers motivated thus will not only demonstrate capacity for autonomy, responsibility, ethical behaviour and self-development but also willingness to modernize their schools to make them more proactive and receptive to change.

2.5 Education for Sustainable Development

To what extent is the issue of sustainable development being considered in current curricula and syllabi? (For example: taught as a specific teaching subject, included within other subjects, incorporated in all learning areas, forming part of extra- curricular activities etc.)

The educational policies and goals explicitly favour for holistic and sustainable development of the people of Sri Lanka. The present status of incorporation of the concept of sustainable development in the curriculum/ syllabi can be briefly stated as follows.

- (a) In the Sri Lankan general education curriculum, Sustainable Development is not yet taught as a separate subject. However, this concept is incorporated within the whole range of subjects, especially, in Environment Related Activities (ERA, Grades 1- 5), Environmental Studies (Grade 6), Social Studies (grades 7-11), Science & technology (Grades 7-11), Biology (Grade 12-13), Agriculture (Grades 10- 13), and Geography (Grades 12-13). In the proposed History, Geography and Civics (Grades 6-11),
- (b) The national system of education assists individuals and groups to achieve nine national goals formulated by the National Education Commission and thus, the Curriculum from Grades 1-13 has been developed based on these national educational goals that are relevant to the individual and society. The goals mostly embrace the social, economical and educational aspects of sustainable development and especially sustainable human development are stated below:
 - Recognising and conserving the best elements of the nation's heritage while responding to the challenges of a changing world.
 - Promoting the mental and physical well being of individuals and a sustainable life style based on respect for human values.
 - Human resource development by educating for productive work that enhances the quality of life of the individual and the nation and contributes to the economic development of Sri Lanka (NEC, 2003).

Further, the National Education Commission has identified eight basic competencies that each individual is expected to achieve through school education. Curriculum, syllabi, learning areas and extra activities within the schools are organized with a view to providing students with opportunities to acquire these basic competencies within which the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values relating to sustainable development of human beings and environment are also incorporated. The competencies relating to 'environment' as explained below, contributes largely to develop the concept of sustainable development and to minimize the issues relating to that concept.

- Competencies relating to the Environment
These competencies relate to the environment: social, biological and physical.
Social Environment:
Awareness of the national heritage, sensitivity and skills linked to being members of a plural society, concern for distributive justice, social relationships, personal conduct, general and legal conventions, rights, responsibilities, duties and obligations.
Biological Environment:
Awareness, sensitivity and skills linked to the living world, people and the ecosystem, the trees, forests, seas, water, air and life - plant, animal and human life
Physical Environment:
Awareness, sensitivity and skills linked to space, energy, fuels, matter, materials and their links with human living, food, clothing, shelter, health,

comfort, respiration, sleep, relaxation, rest, wastes and excretion (NEC, 2003:72-5).

Although the concept 'sustainable development' is not taught as specific subject, it is incorporated in the curriculum either as a 'unit' of learning or 'learning events' which can be facilitated by the teacher when lessons on related areas are dealt with. Examples are given below:

Primary Education Stage (Grades 1-5)

Competency based curriculum in the primary stage comprises language, religion, mathematics and environment related activities (ERA). Objectives of ERA during 5 year primary education stage covers general awareness on earth, resources and space, own (each individual's) duties in the process of environmental conservation and practices, appreciation towards the environment and human activities and creativity, development of sound mind to use energy and power promoting the community's way forward, and positive attitudes towards society and environment. With such objectives, following units are organized to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values: school, home, animals, water, sky, light, wind, earth and sky, edibles, means of receiving information, natural changes of environment, how to make happier environment, transportation, how to help people, plants and animals, and their use, food, care and protection, Sri Lankans, unity, garden, cities, and man and information. Concept of sustainable development is also incorporated in Grade 4 and 5 syllabi. In Grade 5, topics including endemic plants, the need for conservation of such typical plants are comprehensively discussed. The concepts in ERA totally serve to develop attitudes and values towards sustainable development among young learners.

Junior (Grades 6-9) and senior Secondary (Grades 10-13) Stages

Environmental Studies taught in Grade 6, integrate Social studies and Science & Technology. Syllabus includes the units such as 'preparation of meals', 'surrounding society', 'national identity', 'changes of weather' and 're-use of waste at of home'. The whole syllabus serves for the promotion of the concept of sustainable development.

Life Competencies taught in Grades 7 – 9, is expected to develop competencies, which build up a vision for the life, and thereby to promote sustainable human development.

One of the objectives of **Social Studies taught in Grades 7-11**, is to 'develop each individual with competencies to fulfill duties efficiently, creatively, honestly and successfully in the rapidly changing world that is directed towards sustainable development '. Following are some examples. In **Grade 9 Social studies** syllabus, the concept of sustainable development is incorporated in several units such as; 'natural resources in Sri Lanka, 'natural flora, 'weather', 'agricultural products', and 'population of Sri Lanka' serves largely to develop the concept among learners. In **Grades 10 & 11**, attitudes, values and cognitive skills are developed on conservation of limited resources, minimize environment pollution, quality of life and these objectives directly promote the concept of sustainable development.

Science & Technology syllabus in Grades 7-11, exclusively includes the opportunities to develop the concept of sustainable development and such units are; utilization of water, parts of plants, and electricity (**Grade 7**), Natural resources used in industry (**Grade 8**), production for human needs based on flora, effective utilization of power and energy in day-to-day life, and conservation of biodiversity (**Grade 9**).

Agriculture (Grades 10-13) syllabus also comprehensively contributes to the development of the concept of sustainable development. Agriculture and environmental conservation is a major area in the syllabus.

Within the syllabus Biology (Grades 12-13), 'biodiversity' is taught with a view to enhancing knowledge and understanding which encourages each individual to serve the cause of 'biodiversity conservation', and to become responsible members of society. Concepts such as 'sustainable use of bio-diversity resources' and 'eco system approach to conservation' are also taught. Sustainable development of environment is discussed in the units such as 'functional plants and animals', 'continuity of life', and 'man & the environment'.

In **Geography (Grades 12-13) syllabus**, within the section on 'Environment management and conservation', world environment crisis, environment pollution, environmental conservation and western and oriental environmental values and concepts of sustainable development are discussed. The unit 'Concepts of sustainable development' covers the topics 'development without devastation' and 'environmental, economical and social characteristics of sustainable development'.

(b) What measures-if any-are being envisaged in order to ensure that the content of education reflects and supports sustainable development as one of its central themes?

As stated elsewhere, in Sri Lanka, sustainable development is not taught as a separate subject but has been incorporated into the full range of subjects taught at the school as it emerges through the national goals. Further, within several recent initiatives, the inclusion of the concept of sustainable development into the curriculum is considered. Following are the examples:

- At the next revision of the curriculum the concept of sustainable development will be incorporated into Social Sciences, which are proposed to teach at Grades 6-11 replacing environmental Studies (Grade 6) and Social Studies (Grade 7-11). The proposed contents of these three subjects include the concept of sustainable development.
- Discussions were taking place between policy makers and curriculum developers with a view to identify means of promoting the concept in the implementation of learning – teaching process and incorporating that into different subjects of curriculum taught at schools.
- The need of building capacity of teachers to incorporate the concept into learning – teaching process also was taken into consideration. Teachers should be strengthened to organize activities and learning experiences for students to develop their competencies related to the sustainable development concept. Further, it is acceptable that this concept should be broadly defined within the Sri Lankan general education curriculum and syllabi and should be coherently incorporated in a range of subjects through which the students would receive a greater opportunity to learn and exercise the concept 'sustainable development'.



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