PRESENT POLICIES IN GENERAL EDUCATION , IT'S PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

DEPARTMENT OF MANPOWER AND EMPLOYMENT

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1. Introduction

"Education that is designed to develop learners' general knowledge, skills and competencies and literacy and numeracy skills, often to prepare students for more advanced educational programmes at the same or higher ISCED levels and to lay the foundation for lifelong learning. General educational programmes are typically school- or college-based. General education includes educational programmes that are designed to prepare students for entry into vocational education, but that do not prepare for employment in a particular occupation or trade or class of occupations or trades, nor lead directly to a labor market relevant qualification." [1]

Education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills and character traits. These aims may include the development of understanding, rationality, kindness, and honesty. Various researchers emphasize the role of critical thinking in order to distinguish education from indoctrination. Some theorists require that education results in an improvement of the student while others prefer a value-neutral definition of the term. In a slightly different sense, education may also refer, not to the process, but to the product of this process: the mental states and dispositions possessed by educated people. Education originated as the transmission of cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Today, educational goals increasingly encompass new ideas such as the liberation of learners, skills needed for modern society, empathy, and complex vocational skills.

Types of education are commonly divided into formal, non-formal, and informal education. Formal education takes place in education and training institutions, is usually structured by curricular aims and objectives, and learning is typically guided by a teacher. In most regions, formal education is compulsory up to a certain age and commonly divided into educational stages such as kindergarten, primary school and secondary school. Non formal education occurs as addition or alternative to formal education. It may be structured according to educational arrangements, but in a more flexible manner, and usually takes place in community-based, workplace-based or civil society-based settings. Lastly, informal education occurs in daily life, in the family, any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered educational, whether unintentional or intentional. In practice there is a

continuum from the highly formalized to the highly informalized, and informal learning can occur in all three settings. For instance, homeschooling can be classified as non-formal or informal, depending upon the structure.

In this research work, the problems existing in the general education system of Sri Lanka are identified and attention is focused on the education systems operating in the countries of Finland, Japan, India, China, Ethiopia and Maldives, and thus positive solutions that can be given to the education system of Sri Lanka are proposed.

i. Background

The policy of the government of Sri Lanka is to provide free education from the primary education stage to the first degree level of University education. Future generation of Sri Lankan citizens equipped with competencies to meet the challenges of a changing , globalized , knowledge driven economy is the vision and the mission of Sri Lanka general education is to develop an excellent education system which enables students to acquire knowledge , skills, attitudes and values to be future citizens who will perform their roles efficiently and effectively in a modern ,globalized ,knowledge driven economy.

General education in Sri Lanka encompasses primary (grades 1–5) and secondary education (grades 6–13). At the national level, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for education policy, planning, and monitoring; curriculum development; and assessment by examinations. The country is divided into nine provinces. General education is a devolved subject where the Provincial Education Authorities (PEAs) play an important role in the delivery of education services. Sri Lankan primary curriculum based on Language, Mathematics , Environment related studies and Religion. Junior Secondary Level Education is subject based on curriculum , from grade six onward students are given option to study selected subjects in English medium and also main thing is present education is compulsory from grade one to nine. Characteristics of Senior secondary level can be point out under three sections. Students proceed to G.C.E O/L classes at grade 10. Students sit a public examination, the curriculum consists of six core subjects and four or three optional subjects selected from several groups of subjects (basket subjects). Students who pass in six subjects with first language, mathematics and three subjects at creditor higher level qualify to follow the G.C.E A/L. The last stage of

General Education is Senior Secondary Level and it is a selection examination for university admission, there are Science, Mathematics, Commerce Art And Technology streams and General English and a common paper compulsory . Admission to universities is determined on merit but a district quota is reserved for students in educationally disadvantaged districts. Marks obtained at A/L are described as z-scores formulae.

The National Institute of Education (NIE), Sri Lanka is the prime institute in the country responsible for providing leadership for the development of general education with quality, equity and relevance in a pluralistic society. The Institute is mandated to:

- design and develop curriculum for general and teacher education.
- provide professional development of educational community.
- spearhead change through research and innovation.

The vision of National Institute of Education is to be a center of excellence in providing leadership for quality education in a pluralistic and dynamic society and the mission is to provide quality education for all, by developing curriculum, enhancing professionalism and engaging in research to empower learners in order to realize their potential to build a humane society.

Landmarks in the evolution of the present system of education in Sri Lanka

- 1869 Establishment of the Department of Public Instruction
- 1939 Enactment of Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939
- 1943 Special Committee on Education publishes its Report
- 1943 Establishment of Central Schools
- 1947 Introduction of free education from Kindergarten to University
- 1961 Take-over of denominational schools to establish a national system of education
- 1962 Report of the National Education Commission
- 1972 Educational reforms
- 1981 White paper on education
- 1985 Establishment of National Institute of Education
- 1986 Establishment of National Colleges of Education
- 1987 Devolution of power to provincial councils

- 1991 Establishment of National Education Commission
- 1997 Education reforms
- 1998 Enactment of compulsory education regulations
- 2006 Educational reforms: Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (2006-2010)

As per the Department of Census and Statistics the education administrative structure of Sri Lanka is given here, and according to this, by the year 2021, 100 education zones and 312 education divisions will have been established, and the largest number of education zones in the Eastern Province. It is 17. There are 7 education zones in Sabaragamuwa province. Out of 312 education divisions, 38 divisions are in the Western Province, 40 are in the Central Province, 39 divisions are in the Southern Province, 35 divisions are in the Northern Province, 48 are in the East and 31 are in the North-West Province, 30 divisions in the North Central Province, 30 divisions in the Uva Province. Sabaragamuwa province as well as 7 education zones has been divided into 28 divisions for administrative convenience.

Exhibit : 1

Administrative Structure of Education by Province -2021

Administrative Structure of Education by Province -2021					
Province	No.of Edu. Zones	No. of Edu .Divisions	All Govt.Schools	National Schools	Provincial Schools
1.Western	11	38	1,355	79	1,274
2.Central	15	40	1,519	56	1,463
3.Southern	11	39	1,107	70	1,037
4.Nothern	13	35	981	24	957
5.Eastern	17	48	1,117	42	1,075
6.North Western	8	31	1,244	39	1,205
7.North Central	8	30	813	17	796
8.Uva	10	23	896	38	858
9.Sabaragamuwa	7	28	1,116	31	1,085
Total	**100**	**312**	**10,146**	**396**	**9,750**

According to the 2021 reports released by the Population and Census Department, the following is the data on the teachers who are paid by the government to be involved in the learning and teaching process in the general education system of Sri Lanka.

Exhibit :2

Teachers of Government Schools by Qualification Classification - 2021

Level of School	Graduate Trained teachers	Graduate teachers	Trained teachers	Untrained teachers	Other teachers	Total Teachers
National	17,498	5,831	18,552	629	31	42,541
Provincial	72,873	40,796	78,286	6,271	287	198,513
Total	**90,371**	**46,627**	**96,838**	**6,900**	**318**	**241,054**

According to the reports released by the Population and Census Department in 2021 , 4,048,937 students study in the 10146 government schools established in Sri Lanka, which is classified as 835,087 students in 396 national schools and 3,213,850 students in 9,750 provincial schools.

Exhibit : 3

Summary Statistics of Government Schools

Category	No. of Schools	%	No. of Students	%
All Government Schools	10,146		4,048,937	
Level of School				
National Schools	396	3.9	835,087	20.6
Provincial Schools	9,750	96.1	3,213,850	79.4
Type of School				
1AB Schools	1,011	10.0	1,582,995	39.1
1C Schools	1,941	19.1	1,073,326	26.5
Type 2 Schools	3,226	31.8	739,113	18.3
Type 3 Schools	3,968	39.1	653,503	16.1

According to Sri Lanka Examination Department the Performance of School Candidates (1st Attempt) by year of the year 2021 , the results obtained by the students from the first appearance from 2014 to 2021 are shown as below. In the year 2014, 257,322 students appeared for the ordinary level examination, and only 177,612 qualified for the advanced level,

which is 69.02% as a percentage. But by the year 2021, the number of people who appeared for the exam is 311,321 and the percentage qualified for advanced level is 74.52%. 231,982 students have qualified. The highest number of failures in all subjects from 2014 to 2021 was recorded in 2016 and 2017.

Exhibit :4

The results obtained for G.C.E Ordinary Level and G.C.E Advanced Level examinations by the students from the first appearance from 2014 to 2021

Year		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
No. Sat (5 or More subjects)		257,322	273,224	286,251	296,812	296,029	305,427	308,134	311,321
Qualified for G.C.E. (A/L)	Number	177,612	189,428	200,208	216,815	222,281	225,539	236,015	231,982
%		69.02	69.33	69.94	73.05	75.09	73.84	76.59	74.52
Obtained 9 "A" passes	Number	5,271	6,102	8,224	9,960	9,261	10,201	11,661	10,863
%		2.05	2.23	2.87	3.36	3.13	3.34	3.78	3.49
Failed in All Subjects (Appeared for 6 or more Subjects	Number	8,147	8,698	8,900	7,308	5,917	7,007	5,764	6,566
%		3.17	3.18	3.11	3.11	2.00	2.29	1.87	2.11

According to the analysis of the results of the G.C.E.(A/L) Examination -2021 Performance of School Candidates by Subject Stream, 34,773 appeared for the examination in the biology stream and 19,215 qualified for the university entrance, which is a 55.26% percentage. 31,382 appeared for the examination in physics, and 17,358 qualified for university entrance. 51,222 students appeared for the examination from the commerce stream, and a percentage of 68.86% got admission to the university. The highest number of students from the Arts stream 89,646 appeared for the examination, and 59,075 got admission to the university.

Exhibit : 4

The results of the G.C.E.(A/L) Examination -2021 Performance of School Candidates by Subject Stream

	No.Sat	No.Sat Eligible for University Entrance		Obtained 3A's		Failed in all subjects	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
1.Bio Science	34,773	19,215	55.26	922	2.65	6,089	17.51
2.Physical Science	31,382	17,358	55.31	1,235	3.94	6,128	19.53
3.Commerce	51,222	35,274	68.86	4,115	8.03	3,821	7.46
4.Arts	89,646	59,075	65.90	2,833	3.16	5,406	6.03
5.Engineering Technology	16,044	10,971	68.38	104	0.65	765	4.77
6.Bio Systems Technology	8,325	6,109	73.38	66	0.79	426	5.12
7.None	4,643	1,944	41.87	38	0.82	293	6.31
8.Total	236,035	149,946	63.53	9,313	3.95	22,928	9.71

Basically ,primary to higher education is funded by three government institutes. Ministry of Education is for schools, pirivena, teacher's colleges and educational institutes. Department of Examination is for provisions of National Examination service. Ministry of Educational service focus on provision of physical resources for General Education.

ii. Objectives

- Identify the need for a successful general education system in Sri Lanka for future generations
- Eliminating the mismatch between the mainstream education system and the future world of work
- Submit recommendation for qualify, stress free education system

- Introduce policies to reduce the mismatch between General Education and Labour Market

iii. Methodology

- The comparative methodology is the main methodology in this case study. Quantitative and Qualitative data will be used to gain the evaluation. Data Analysis by a questionnaire responses which responded by Principals in Colombo district.
- Desk research will be performed.

iv. Limitations

The reluctance of the principals to reveal the true information as well as the reluctance to provide detailed information can be pointed out as the limitations in completing this research work.

2. Core Competencies of General Education in Sri Lanka

Free-education is the fundamental policy of our education system. 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. To ensure that every child has access to schooling, a network of schools has been established covering every nook and corner of the island. The necessary resources to these schools have been supplied. There is seven basic competencies in Sri Lanka General Education System.

Basic competencies:

The following basic competencies developed through education will contribute to achieving the national education goals.

- Competencies in communication: Competencies in communication are based on four subsets: literacy, numeracy, graphics and IT proficiency.
- Literacy: Listen attentively, speak clearly, read for meaning write accurately and lucidly and communicate ideas effectively.
- Numeracy: Use numbers for things, space and time, count, calculate and measure systematically.

- Graphics: Make sense of line and form, express and record details, instructions and ideas with line form and color.
- IT proficiency: Computer literacy and the use of ICT in learning, in the work environment and in personal life.

(ii) Competencies relating to personality development: -

- Generic skills such as creativity, divergent thinking, initiative, decision-making, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, teamwork, inter-personal relations, discovering and exploring;
- Values such as integrity, tolerance and respect for human dignity;
- Emotional intelligence.

(iii) 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. Included here are skills in using tools and technologies for learning working and living.

(iv) Competencies relating to preparation for world of work:

Employment related skills to maximise their potential and to enhance their capacity: to contribute to economic development, to discover their vocational interests and aptitudes, to choose a job that suits abilities, and to engage in a rewarding and sustainability livelihood.

(v) Competencies relating to religion and ethics:

Assimilating and internalizing values, so that individuals may function in a manner consistent with the ethical, moral and religious modes of conduct in everyday living, selecting that which is most appropriate.

(vi) Competencies in play and use of leisure:

Pleasure, joy, emotions and such human experience as expressed through aesthetics, literature, play, sports and athletics, leisure pursuits and other creative modes of living.

(vii) Competencies relating to 'learning to learn':

Empowering individuals to learn independently and to be sensitive and successful in responding to and managing change through a transformative process, in a rapidly changing, complex and interdependent work.

Source : NEC (2003:71-75)

Whether the above-mentioned competencies are successfully implemented in Sri Lanka should be analyzed with the education systems of other countries.

3. How other countries of the world implement the General Education system

Finland Education System

Finnish education is of high quality. Differences in the learning results of different schools are small and nearly all students complete comprehensive school within target time. Preschool education, comprehensive education and upper secondary education is free of charge and also higher education is for the most part free of charge. The goal is for everyone to have an equal opportunity to receive high quality education regardless of the family's income and to grow up to become active citizens.

In Finland, comprehensive education normally starts during the year when the child turns seven. All children residing in Finland permanently must attend comprehensive education. Comprehensive school comprises nine grades. Finnish legislation guides comprehensive education. National curriculum bases and local curriculums are also in use. Comprehensive education is organized by municipalities and is free of charge for families. There is at least 20 hours of tuition per week for first and second grades and more for higher grades. All comprehensive school teachers in Finland have a Master's degree. Comprehensive school class teachers, who teach grades 1–6, are specialized in pedagogy. Grade 7–9 teachers are specialized in the subjects they teach. Teachers are at liberty to plan their tuition independently

based on the national and local curricula. Recently, curricula have emphasized, for example, entities that cover several subjects, investigating daily phenomena and information and communications technology.

Children often have the same teacher for the first six years. The teacher gets to know the students well and is able to develop the tuition to suit their needs. One important goal is that the students learn how to think for themselves and assume responsibility over their own learning. The teacher evaluates the students' progress in school. In comprehensive education, all grades are given by the teacher. There are no national examinations as such. Instead, learning results are being monitored with sample-based evaluations. These are usually organized in the ninth grade. If the child or young person has only recently moved to Finland, he or she may receive preparatory education for comprehensive education. Preparatory education usually takes one year. After it, the student may continue to study Finnish or Swedish as a second language, or an S2 language, if he or she needs support in learning the language.

The most common options after comprehensive school are general upper secondary school and vocational education. Compulsory education was extended in Finland in 2021. After comprehensive school, all young people have to study until they graduate from secondary education or reach the age of 18. A young person must apply for upper secondary education if they are in the 9th grade of comprehensive school in spring 2021 or later.

General upper secondary school

General upper secondary schools provide all-round education which does not lead to any profession. Mostly the same subjects are studied in general upper secondary schools as in comprehensive education, but the studies are more demanding and independent. At the end, students usually take the matriculation examination. General upper secondary school takes 2–4 years, depending on the student. After finishing, students are eligible to apply to universities, universities of applied sciences or general upper secondary school based vocational education. Most general upper secondary schools provide education in Finnish or Swedish language. Larger cities have some general upper secondary schools that provide tuition in other languages, such as English or French. Adults may take general upper secondary

school studies in general upper secondary schools for adults. There, it is possible to either take separate courses or complete the entire general upper secondary school syllabus and take the matriculation examination. Tuition may include contact teaching, distance education, online education and independent studies. .

Less Formal Schooling = More Options

Students in Finland start formal schooling at the age of seven. Yes, seven! Finland allows their children to be children, to learn through playing and exploring rather than sitting still locked up in a classroom. But don't they get behind? No! The kids start school when they are actually developmentally ready to learn and focus. This first year is followed by only nine years of compulsory school. Everything after ninth grade is optional.

Less Time in School = More Rest

Students typically start school between 9:00 and 9:45 and the school day usually ends by 2:00 or 2:45. They typically have three to four 75 minute classes a day with several breaks in between. This overall system allows both students and teachers to be well rested and ready to teach/learn.

Fewer Instruction Hours = More Planning Time

Teachers have shorter days as well. Teachers and students in Finland are not expected to be at school when they do not have a class. For example, if they don't have any afternoon classes on Thursdays, they (both teachers and students) can simply leave. This system allows the Finnish teacher more time to plan and think about each lesson. It allows them to create great, thought provoking lessons.

Fewer Teachers = More Consistency and Care

Elementary students in Finland often have the same teacher for up to six years of their education. That is right! The same teacher cares for, nurtures and tends to the education of the same group of students for six years in a row. They know where the kids are and what they have learned and will plan according to the students' needs.

Fewer Accepted Applicants= More Confidence in Teachers

Children have the same teacher for three to six years. Finland works very hard to make sure there are no “bad teachers.” Primary education is the most competitive degree to get in Finland. The elementary education departments in Finland only accept 10% of all applicants and turns down thousands of students annually. A person not only has to be the best and the brightest to become a primary teacher, they also have to have passed a series of interviews and personality screenings to get in.

Although it still exists, there is overall less pressure on the teacher in Finland to get through the curriculum. The teacher is simply trusted to do a good job and therefore they have more control over their classroom and its content. The teacher is able to take more risks and try new things and create exciting, engaging curriculum that allows students to become skilled individuals ready for the real world. They have time to teach skills that allow students to develop into individuals who know how to start a project and work systematically to accomplish a goal.

Finnish education system has great opportunities for both students and teachers in terms of building strong relationships, healthy lifestyle and respectability.

While the East Asian systems may enjoy being at the top of the international tests, they are not happy at all with the outcomes of their education. They have recognized the damages of their education for a long time and have taken actions to reform their systems. This can be seen as the threat to the Finnish system of education.

To conclude it can be said that Finland has figured out that competition between schools doesn’t get kids as far as cooperation between those schools. One reason for that is Finland has no private schools. The Parents trust the teachers to make decisions that will help their children learn and thrive. The Teachers trust the students to do the work and learn for the sake of learning. The Students trust the teachers to give them the tools they need to be successful. Society trusts the system and gives education the respect it deserves.

Japan Education System

The Japanese school system primarily consists of six-year elementary schools, three-year junior high schools and three-year high schools, followed by a two-or-three-year junior colleges or a four-year colleges. Compulsory education lasts for 9 years through elementary and junior high school. School exchanges during Japan Educational Travel are mainly implemented in junior high and high schools. For physically or mentally challenged students, there is a system called "Special Needs Education" to support special students to develop their self-reliance and thus enhance their social participation.

Regarding the Level of Education

The level of Japanese education is high even by world standards. In OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) aimed at fifteen-year-olds, Japanese students recorded high levels of achievement, particularly in science related areas. Educational activities outside of school also flourish, and programs leading to advanced education are implemented.

Enrollment in high schools, the second-half of secondary education, reaches over 90%, and the enrollments in college are also high reaching over 50%. Admission to high schools and colleges is mainly through entrance exams, held from January to March.

English is a compulsory subject in junior high and high schools. There are also elementary schools that introduce English education from intermediate grade classes. In some high schools, apart from English, students are also allowed to take courses in Chinese, Korean, French, German, etc.

Student Clubs

Student clubs are a characteristic part in Japan's school education. Under teachers' guidance, students with the same interests in sports, cultural activities, or fields of study voluntarily gather together after classes and on days off. There are also numerous student clubs revolving around Japanese traditional sports and culture, such as judo, kendo(Japanese swordsmanship), sado (Japanese tea ceremony), kado (Japanese flower arrangement), shodo (Japanese calligraphy), etc. Club activities also provide students with the chance to participate in school exchange and friendly matches.

Maldives Education System

The Maldives has a functional literacy rate of 98%, which is the highest in the South Asia and Indian Ocean region. Educational standards are also among the highest in the region and schools follow the British system of education. English language is used as the medium of instruction in most schools; however, there are schools that provide Arabic and Islamic education specifically.

The Ministry of Education aims to further enhance existing educational facilities and services so that every Maldivian will have access to quality primary and secondary education and hence increased scope for higher education and training. The education system of the country is designed such that it will foster religious and cultural values though the curricula are based on external examinations that would enable Maldivian students to avail themselves to educational, training and employment opportunities both nationally and internationally.

China Education System

Structure of the Chinese education system

The educational system in China is a major vehicle for both inculcating values in and teaching needed skills to its people. Traditional Chinese culture attached great importance to education as a means of enhancing a person's worth and career. In China, education is divided into three categories: basic education, higher education, and adult education. By law, each child must have nine years of compulsory education from primary school (six years) to junior secondary education (three years). Basic education in China includes pre-school education (usually three years), primary education (six years, usually starting at the age of six) and secondary education (six years). Secondary education has two routes: academic secondary education and specialized/vocational/technical secondary education. Academic secondary education consists of junior (three years) and senior middle schools (three years). Junior middle school graduates wishing to continue their education take a locally administered entrance exam, on the basis of which they will have the option of

i) continuing in an academic senior middle school; or

ii) entering a vocational middle school (or leaving school at this point) to receive two to four years of training. Senior middle school graduates wishing to go to universities must take National Higher Education Entrance Exam (Gao Kao).

Ethiopia Education System

Ethiopia's education system expanded rapidly in the decades after the overthrow of the Derg in 1991. The net enrollment rate (NER) in elementary education, for instance, jumped from only 29 percent in 1989 to 86 percent in 2015, according to the UIS. Ethiopian government statistics report that the number of elementary schools tripled from 11,000 in 1996 to 32,048 in 2014, while the number of students enrolled in these schools surged from less than 3 million to more than 18 million. In secondary education, overall enrollment is much smaller, but growing modestly nevertheless: The NER in upper-secondary education grew from 16 percent in 1999 to 26 percent in 2015 (UIS).

Administration of the Education System

Ethiopia is a federation of nine regional states delineated by ethnicity, as well as two cities designated as separate administrative units or "chartered cities" (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). After the fall of the Derg regime, Ethiopia's government pursued a deliberate policy of decentralization, including the devolution of education administration to the regions. School education is now mostly administered by local authorities in sub districts or woredas within the individual regions, a move designed to better accommodate local needs.

Funding is shared between the regions and the federal government, which provides about 50 to 60 percent of the funding through non-itemized block grants to regional governments, as well as grants given directly to schools. To ensure consistency, the federal government manages the education system with multi-year development programs that set performance targets and reform agendas for the entire system. School curricula are standardized nationwide. Schools use a national curriculum framework that includes textbooks developed by the General Education Curriculum Framework Development Department of the federal Ministry of Education (MOE).

The federal MOE in Addis Ababa oversees and funds Ethiopia's higher education, exercising far-reaching control over public institutions. The autonomy of public HEIs is limited, since the MOE sets admission standards, enrollment quotas, and curricula; systematically curtails academic freedoms; and frequently appoints university administrators based on political allegiance.10 Private HEIs are regulated less tightly, but must be accredited by the Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (HERQA), a nominally autonomous body under the purview of the MOE. Quality control in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is provided by a federal TVET agency, which the MOE also oversees.

The Ethiopian school system consists of eight years of elementary education, divided into two cycles of four years, and four years of secondary education, divided into two stages of two years (4+4+2+2). Education is technically compulsory for all children until grade eight, but actual participation in elementary education is far from universal. Low enrollment rates, particularly in rural areas, and widespread attrition are two reasons why. According to government statistics from 2011, 20 percent of children dropped out as early as grade two, and only about 50 percent of pupils remained in school until grade eight. Prior to entering elementary education, pupils can attend kindergartens, which are mostly run by non-governmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and other private providers. However, the availability of preschool programs varies considerably by region and is extremely limited in some areas. The number of children attending kindergarten is still small, but growing quickly—the nationwide GER in preschool education was 39 percent in 2015 (up from 5.2 percent in 2011).

Elementary education is provided free of charge at public schools, as well as by fee-charging private schools, which tend to have better facilities and better-educated teachers. About 7 percent of elementary schools were private as of 2012/13, most of them located in Addis Ababa. Private providers in the capital charge monthly tuition fees anywhere from a few dollars to more than USD$75, in addition to other fees for registration and teaching materials, putting these schools out of reach for poor households. There are also a number of international schools in Addis Ababa that charge exorbitant tuition fees by Ethiopian standards and therefore cater only to wealthy elites and expatriates. The overall share of enrollments in private schools among all elementary enrollments was 5 percent in 2015 (UIS).Most pupils enter elementary

education at the age of seven, although there are a sizable number of overage children in Ethiopia's schools. The majority of public schools don't have formal entry requirements, but private schools often have selection mechanisms in place, such as interviews and examinations. As stated earlier, the core curriculum is standardized nationwide, but there are some variations, including the language of instruction, at the local level. The subjects taught in the first stage (grades one to four) are Amharic, mother tongue, English, mathematics, environmental science, and arts and physical education. The second stage (grades five to eight) includes the same language subjects, mathematics and physical education, but also features civics, integrated science, social studies, and visual arts and music, as well as biology, chemistry, and physics in higher grades. Promotion is based on continual assessment during the first phase, while term-end examinations are introduced in the second phase. At the end of grade eight, pupils sit for a region-wide external examination and are awarded a Primary School Leaving Certificate, which is a prerequisite for admission into secondary school. Pupils who fail the exams need to repeat grade eight before they can retake the test.

Alternative Basic Education

Given the high number of out-of-school children in rural regions, Ethiopia has an alternative basic education (ABE) system in place to educate underserved children, mostly from pastoral communities, outside of the formal school system. ABE affords children in critical areas the opportunity to study the first-stage elementary curriculum on flexible class schedules that are adjusted to accommodate traditional ways of living. Classes are set up mostly in rudimentary local ABE centers and makeshift mobile schools that rely on local intra-communal instructors. ABE allows marginalized children to receive at least a basic, foundational education. Upon the completion of ABE, children can transfer into the second cycle of elementary education at regular schools. There were 821,988 children enrolled in ABE programs nationwide in 2011. In addition to ABE, radio broadcasts and pre-recorded audiocassettes and videotapes are used to provide educational programming.

Secondary Education

Participation in secondary education in Ethiopia is mostly a privilege of affluent households in urban areas. Enrollments in rural regions accounted for only 11.2 percent in lower-secondary

education and 3.6 percent in upper-secondary education as of 2011. Overall enrollments in secondary education in the nation of 105 million people are remarkably low by international standards. There were only around 795,000 students enrolled in upper-secondary education in 2015, compared with 982,000 students in Afghanistan and one million in Sudan, both of which are countries with considerably smaller populations. Until very recently (UIS), merely 10 percent of Ethiopian youths in relevant age cohorts participated in upper-secondary education. The first stage of secondary education in Ethiopia is referred to as general secondary education and lasts for two years (grades nine and 10). There are no entrance examinations at public schools, and education is tuition-free until grade 10, whereas upper-secondary students have to pay school fees. Private education is still nascent in general secondary education, where less than 5 percent of students are enrolled in private schools, but the share of private enrollments jumps pointedly to around 15 percent at the upper-secondary stage (2015, per UIS).

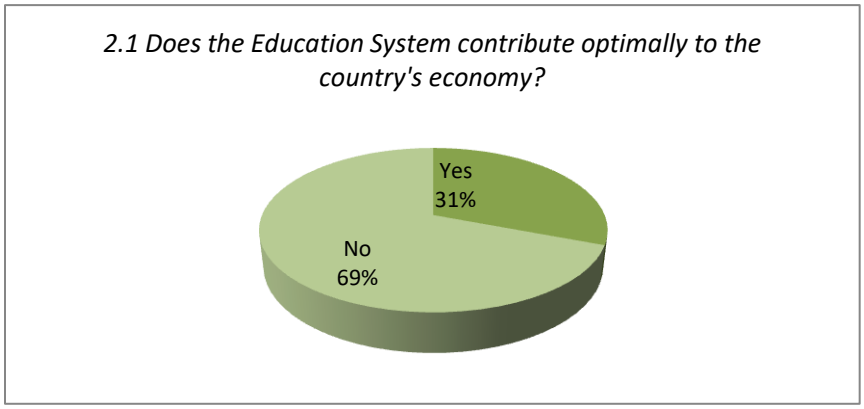
The general secondary curriculum covers three languages (mother tongue, English, and Amharic), mathematics, information technology, civics, biology, chemistry, physics, geography, history and physical education. The language of instruction is English, which can represent a challenge since the English-language abilities of both teachers and students tend to be limited.

At the end of grade 10, students must sit for the nationwide external Ethiopian General School Leaving Certificate Examination (EGSLCE), a multiple-choice test federally administered by the National Educational Assessment and Examination Agency. The EGSLCE usually includes nine test subjects, graded on an A-E letter grading scale. To qualify for progression into upper-secondary education, students must pass at least five subjects with a grade of C or higher. Failure rates in the exam are relatively high with about one-third of test takers failing in 2015.12 Depending on their grade average, students who pass can continue in the university-preparatory upper-secondary track, or enroll in vocational programs (discussed below). The government currently prioritizes technical training and seeks to stream the majority of grade 10 graduates into vocational education programs amid capacity shortages in higher education: In 2013/14, 45 percent of graduates transitioned into vocational education, while 30 percent to 35 percent of students continued in the university-preparatory track.

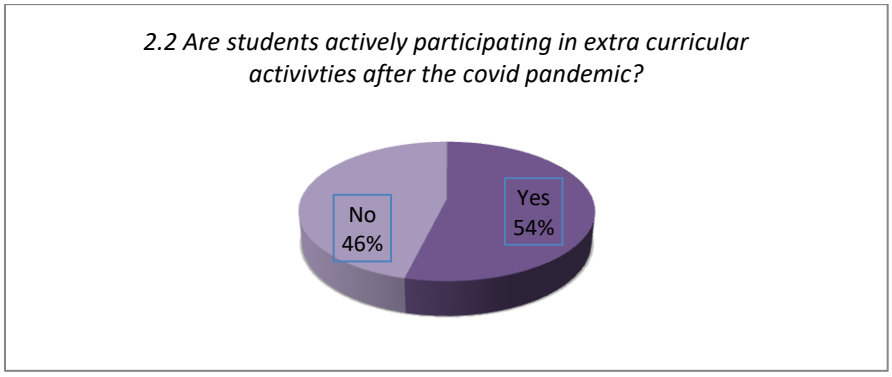
4. Situation of General Education after the Covid -19

In this study, a questionnaire was prepared and sent to the principals of schools in Colombo district to obtain information and suggestions about the existing education system. In this survey, 13 schools from Homagama, Piliyandala, Sri Jayawardenepura, and Colombo participated, representing 04 education zones in the Colombo district.

The principals of these thirteen schools answered the questionnaire and after analyzing the data obtained, the first question, whether the existing education system optimally contributes to the country's economy, was answered no by a large percentage of 69%. that 31% of them mention 'yes' this education system contribute optimally to the country's economy .

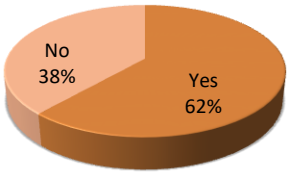


For the second question " Are students actively participating in extra curricular activities after the covid pandemic " 54% of them answered 'Yes' and 46% of them answered 'No' .



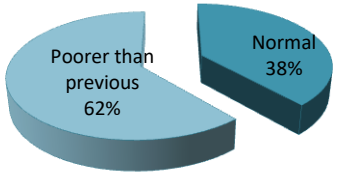
"Are students actively participating in Co – Curricular activities after covid pandemic ? " this is the third question and majority of percentage 62% of them agree with question and 38 % of them said 'No' .

2.3 Are students actively participating in Co -Curricular activities after covid pandemic?



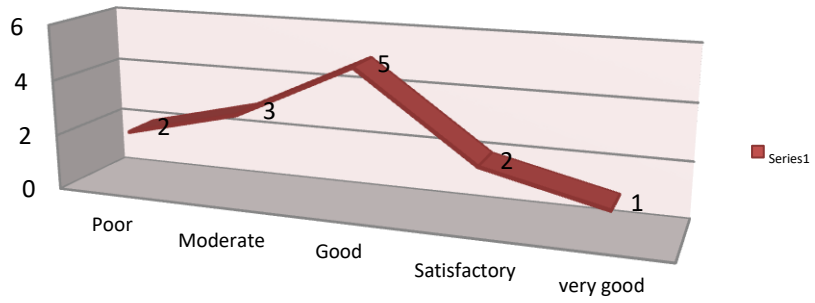
Attitudinal changes in students after the covid pandemic is poorer than previous level is the answer which takes 62 percentage . Only 38 % of them response ' No ' for this question .

2.4 Attitudinal changes in students after the covid pandemic.

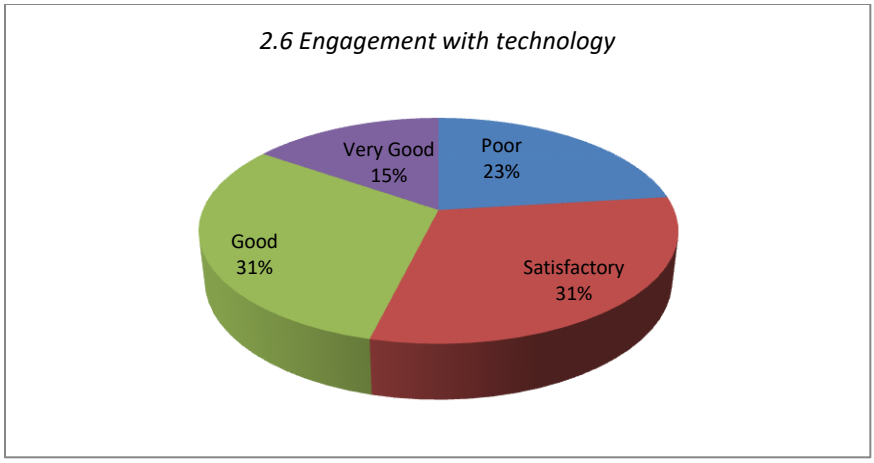


This chart shows students aesthetic performances . Minority response is very good and majority response is 'Good' and also Equal response is poor and satisfactory and only three of them response to the answer moderate.

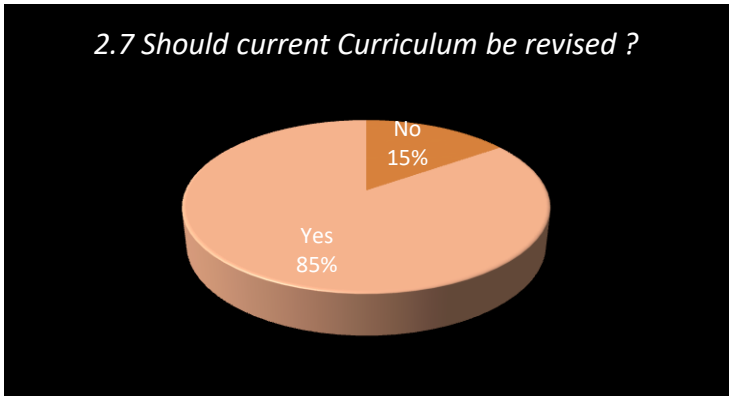
2.5 Students aesthetic performances by rank



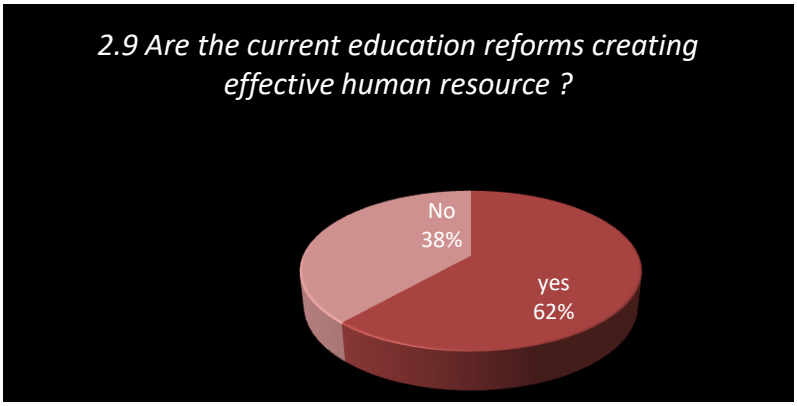
Engagement with technology is the one of the major point which have to be discussed . For this point 15 % of them response engagement with technology is very good. 31% of them are in equal in responses good and satisfactory . 23% of them response for the poor.



Should Current Curriculum be revised is the ninth question and it's the major part which point out from this analysis . For this question majority of them 85% responded 'yes' and only 15 % responded 'No'.



A majority answered (62%) 'yes' to the question whether this educational system makes efficient use of human resources and only 38% answered 'No'.



2.10 If the answer is "No" for 2.9 , what are the main factors affecting it? Is the last question and 38% of them responded ‘No’ for 2.9 question and they mentioned below factors:

- Building from the bottom up and making plans without understanding , Making our plans based on would information .No recognizing past possibilities .Making decisions based on politics .
- Exam oriented learning, unlimited competition among students.
- Proposed new curriculum is better.
- Competitive based education.
- No equality in education.
- Exam oriented studying system.

Among the points that have been noticed while paying attention to the answers given for this questionnaire, the majority have stated that the attitude change of the students in the face of the Covid situation is at a weaker level than the previous level. This is a reversible condition. In the same way, many have commented that students are actively contributing to co-curricular and extra-curricular activities after the Covid situation.

A positive level of use of technology is demonstrated to some extent. The majority have pointed out that the general education system in Sri Lanka does not directly intervene for the country's economy and a majority have recommended that the syllabus should be changed.

5. Issues and problems identification with General Education in Sri Lanka

- Attention should be paid to the issues that have arisen in the current education system. Among them, the main problem is the problematic situation that has emerged related to education reforms. The lack of a long-term plan in school education and the reforms introduced from time to time have failed to achieve the desired goals. The need for modern reforms to suit the current world has arisen.
- There is a huge mismatch between the output of the education system and the labor market. Any education system must be focused on the job market demand. But in Sri Lanka, there is no way to examine or evaluate skills or develop skills. The education system should be correlated with the labor market demand.

- Although it has been mentioned that there is a student-centered education system, the truth is that it is an exam-centered education system. There is a competency-based education system, but in the end, the examination system evaluates not the skills acquired by the students, but the memorized memory. What has happened in this system is that the skills of the students are not highlighted and their future world is not clear and a big gap between the education system and the world of work has emerged.
- Moreover, the quality of education in this general education system as well as the need for teachers who go beyond the traditional framework is a problem that has emerged very strongly. The questionable conditions of the education administration have generated huge administrative costs in the complex hierarchy of the administration and the cost of developing teachers has been minimal. Teacher training institutes and national educational institutes have failed to achieve the desired results.
- The impact of the social, economic, and family background on the student community as well as the problems faced by the parents regarding education is another matter that needs attention. Instead of focusing on the goals unique to their abilities and skills, children follow the dreams of their parents, the value of education without the child's talent fades away and a pattern of professionals and workers is created through rote memorization.
- At present, the education system in Sri Lanka is becoming an outdated education system. In Sri Lanka, this is an effective educational outcome. This education system requires 13 years of in-school education from grade one to thirteen. This is the most precious period of human life. Centered in life. On the other hand, it is this education system that lays the foundation of the generation that determines the country's economy. But according to other countries, Sri Lanka's education system is in a very weak place.
- There are many problems in the education system of Sri Lanka. Although the National Curriculum should be revised every 8 years, it is not done properly. A primary issue is the lack of focus on essential issues that need to be addressed while revising the curriculum. It is a fundamental problem that due to Sri Lanka not allocating the special place reserved for its own education policy and curriculum by the countries with advanced education systems in the world as well as the developed countries, the

changes that must necessarily take place in the curriculum are not taking place. While developing the curriculum, new experiences of knowledge, demands from the industrial field, labor market, technological advancements, economic and political needs, environmental changes, etc. should be focused on, but it is a big problem not to do so.

- Another big problem facing the Sri Lankan education sector is that the curriculum development experts are not properly assigned. It is problematic that the way these experts should operate in determining the critical factor structures needed to engage in surveys, research and innovation by focusing on the education policies in place in other countries of the world and studying new trends is not happening more actively and widely than it is now.
- Another problem that Sri Lanka is facing is that the objectives of education cannot be achieved due to the excessive content of the curriculum. It is questionable to have a syllabus that does not cover each grade and does not change over time.
- It is a big problem that the teachers do not have proper guidance regarding the educational process, as well as not using other sources besides the teacher's guide books, and the teachers do not have any kind of understanding of how to make the learning process interesting and practical.
- In Sri Lanka's existing education system, the quality of the education system is deteriorating day by day due to the non-operation of a certification system to confirm the quality of the education system. There are public schools, semi-public schools, private schools etc. operating in Sri Lanka and the quality of the education provided by all these schools has been challenged due to the lack of any certification.
- At present, teachers are recruited from formal institution-based pre-service diploma holders who study National Diploma of Education in National Faculties of Education and from degree or diploma holders without formal pre-service teacher education and this second type of teacher recruitment does not have any professional knowledge or experience in teaching. In the absence of this, the teaching and learning process has been hampered.

6. Recommendations and Proposals

- In Finland, pre-school education, comprehensive education and upper secondary education are free, and higher education is mostly free. The goal here is that everyone, regardless of family income, has an equal opportunity to receive high-quality education and become active citizens. Sri Lanka has a free education system, but its goal should be different from that of Finland. All should aim to get high quality education and become active citizens.
- All comprehensive school teachers in Finland have a master's degree. Comprehensive school classroom teachers, who teach grades 1-6, are pedagogy specialists. Grade 7-9 teachers are experts in the subjects they teach, but this is not the case in Sri Lanka. In order to join the teaching service, it should be mandatory for all teachers to have a master's degree, and experts in education should be hired to teach students above the age of 12. The time has come to change both these categories of teachers who join the teaching service through colleges and universities and mostly the students who do not get university degrees and the teachers who join the teaching service after the university competitive examination. Because teachers have a unique responsibility in deciding the entire future of the country. According to the system in this country, teaching can be described as a profession that can be entered easily. This system should be changed.
- Teachers are free to design their lessons independently based on national and regional curricula. Recently, the curriculum has emphasized, for example, the investigation of institutions, everyday phenomena and information and communication technology covering several subjects. This is not the case in Sri Lanka. There are contradictions between the syllabus and the teacher's manual
- In the Finnish education system, children often have the same teacher for the first six years. The teacher knows the students well and is able to develop lessons to suit their needs. One important goal is for students to learn how to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. But while the teachers do not take responsibility for the students in Sri Lanka, changing the teacher at every grade can easily replace the

above method followed by Finland for the problem of not recognizing the needs and talents of the students.

- The teacher evaluates the progress of the students in the school. In comprehensive education, all grades are given by the teacher. There are no national exams. Instead, learning outcomes are monitored with sample-based assessments. These are usually organized in ninth grade. If the child or young person has recently moved to Finland, he or she can receive preparatory education for comprehensive education. Preparatory education usually takes one year. But the damage that has been caused by the examination-centered system in Sri Lanka can be used for the sake of the future generations or to correct the observation method followed by these countries. Children should be taught not to memorize but should be given the opportunity to learn through experience.
- Compulsory education in Finland extended in 2021. After comprehensive school, all young people must study until they graduate from secondary education or reach the age of 18. A youth should apply for higher secondary education if he has completed 9th grade. If this situation can be implemented in Sri Lanka too, the number of school leavers from the age of 16 can be kept at a minimum level.
- Normal upper secondary school in Finland takes 2-4 years depending on the student. Upon completion, students are eligible to apply for vocational education based at universities, universities of applied sciences or general upper secondary schools. In a country where these kinds of educational opportunities are implemented, the creation of a group of people who have attained a qualification that meets the demand of the country's labor market. The problem of not having enough workers to meet the current demand in Sri Lanka's labor market can be solved by maintaining the above education system.

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Abbreviations

ISCED - International Standard Classification of Education

MoE - Ministry of Education

PEA - Provincial Education Authority

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

NER -Net Enrollment Rate

HERQA - Higher Education Relevance and Qualify Agency

TVET - Technical and Vocational Education

ABE - Alternative Basic Education

EGSLCE - Ethiopia General School Leaving Certificate Examination