

Title of the study : **Management of Education**
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Introduction

Therefore, time that the MHRECA and the other agencies at the centre sat round a table to clearly identify

- their respective roles and functions,
- factors that stand in the way of their performing these roles and functions efficiently and effectively,
- measures that should be taken to overcome these (listed in order of priority), and
- interim steps that may be necessary, as some of the remedial measures may take some time to bear fruit..

Representatives of the Treasury/ Department of Management Services should be associated in the discussion, which may even take a day or two of undivided attention.

The second stage of the exercise would be to go through the same process to identify the overlaps and duplication between the central agencies and the provincial authorities. This would be the more difficult part of the exercise as the Provincial Councils would naturally like to have in their hands all the powers and functions vested in them under the 13th Amendment which the central Ministry seems reluctant to give up for good reasons or bad.

It is the Ministry's responsibility to ensure that, not only the Ministry, but also the whole system functions efficiently and effectively. Seeking solutions to problems that the different agencies (which form part of the total system) face, cannot entirely be left to them to solve. The Ministry has an over-arching responsibility and must engage in a continuing, system-wide performance review to identify major snags and institutional problems, which affect both the quality and the 'quantity' of services that the system must deliver to the public.

Recommendations

1. A number of reports and studies since the Ernest and Young Report of 1996 have referred to overlaps and duplication in the Ministry organization. These continue despite a number of organizational changes that have been carried out. It is recommended that the structure proposed by the Committee on Rationalization of Institutional Structures in May 2002, modified as follows, be implemented:
 - 1) Planning and Performance Review Division;
 - 2) Education Development Division;
 - 3) School Supplies, Services and Works Division
 - 4) Administration and Finance Division; and
 - 5) Educational Services Establishments Division.
2. There is no clarity in regard to the role and functions of the Ministry of School Education. This is not in the interest of either the Ministry of School Education (MSE) or the Ministry of Human Resources, Education and Cultural Affairs (MHRECA) or the overall system they preside over. The respective roles, functions and responsibilities of the two Ministries should be clearly spelt out. Financial responsibilities of the two Ministries are diluted, and the accountability of the two Chief Accounting Officers (Secretary/MHECA and Secretary/SE) remains vague. Budgetary provision should be separately made for the two Ministries and lines of accountability clearly drawn. There should also be a clear allocation of staff to go along with the functions of the two Ministries.

3. The overlaps and duplication of functions between the Ministry and other agencies have been referred to at regular intervals. However, no serious attempt has been made to put things right. A 'round-table' should be convened of the top management of these institutions to clearly identify the long and short-term measures that must be implemented to overcome this state of affairs. The overlaps and duplication between the Ministry and other agencies at the centre must be first resolved, and overlaps between the centre and the provincial level taken up as the second part of the exercise. It may be helpful to associate the Treasury and the Department of Management Services in this exercise.
4. MHRECA should set up a high level Performance Review and Coordination Committee (PRCC) to address system-wide issues, and strengthen inter-agency communication and coordination. The PRCC should be kept small in size and will consist of heads of relevant agencies at the centre and key officials of the Ministry from the point of view of overall coordination and system-wide performance review, with Secretary/HRECA as chair. There may be others invited to attend depending on specific items in the agenda, which may warrant their presence. It should meet on a pre-set agenda at least once in two months, if not earlier. A running record of action taken on its decisions should be maintained and tabled at each meeting of the PRCC until action has been completed and the matter laid to rest. System-wide performance should be assessed not merely in terms of quantitative targets, but more importantly, from the point of view of quality through selective quality checks on actual performance.
5. The present Policy, Planning and Monitoring Division should be re-named the Planning and Performance Review Division. This Division will carry out/coordinate performance reviews in addition to its other work, and service the Performance Review and Coordination Committee.
6. Proper procedures should be followed and basic tenets of fair play and justice adhered to in regard to appointments, promotions and transfers within the education system. This is crucial in any attempt to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system.
7. Unless training forms an integral part of a package of sound personnel and placement policies, the returns to investment from training will be very small. The sooner the assumption that training alone can deliver the goods, and can make up for the absence of such policies, is dispelled - the better it would be. GEP 2, for instance, has invested heavily in training. An independent study should be made to see how purposeful and results-oriented these expenditures have been, to draw lessons for the future.
8. Early steps should be taken to fill the existing vacancies for SLEAS officers at different levels in the provincial cadre. There should be a more rational distribution of SLEAS staff between the centre and the provinces as well as within the provinces.
9. The Divisional Education Officers should function as field officers 'attached' to the Zonal Office, but based in their respective Divisions, and not as a separate layer in a structural hierarchy. They should visit every single school in their division ideally once every term or, at least, once in six months. These visits must not be in the nature of fleeting ad hoc visits, but meant to focus on matters relating to the teaching-learning process and any special problems that the schools may face on the managerial side. Zonal Offices should exercise greater supervision over the Divisional Education Officers than at present.
10. A considerable amount of energy and resources have been spent on preparing the ground for School Based Management, in place of the top-down bureaucratic structure we have hitherto been used to. Steps should be taken to introduce SBM to a selected group of schools, preferably picked from among 1AB schools, where the ground conditions will be more satisfactory for introducing a larger measure of

- managerial autonomy. In the light of experience gained, SBM should thereafter be taken to the other schools in stages.
11. The National Education Commission should consider conducting an opinion survey, through an independent specialist organization, to find out the public perception of the impact of devolution on the education system. A special effort should be taken to obtain the views of the key stakeholders of the system.
 12. The major contributory factor for overall inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the system lies in the extreme politicization that has taken total command of the system. Unless something is done about this, no amount of structural and organizational changes can prevent a total breakdown of the system, signs of which are already evident. The present period of cohabitation between the two main political parties in the country offers an opportunity to stem the tide, and the opportunity should not be lost.
 13. International schools (and other similar schools) should be brought under some degree of state control to ensure maintenance of standards and prevention of abuse. The Line Ministry or the Provincial Councils, as may be appropriate, should be made responsible for their registration, supervision and quality assurance under an appropriate legal and regulatory framework which recognizes these institutions as legitimate educational institutions.
 14. Private fee-levying schools should be given the choice of teaching in the English medium and preparing their students for either local or foreign examinations. Private non fee levying schools, however, should be required to subscribe to the medium policy applicable to state schools. They should be given the option of reverting to the status of private fee-levying schools if they wish to make use of the option of teaching in the English medium.
 15. Private non fee levying schools receiving financial aid from the state should be required to admit a specified number of deserving pupils who pass the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination in fulfillment of their social responsibility. The government grant given to these schools should be accordingly increased, based on an agreed formula of cost per pupil so admitted. Private fee-levying schools should also be encouraged to admit a limited number of Grade 5 scholars through a system of vouchers paid for by the state or through privately funded scholarships.
 16. The assistance of schools permitted to teach in the English medium should be obtained to train more and more teachers competent to teach English in the state schools. The possibility of the Association of International Schools establishing a College of Education for the training of English teachers with technical assistance from abroad, arranged through the intervention of government, should be explored.
 17. Private sector initiatives in education should be encouraged subject to a regulatory framework and a code of ethics that is strictly enforced. While this will take some part of the load off the state system and provide some element of choice to parents who seek an option to what the state has to offer, it will also help the country to save valuable foreign exchange which is flowing out of the country in search of options which are not available within the country.
 18. A system should be devised to enable private 'tutories' who are competent to teach English to be registered and brought into the mainstream of a concerted drive to improve the standard of English teaching, particularly in the disadvantaged state schools.
 19. More doors should be opened for the private sector, community organizations and other non-state sector initiatives to play a larger role in building a knowledge based society in Sri Lanka, if the country is to move forward as other countries have done in the region.

20. The American concept of Charter Schools which "straddle the line traditionally distinguishing public from private schools" should be adapted with suitable modifications to obtain community participation in the management of schools.
21. There is a need for a regular mechanism for policy makers to consult public opinion as a continuing activity. The NEC should consider implementing the proposal made in the White Paper of 1981 to hold District Education Conferences and a National Education Convention once in two years for review of educational policies and practices as well as for ascertaining national opinions on educational policies and plans.
22. It is a common feature in Sri Lanka to see educational policies being formulated and reaching the implementation stage without the costs being worked out, which does not do the system any good. Hence, institutions vested with the responsibility of policy formulation should be strengthened with expertise from the fields of economics and financial analysis.