

Summary of Recommendations

In pursuance of its mandate to advise the government on education policy the National Education Commission has formulated these proposals on general education for consideration by the government.

These policy proposals are an outcome of an eighteen months' process of preparation of over twenty evaluation studies of the present situation and on-going reforms; review of the contextual factors that have determined the contours of the general education system; public consultations; interactive discussions in the Commission; Standing Committee and sub-committees; and consequently, distillation of the insights and experiences of a large number of committed individuals and groups. The Commission has endeavoured to maintain continuity by strengthening successful on going policy reforms and to stimulate change to meet emerging needs and challenges, in the context of national goals.

The general education system has linkages with the tertiary and vocational education systems and is an integral part of the national development process that impinges on the lives of all Sri Lankans. In this context the vision of a holistic human development encompasses social, economic, political and personal development and ethical values reflected in our religious traditions and is rooted in the principles of equity, relevance and excellence in a transformative process of education.

In consonance with the objectives of the reforms, these proposals are presented in three related areas (i) educational opportunity (ii) renewal and relevance of curriculum related activities and (iii) efficiency through professionalisation of educational personnel and management.

Educational opportunity - Equity and Excellence

Compulsory Education

- 1. The compulsory school attendance regulations of 1997 should be amended to enforce compulsory attendance from 5 to 16 years in schools or in vocational education institutions or, as a transitional measure, in non-formal literacy classes from 2005.*
- 2. The Planning Unit of the Ministry and Zonal Planning Units should collect and publish annually data pertaining to out-of-school children*

and school drop-outs from each grade to facilitate monitoring of the implementation of these regulations.

The Grade 5 Scholarship Examination and Bursary Scheme

3. *The Grade 5 scholarship examination should be restructured to comprise the following two papers:*
 - (i) *A General Paper to test general ability/aptitude (45 mts.)*
 - (ii) *A paper to assess the Essential Learning Competencies (ELCs) identified to be tested at the end of primary education (Key Stage 3) under the on-going curriculum reforms in primary education, in place of the paper on the content of all subjects in primary grades. It is envisaged that such an examination will be less stressful for children and be consonant with the objectives of the curriculum reforms.*

4. *The income qualification (Rs. 6000 p.a.) for eligibility for a bursary and the Bursary award of Rs. 240 per month for ten months are inadequate in the present context. It is proposed as soon as it is practicable*
 - (a) *to increase the family income limit to Rs. 36,000 p.a.*
 - (b) *to increase the bursary award to Rs. 500 per month (Rs. 5000 for 10 months)**without reducing the number of bursaries (10,000) that are being awarded currently.*

Ancillary Services

5. *It is proposed that a mid morning meal should be provided for children in primary schools in disadvantaged communities, with the assistance of donor agencies.*

6. *Policies pertaining to the provision of free textbooks, uniforms and subsidised transport should be continued and implemented more efficiently.*

School Structure and Classification

7. *The junior secondary education structure should be reorganised to provide a common coherent four year junior secondary education (Grades 6-9) without diluting its quality by a transitional Grade 6.*

8. *The classification of schools should be streamlined by introducing a simple classification system based on the length of education (span of years in schools)*
 - *Primary schools (Gr. 1- 5)*
 - *Secondary schools (Gr. 1-11/Gr. 6-11)*
 - *Senior secondary schools (Gr. 1-13/Gr. 6-13)*
in place of the present system of 4 types of schools - 1AB, 1C, 2, 3.
 - (a) *A catchment area of 2 km should be identified for each Primary school or primary section of a school*
 - (b) *Primary schools should be organised as 'feeder' schools to one or more secondary/senior secondary schools within a distance of 5 km.*
9. *At least one school in each Administrative Division (according to population) should be identified and developed as a potential Provincial 'centre of excellence' in order to promote equity in the distribution of schools and excellence in education, in the context of disparities in the school system. The school could be a present 1AB, 1C, Central or DSD school that has reached an adequate level of performance. These schools should be administered by the relevant Provincial Council. Criteria for the selection and development of these schools are found in pages 101-103.*
10. *A limited number of National (All Island) Schools, perhaps 30-50 in number, should be identified on strict criteria. These schools will also ensure access to high quality education to students, particularly scholarship holders, from any Division, Zone or District. These schools should be administered by the central government (Ministry). Criteria for selection of these schools are found in pages 103-105.*
11. *National (All Island) Schools and Provincial Centres of Excellence should be identified by a panel comprising educators from outside the Ministry and central and provincial education officials. Any subsequent addition to the list of these schools should be made by the panel and be based on the same criteria.*
12. *The best DSD schools (after evaluation) should be included in the group of schools selected to be developed as Provincial 'centres of excellence'. These schools should have the potential for rapid development and public acceptance. The remaining DSD schools should be developed as a second tier of schools that will develop to be local centres of educational opportunity.*

13. *The right of every child to primary education in a school within 2 km and to secondary education within 5 km from the residence, should be recognised, irrespective of the size of the student population and the community.*
14. *Competent and committed zonal level committees, in collaboration with community based organisations, should identify the small schools (with 200 or less student enrolment) that need to be supported to meet the educational needs of small communities.*
15. *Small schools should be organized wherever possible as 'feeder' schools to the nearest large secondary school in order to limit the exodus to larger schools.*
16. *The provisions of the circular pertaining to the deployment of teachers on the basis of a uniform student-teacher ratio should be amended to suit the requirement of small schools.*
17. *Selected small schools should be developed as learning centres that meet the multifaceted needs of the community.*
18. *It is the obligation of the central Ministry and Provincial Education Authorities to prescribe, provide and strictly enforce minimum requirements in all schools, large or small, in the urban, rural or plantation sectors.*

School Facilities in the Conflict affected areas

19. *It is recommended strongly that the rehabilitation programme in the conflict affected areas should be given high priority. These programmes should be expedited and implementation monitored so that students in these areas will have access to all education facilities as early as possible.*

Medium of Instruction – State and State assisted schools

20. *The medium of instruction in the primary grades should continue to be Sinhala/Tamil. Oral English should be strengthened to facilitate the development of communication skills.*
21. *Bilingualism should be promoted by using English as the medium of instruction in selected subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Information Technology in the secondary grades, year by year from Grade 6.*

Sinhala/Tamil should continue to be the medium of instruction in some subjects.

22. *Students of secondary grades should be given the option to*
 - (a) *study any subject in the English medium in the GCE OL and GCE AL grades subject to the availability of teachers, and*
 - (b) *sit the GCE OL and GCE AL examinations in the medium of their choice.*

23. *Access to English should be extended island wide over the next five years, starting in 2004 with the National Schools and Provincial Centres of Excellence to which scholarship holders will also be sent, so that at least one or two schools in each administrative division will teach the selected subjects in English as early as possible.*

Private and International Schools

24. *The appropriate authority for granting permission for opening and registration of schools should be the Ministry responsible for Education. Any private/international school must conform to the requirements laid down by the Ministry regarding minimum facilities and standards given in pages 121-122.*

25. *There should be three types of private schooling arrangements.*
 - (a) *Non-fee levying, assisted Private Schools*
 - (b) *Fee levying Private Schools*
 - (c) *International Schools*

26. *Section 25 of the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (Supplementary Provisions) Act No. 8 of 1961 should be either amended or the Act repealed to allow the establishment of schools in the non state sector with the approval of the Ministry and subject to the demand for such schools in the community in which the school is to be located.*

27. *There should be no restriction on the medium of instruction in the Fee-levying Private Schools and International Schools. However, non fee-levying Assisted Private Schools should conform to guidelines applicable to state schools with regard to the medium of instruction.*

Admission Policy - Schools

28. *In view of the lack of consensus on an alternative modality, it is proposed that the 2003 admission scheme based on the new circular 2003/23 should be monitored and evaluated and the policy reviewed in 2004.*

Admission to Universities

29. *The 'Z-Score' technique should be used to rank students in each stream/discipline.*
30. *The minimum requirements for admission to all disciplines should be passes in all three subjects with at least one 'C' grade at the GCE AL examination. However, each discipline (e.g. Medicine, Engineering, Architecture) may specify additional requirements for admission, i.e. a maximum of two subjects in a selected area.*
31. *A Central Admission Agency should select the total number for admission to each discipline of the University system using the criteria specified and allocate students to different Universities on the basis of merit and order of preferences indicated by the applicants.*
32. *Admission to Arts, Social Sciences, Commerce, Management, Law and Architecture courses should be based on all island merit.*
33. *For admission to courses in Medicine, Engineering, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Agriculture, Dental Science, Veterinary Science, and Applied Sciences, the all-island merit quota should be increased from the present figure of 40% to 60% in 2004 and to 80% in 2006. Criteria should be revised at each stage after reviewing the availability of facilities, especially in rural schools. The highest priority should be given to equip schools to reach the requisite standards.*
34. *District quotas should be computed on the basis of the number of candidates sitting the AL examination, and not on the basis of the population ratio.*

Early Childhood Care and Development

35. *The National Policy that is being formulated by the Ministry of Social Welfare should be followed by the preparation of a Plan of Action to be implemented in collaboration with, for instance, the Ministries of Education and Health and Provincial Administrations.*

36. *All Day Care Centres and Pre-schools should be registered with the Children's Secretariat.*
37. *The state should prescribe minimum standards for space, physical facilities, equipment and qualifications of teachers.*
38. *The National Institute of Education should collaborate with the Children's Secretariat in developing flexible guidelines for activities and materials to be used in Pre-schools to achieve desirable outcomes identified to meet child development needs.*

Education for Children with Disability

39. *Separate units with adequate cadre should be established in*
 - (i) *the Ministry of Human Resources, Education and Cultural Affairs, and*
 - (ii) *the National Institute of Education (as before), to develop, implement and monitor appropriate programmes.*
40. *The National Institute of Education should be provided with resources to extend its programmes of*
 - (i) *developing learning materials,*
 - (ii) *training all teachers, and*
 - (iii) *orienting teachers, Principals and education officers to implement and monitor programmes.*
41. *Inclusive education for children with disability should be a compulsory component of the teacher education curriculum in University Faculties of Education, the National Institute of Education, National Colleges of Education and Teachers' Centres.*
42. *Children with disability should be given preference where possible for residential accommodation in schools, and in the long term, one school at least in each zone should provide facilities for such children in their hostels.*

Non- Formal Education

43. *The Non Formal Education, Continuing and Special Education Division should be restructured as the Division of Non-formal and Continuing Education and a formal mechanism should be created to enable the*

Division to work effectively with provincial and Non-Formal Education officers.

44. *The Division should work through the Zonal officers and community based organizations to activate the School Attendance Committees to motivate and assist all children in the compulsory school age to enroll in and to attend school regularly.*
45. *The Division should avoid initiating a multiplicity of programmes but should develop model Community Learning Centres that will provide functional literacy, skills training, English language and other relevant programmes for out of school children, youth and adults, and liaise with other ministries, private enterprises, NGO's and community based organisations to provide the necessary services and support.*
46. *The Division should develop a few pilot projects for vulnerable groups such as "street children" and other economically deprived children.*
47. *The Non-Formal Education Division and Zonal officers should assist schools to organise programmes to meet community needs from the perspective of holistic human development.*

Curriculum Renewal, Quality and Relevance

Curriculum Structure

48. *The Primary Education Curriculum (Grades 1-5) developed in 1997 should be retained. The training of mathematics should be strengthened to raise levels of attainment.*
49. *The following changes are proposed in the junior secondary curriculum (Grades 6-9).*
 - (i) *A common 4 year curriculum*
 - (ii) *Changing "science and technology" to science as before to prevent the dilution of the science curriculum*
 - (iii) *Reverting to History, Geography and Civics/Civic Education in Grades 6-9 in place of "Environmental Studies" in Grade 6 and "Social Studies and History" in Grades 7-9.*
 - (iv) *Removing "Life Competencies" and incorporating values and personal growth enhancing skills in all subjects.*
 - (v) *Retaining and strengthening Technical Skills and adding computer literacy.*

- (vi) *Allocating at least 20% of the curriculum in all subjects to activity based projects / practical work which should be a compulsory component of the curriculum that will be assessed under School Based Assessment (SBA).*
 - (vii) *An Activity Room, as proposed in the 1997 reforms, should be organised in each school as early as possible for Technical skills as well as for activity based/practical work in other subjects where relevant.*
 - (viii) *The list of 12 subjects in the proposed junior secondary school curriculum (Grades 6-9) is given in pages 142-143.*
50. *The changes proposed in the senior secondary curriculum (Grades 10-11) are*
- (i) *Science instead of Science and Technology, with an expanded science syllabus.*
 - (ii) *History, Geography and Civics offered as social sciences with three compulsory sections in order to prevent a multiplicity of subjects at the GCE OL examination.*
 - (iii) *Addition of Information Technology to Technical subjects and removal of sea life resources technology and inland water resources technology as few students have opted for these subjects.*
 - (iv) *Omission of additional subjects owing to lack of space in the Time Table and the need to ensure that schools focus on teaching the ten subjects effectively. Options are available within aesthetic subjects and technical subjects.*
 - (v) *The list of subjects in the Grade 10-11 curriculum is given in page 145.*
 - (vi) *A project/assignment based approach with activities will be a compulsory component in the curriculum in each subject and will be assessed under School Based Assessment (SBA).*
51. *The following reforms are proposed in the senior secondary curriculum (Grades 12-13).*
- (i) *The curriculum should not be structured into academic streams - Science, Commerce and Arts - as at present. Streaming has a hierarchic connotation and it promotes compartmentalisation and rigidity in the curriculum. It is not a practice in most countries.*
 - (ii) *Pursuant to the abolition of types of school (e.g. 1AB and 1C) all schools with GCE AL grades should offer a small core curriculum that is not examined at the AL examination, and a flexible curriculum of subjects from which the three subjects can be selected.*
 - a. *The core curriculum should be allocated 10 periods a week and should comprise General English (5),*

*Project/assignment (2), Information Technology (1)
Personality Development (1), Library (1).*

- b. These subjects can be selected from the list of subjects that are offered at the GCE A/L examination. A maximum of two subjects from a selected area of specialization may be stipulated by a Faculty of a University or a College of Technology. The third subject could be from the full range of subjects.*
- (iii) Student should reach a minimum standard in*
 - a. a practical examination in science subjects conducted at School/zonal/Provincial level by a panel of university staff*
 - b. an activity based assignment in non science subjects evaluated by an external panel in the same district to qualify to sit for the GCE AL examination.*
- (iv) The earlier list of subjects that can be offered at the GCE AL examination has been reduced from 41 to 31 and Technology (with six options) and Information Technology have been added (see pages 149 - 150).*

The Common General Paper will continue to be a compulsory component for university admission.

The Learning - Teaching Process

- 52. In order to work towards the transformation of learning - teaching techniques, it is necessary that teaching methodologies and student activities should not merely transmit knowledge but also contribute to*
- (i) the development of generic skills that are necessary for effective functioning in personal life, inter-personal relationships, employment/economic activities and society. Examples of such skills are critical and divergent thinking, creativity, initiative, leadership, problems solving, decision making, responsibility and team work. These are the products of the totality of the education process, encompassing classroom activities, field based projects, co-curricula activities and the social climate of the school or its "hidden curriculum".*
 - (ii) the promotion of human values that are the bedrock of personal growth that is consonant with ethical norms, democratic values, national harmony, social equity and gender equity and a holistic vision of human development.*

Primary Education

53. *The reforms introduced in the primary curriculum in 1997 should be sustained and strengthened through*
- (i) *capacity building in curriculum development and in student assessment,*
 - (ii) *development of models for*
 - (a) *centres of excellence in primary education*
 - (b) *small primary schools.*

Promotion of Mathematics, Science and IT Education at Secondary Level

54. *Mathematics, Science and Information Technology in the secondary school curriculum should be strengthened and expanded by*
- (i) *replacing “Environmental Studies” in Grade 6 and “Science and Technology” in grades 7-11 with “Science” based on a revised and expanded curriculum.*
 - (ii) *introducing an activity based student centred approach in Mathematics and Science.*
 - (iii) *provision of adequate /laboratory and Information Technology facilities.*
 - (iv) *strengthening School Based Assessment with respect to assessing practical work, projects and assignments.*
 - (v) *extending the option of the English medium for science students depending on the availability of teachers.*
 - (vi) *popularising science education through the media, science centres, science parks, science camps.*
 - (vii) *introducing computer literacy in the core curriculum in the junior and senior secondary education grades and in teacher education.*
 - (viii) *providing facilities for Information Technology as a subject for the GCE OL and GCE AL examinations.*
 - (ix) *making provision for the teaching of mathematics and science in GCE AL grades in what are at present 1C schools in a phased programme over 3 years.*

Social Sciences

55. *The teaching of Social Sciences in secondary schools, should be strengthened and enriched by*
- (i) *re-introducing History, Geography and Civics in place of Environmental Studies in Grade 6 and Social Studies in Grades 7-11*

- (ii) *revitalising the learning – teaching process in these three subjects and enhancing their relevance to meet needs such as personal growth as well-balanced individuals, national identity and harmony, responsible citizenship, ethical values and behaviour, social justice, social cohesion, awareness of changing contours in the economy and environment and internationalism*
- (iii) *integrating generic skills such as critical thinking, initiative, problem solving, team work and human values in the content, activities and learning – teaching experiences.*
- (iv) *allocating at least 20% of the curriculum and time to a compulsory component of activity based learning within the school and in field studies which will be tested under School Based Assessment.*
- (v) *in History,*
 - (a) *stimulating interest in and understanding of the past*
 - (b) *promoting a sense of belonging, patriotism and a Sri Lankan identity*
 - (c) *understanding the world through main events and movements*
 - (d) *understanding the concept of change in how people lived through the ages*
 - (e) *developing analytical skills and a spirit of inquiry by seeking and evaluating information from sources, and investigation of local history*
- (vi) *in Civics, incorporating in content and activities*
 - (a) *understanding of the role of citizens and their rights and duties, good governance at local and central level, and the need for a vibrant, participatory democracy*
 - (b) *awareness of international norms of human rights, and specifically, political, civil, economic and social rights, including women’s rights and the rights of the child*
 - (c) *respect for the diversity of cultures and learning to live with others in harmony*
 - (d) *an issue based and activity based approach in classroom and field activities.*
- (vii) *in Geography, adopting learning-teaching processes that provide the students the opportunity*
 - (a) *to acquire a wide range of transferable skills such as collecting and analyzing statistical data, drawing conclusions, reading and construction of maps, using globes, atlases, satellite images and ICT*
 - (b) *to engage in geographical inquiry inside and outside the classroom to learn about a wide range of people, places and*

environment, and the interface of humans and the environment.

Promotion of English Education

56. *In the context of the increasingly important role of English in the national and global environment, it is necessary to work towards the goal of providing equal opportunity to all segments of the population to learn English.*

(i) *Primary education (Grades 1-5)*

- (a) *The oral English programme in Grades 1 and 2 should be strengthened and extended to Grade 5 in all schools and the formal teaching of English continue in Grades 3 to 5.*
- (b) *Educational administrators should ensure that all schools are provided with one or more teachers (depending on the size of the school) proficient in English to implement the programme in primary schools, and imaginative learning materials.*
- (c) *“Crash” residential and non residential programmes should be organized for teachers at National Colleges of Education, Teacher Training Institutes/Colleges and Teachers Centres during week ends and school vacations.*

(ii) *Junior secondary education (Grades 6-9)*

- (a) *A bilingual policy should be introduced in junior secondary classes to provide an enabling environment to ensure that all students, irrespective of socio-economic and/or regional disparities, have the opportunity to acquire a level of English proficiency adequate for higher education and career advancement. The teaching of Science, Mathematics, IT, Health and Physical Education and Environmental Studies and Social Studies has been introduced already in Grades 6 and 7 in schools that have opted to do but should be extended to all schools through a five year phased programme in 2004 to 2008. Some subjects should continue to be taught in Sinhala/Tamil.*
- (b) *In view of the lack of an adequate number of teachers proficient in English in 2004, teachers from at least one school in each Division (the proposed National (All Island) Schools and Provincial Centres of Excellence) should be selected initially for the training programme. In pursuance of equity and excellence, preference should be given to Grade V scholars in admission to these schools.*

- (c) *The number of schools in each Zone/Division should be increased each year to cover all schools by 2008.*
 - (d) *Physical facilities available in National Colleges of Education, and former Teacher Training Colleges (presently under-utilised) should be used for large scale programmes during vacations. Teachers' Centres should be used for continuing education in English throughout the year.*
 - (e) *English should be continued to be taught as a compulsory subject in the curriculum.*
- (iii) *Senior secondary education (Grades 10-11 : GCE O/L)*
- (a) *English is already a compulsory subject in these grades*
 - (b) *The bilingual policy should be extended to these grades from 2005/2006*
- (iv) *Senior secondary education (Grades 12-13: GCE A/L)*
- (a) *General English was introduced as a core subject in grades 12-13 under the reforms. As progress has been slow disparities in the provision of qualified teachers and material should be eliminated speedily.*
 - (b) *The use of time allocated for General English in the classroom should be monitored at Zonal level as the subject has tended to receive low priority.*
 - (c) *Schools have been given the option to teach Science subjects and Mathematics in the English medium in Grades 12-13. In the interest of equity it is necessary to ensure that initially at least one school in each Division according to population [National (All Island) Schools/Provincial Centres of excellence] is equipped with teachers proficient in English to implement this programme. Hence qualified teachers need to be appointed or transferred to these schools in 2004 and a phased teacher training programme should be organised to extend the programme to all senior secondary schools.*
 - (d) *Three National Colleges of Education are currently training English teachers. In addition, the former Teacher Training College in Peradeniya should be rehabilitated and developed with all modern facilities to function as an Institute for the training and continuing education of teachers of English to equip teachers (a) to teach English effectively as a subject, and (b) to teach selected subjects in the English medium.*
 - (e) *An English course should be incorporated and made compulsory for all those who enrol in postgraduate teacher education courses and are not proficient in English. Postgraduate courses*

should be offered also in the English medium or initially bilingually.

- (f) Where necessary*
 - (i) retired English teachers and retired Science teachers proficient in English should be appointed to fill the lacunae in the availability of teachers, and*
 - (ii) the services of qualified English teachers should be obtained under the VSO programme or from overseas.*
- (g) A scheme of additional financial and other incentives should be introduced for teachers of English, Science and Mathematics and Information Technology in schools in disadvantaged locations.*

Orientation to the World of Work

- 57. While it is neither desirable nor feasible to vocationalise secondary education, general education has an important role to play in providing relevant knowledge and skills and in promoting generic skills such as initiative, decision making, problem solving, team work, responsibility, leadership, communication skills in order to equip students to function effectively as employees, employers and self employed members of the labour force.*
- (a) The Technical Skills component of the core curriculum in the Junior Secondary Grades 6-9, comprising graphic arts, computer literacy, elementary technology, agriculture and food preparation, should provide training in relevant multi skills and 'hands on' experience, awareness of the changing needs of the economy, and at least minimum competence in basic skills in Information and Communication Technologies.*
 - (b) The Technical Studies/Design and Technology component of the compulsory curriculum of the GCE OL grades with its provision of eight alternative vocational courses should initiate students into specific occupations in the agriculture, industry and services sectors of the economy. This component should be developed and conducted with the assistance of relevant employment agencies.*
 - (c) The six options offered in the new subject, Technology, developed for the GCE AL grades, and existing courses such as Agriculture and Business Studies, should have a practical component/ assignment organised in collaboration with employment establishments. Information Technology has been introduced as a separate subject.*

- (d) *The vocational guidance component of the Counselling and Guidance programme in secondary schools should provide information on vocational training programmes and labour market trends and opportunities from employment agencies including Chambers of Industry and Commerce.*
- (e) *There should be formal links between schools and vocational training institutions or programmes in the district/zone to facilitate co-operation through staff and student visits and use of facilities in vocational institutions, and to assist school leavers to enrol in courses in these institutions.*
- (f) *The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission and the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Training should be requested to re-organise vocational institutions/centres in each district to provide a diversity of vocational training opportunities for school leavers and to prepare a handbook to be sent to all secondary schools.*
- (g) *The private sector should assist in the provision of equipment and facilities for technical teachers and students.*

Counselling and Guidance

- 58. (i) *A committee of competent persons should be appointed to develop a five year plan for counselling and Guidance as this area has received low priority in the school system.*
- (ii) *Programmes should be implemented early for the in-service training of two teacher counsellors in each school for (a) educational and personal guidance, and (b) vocational guidance.*
- (iii) *The National Institute of Education should develop information and test materials and organise training of trainers programmes in counselling and guidance at provincial level.*
- (iv) *Schools should provide adequate time and space for interaction between teacher counsellors and students and with parents.*
- (v) *Counselling and Guidance should be a compulsory course in the curriculum of all teacher education institutions.*
- (vi) *Annual vocational information programmes should be organised for students in senior secondary grades with the assistance of employment establishments.*

Education Technology

- 59. (i) *A team of experts should be appointed to prepare a national policy and action plan for technology-enhanced education.*

- (ii) *Teachers and other ICT personnel in the education sector should be trained in the following areas*
 - (a) *Awareness, system administration, usage of basic ICT tools in education (teaching-learning and administration) and*
 - (b) *Technology in Education and Management Information Systems (MIS) at Postgraduate Diploma and Masters levels and Technology in Education and MIS in National Colleges of Education (NCOE) courses and in-service teacher training programmes.*

Training and re-training of existing teachers should be carried out with the assistance of the Universities, NIE, NCOE's and private sector institutions.

- (iii) *Connectivity should be established to all schools in stages. Internet Protocol (IP) backbone of the SLT or any other operator may be used for this purpose. An education Virtual Private Network (VPN) should be established to cover as many parts of the country as possible.*
- (iv) *The cost of communication services required in education should be maintained at affordable level through the promotion of Education-VPN as a multi-media network to provide all possible communication services through it.*
- (v) *Low-cost computer clusters based upon client-server architecture and special configurations available for educational purposes should be utilised wherever feasible.*
- (vi) *Pooling expensive and short-lived hardware resources should be promoted wherever possible in order to improve the utilisation factor of hardware.*
- (vii) *A National Education Network should be established to make available educational resources to the widest possible audience. The availability of content in Sinhala and Tamil should be ensured.*
- (viii) *IT and MIS should be used extensively in school management and student records and functions of school administration should be automated. These programmes should be introduced first in National and Provincial Centres of Excellence and then extended to schools on (a) Zonal basis, and (b) Divisional basis.*

Text Books

- 60. (i) *The Educational Publications Department (EPD) should invite applications (not tenders) from interested and competent writers with some familiarity with the classroom learning environment, to write textbooks in conformity with the syllabus outline prepared by the National Institute of Education.*

- (ii) *The Department should ensure high quality in textbooks by appointing qualified subject panels*
 - (a) *to evaluate proposals and the credentials of applicants, and*
 - (b) *to assess the quality of the drafts of three chapters of the proposed book, select at least two books per subject per grade, and*
 - (c) *to review the final draft, including its subject content, activities, illustrations, exercises and overall presentation.*
- (iii) *The department should call for tenders from printing establishments and select printers who can assure a high quality of printing, colourful illustrations and imaginative presentation. Printers should be requested to print large textbooks in three volumes (for each term).*
- (iv) *Principals and staff in schools should select any textbook per subject per grade which should be provided free to students from Grade 1 to Grade 11 by the state. Other approved books will be placed in school libraries for the use of students and teachers. All textbooks will be available for sale in bookshops.*

School Based Assessment

- 61. (i) *The present School Based Assessment schemes for Grades 6-9 and for Grades 10-13 should be reviewed by a competent Committee and a common scheme developed for all grades. The Committee should ensure that the scheme recommended is*
 - (a) *clear, coherent and simple, so that unnecessary burdens are not imposed on teachers that could affect the reliability of the process and their teaching activities,*
 - (b) *balanced in its coverage of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour,*
 - (c) *comprehensive in the use of a wide range of assessment modalities without undue reliance on written tests,*
 - (d) *flexible in providing opportunities for teachers to adapt to specific school contexts.*
- (ii) *The practice initiated in 2002 of recording SBA grades in the GCE OL Certificate should be continued for a period of three years and the policy be reviewed and revised, if necessary, after obtaining feedback from independent studies.*
- (iii) *School Based Assessment in GCE AL grades such as assessment of science practicals and projects and assignments in other subjects, should be conducted by external panels at regular intervals to eliminate subjectivity.*

- (iv) *Student record books in each grade should include information on personality and behaviour traits observed in classroom and school activities. This cumulative information should be made available to counsellors, career guidance officers and employers.*

Private Tuition

62. *As the demand for private tuition has been fuelled by the competitive examination ethos and the poor quality of teaching, resulting also in the conduct of private classes during school time, it is necessary not only to ensure qualitative improvement in teaching in schools but also to introduce and enforce regulations to prohibit*
- (i) *students in the formal school system participating in private tuition classes during school hours, and*
 - (ii) *teachers conducting private tuition classes during school hours.*

Professional Development of Teachers and Principals

Teacher Education

63. *A Teacher Education Board should be established in the Ministry of Education, Human Resources Development and Cultural Affairs. The Chairperson of the Board should be the Secretary, Cabinet Ministry responsible for Education. The responsibilities and the composition of the Board are given in pages 210-211.*
64. *Curriculum Development and examinations in teacher education should be the responsibility of*
- (a) *the universities for their own teacher education programmes and examinations.*
 - (b) *the National Institute of Education for*
 - *its own programmes*
 - *the programmes of the National Colleges of Education*
 - *Continuing Education programmes.*
65. *The National Colleges of Education should be encouraged to exercise autonomy in managing their institutions as provided for in the Manual of the National Colleges of Education.*
66. *All teacher education institutions should be co-educational in conformity with the policy pertaining to other higher/tertiary education institutions in the country.*

67. *Teacher education institutions should be multi-ethnic and multi religious where feasible, especially those located in or near urban centres with mixed population groups.*
68. *The goal of the teacher education policy is the development of an all graduate professionally qualified teaching force.*
69. *Teacher education programmes should be provided by*
- *The University Faculties/Departments of Education.*
 - *The National Institute of Education.*
 - *National Colleges of Education.*
 - *Teacher Education Institutes*
 - *Teachers' Centres*
70. *University Faculties/ Departments of Education and the National Institute of Education should continue to offer undergraduate (B.Ed.) and post-graduate programmes. National Colleges of Education (NCOE), currently 17 in number, should offer a three year National Diploma course comprising a two year course in the NCOEs and one year internship in schools.*
71. *As it has been observed that some courses in NCOEs are replicated excessively and that some curriculum areas are underserved in these institutions, it is desirable that:*
- *institutions concentrate on a limited number of school curriculum areas in their methodology courses.*
 - *the intake to specific curriculum areas be increased/ decreased according to current teacher demand and supply, and*
 - *adequate provision be made to meet the demand for teachers in Sinhala/Tamil/English media of instruction.*
72. *General English, Technical Skills, Counselling and Guidance, Computer Literacy, and teaching Sinhala to Tamil student and Tamil to Sinhala students should be incorporated in the core curriculum of all teacher education institutions.*
73. *A bilingual approach should be adopted, starting immediately in Science and Mathematics courses, and introducing English terms as widely as possible, in other courses.*
74. *Continuing Teacher Education Programmes should be provided in the Teacher Education Institutes, Teachers'Centres, Regional English Support*

Centres and Computer Resource Centres to meet the needs of the education system.

- (i) Curriculum Reforms*
 - (ii) Core Curriculum Reforms, e.g. English, Information Technology, Counselling & Guidance, Sinhala and Tamil as second languages*
 - (iii) Management*
 - (iv) National harmony, social equity and gender equality*
 - (v) Compulsory activity based projects to develop skills such as problem solving, decision making, team work and values*
75. *Entry to teacher education institutions should be based on performance at the GCE Advanced Level examinations and a selection mechanism should be designed to ascertain aptitude for teaching and interest in the teaching profession.*
76. *No teacher should be appointed to a school without an initial course in teacher education. Where this is not feasible, appointees should be required to complete a three months' teacher education programme.*
77. *Teachers with the National Colleges of Education Diploma should be required to register for the B. Ed. degree of the Open University or National Institute of Education and successfully complete the B.Ed. programme within seven years of appointment to schools.*
78. *Untrained Graduates should undergo three months induction course and be required to acquire the Post Graduate Diploma in Education within 5 years of appointment.*
79. *Accreditation mechanisms should ensure equivalence in the standards of programmes conducted by different teacher education institutions at each level.*
80. *Staff development plans should be developed in each institution to address professional development needs such as providing scholarships.*
81. *All teacher educators will be required to reach an accepted level of English proficiency for promotion to the next grade.*

Recruitment, Deployment and Promotions of Teachers and Principals

82. *A teacher cadre should be worked out for each school to meet its specific needs and requirements. Teacher recruitment and transfer should be school based so that the needs of schools such as lack of teachers for*

- English, Science, IT, technical studies, aesthetic subjects and physical education, are met as early as possible.*
83. *A pool of supply (substitute) teachers should be established for each zone.*
 84. *Until such time as a school based system can be implemented the National Policy on Transfer of Teachers should be implemented without political or other external influences.*
 85. *An independent panel to monitor and supervise the recruitment and deployment of teachers within zones should be established at the zonal level as it is likely to be more sensitive to the needs of local schools. An 'Appeal Mechanism' should also be established at provincial level.*
 86. *A special scheme should be developed to appoint or transfer teachers to small schools. Strategies such as attaching teachers in selected subjects to two or more schools in neighbouring communities and using multigrade teaching to make optimal use of a limited number of teachers, should be adopted.*
 87. *Incentives should be provided to teachers and principals serving in difficult areas,*
 - (i) *Financial incentives should be offered as in many countries, to attract to and retain teachers in schools in difficult areas. An allowance amounting to 25% of the salary as an incentive is suggested for the purpose,*
 - (ii) *Teachers quarters should be provided,*
 - (iii) *Children of teachers who opt or agree to serve in a difficult area should be given priority in admission to popular schools, and*
 - (iv) *Service in a school in a difficult area should be considered for foreign scholarships and promotions assessed on measurable criteria.*
 88. *A scheme of teacher promotions has been integrated in the Teachers Service Minute but has not been implemented. This scheme should be reviewed, amended if necessary, and implemented without fear or favour to ensure equity and quality in education. A scheme for merit promotions also should be introduced based on a performance appraisal.*
 89. *The Performance Appraisal schemes for teachers and principals that have been developed should be reviewed if necessary, and implemented without delay.*

90. *Teachers and Principals who are scheduled to retire during the school year, should be allowed to continue on contract basis until the end of the school (calendar) year.*
91. *A scheme of encashment of unutilised leave should be implemented for teachers and principals.*
92. *A committee should be appointed to review existing procedures for recruitment, deployment and promotion of principals in all the services - Sri Lanka Educational Administrative Service (SLEAS), Sri Lanka Principals' Service (SLPS) in order to eliminate anomalies pertaining to salary, contradictions in terms of service and promotional prospects, and to develop a National Policy, implemented and monitored by the Central Ministry in collaboration with Provincial administrations. The report of this committee should be presented to the Public Service Commission which is the authority for the appointment of Principals.*
93. *Strict criteria should be laid down and followed in the recruitment of Principals including*
 - (i) *educational and professional qualifications with preference to those with qualifications in educational management,*
 - (ii) *performance at an examination, and*
 - (iii) *personality qualities such as leadership, initiative, decision making capacity, responsibility, interpersonal relations as evidenced in records, appraisals and interviews.*
94. *Procedures laid down in regulations for the promotion of principals should be adhered to without any deviation caused by extraneous influences.*
95. *If Principals recruited have not had training in management they should be required to follow a three months' induction course in the Centre for Professional Development in Educational Management in the National Institute of Education, followed subsequently by successful performance in continuing education courses at the Centre (NIE) or in University Faculties/Departments of Education.*
96. *The scheme proposed by the Centre for Professional Development in Educational Management, NIE, to develop a pool of qualified persons with potential for appointment as principals when vacancies arise, should be implemented from 2004.*

Education Governance/Management

97. *There should be one Ministry dealing with the subject of education. There should be one Cabinet Minister and one Chief Accounting Officer (Secretary) responsible for the education sector. However, under such a set-up, it is possible to have two State or Deputy Ministers in charge of (i) Education Services and (ii) Higher/Tertiary Education under the Cabinet Minister with clear demarcation of duties. The State/Deputy Ministers are responsible to the Cabinet Minister, while the State Secretaries are responsible to the Secretary of the Cabinet Ministry. This hierarchy and line of authority should be clearly established and strictly observed.*
98. *Overlapping and duplication of functions within the Ministry and between the Ministry and other agencies coming under the Ministry must be resolved as an urgent priority by convening a meeting of the top management of these institutions to identify these overlapping areas and to take appropriate administrative and legislative measures to correct this situation.*
99. *It is necessary that the role and functions of the NIE should be clearly defined and its role in curriculum development and educational research strengthened. It is recommended that the NIE should not embark on higher degree programmes in areas where sufficient expertise is not available. The Universities are better equipped to provide postgraduate education leading to higher degrees for teachers in most of the disciplines.*
100. *The Ministry 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 chaired by the Secretary should meet at least once a month on a pre-set agenda.*
101. *The Department of Examinations which is responsible for the organisation and conduct of all national examinations should be independent with adequate authority and autonomy in decision making and in carrying out its duties and functions. Hence, it is recommended that this Department should be converted into the 'National Examinations Commission' with an independent Board of Management by legislation.*
102. *Well formulated schemes and procedures should be followed in regard to all appointments and promotions in the education system. Criteria should be based on merit and seniority, and fair play and justice must prevail at all times. Similarly, transfers should be effected through the*

- operation of Transfer Boards strictly following the agreed transfer policy. There should be no external interference, political or otherwise, in the appointment, promotion and transfer of teachers, principals and officers.*
103. *All high positions such as Commissioner-General/Examinations, Commissioner/Educational Publications, Chief Commissioner/ Colleges of Education and Director-General/NIE should be advertised and filled after following a transparent procedure.*
 104. *The lack of independent Public Service Commissions in the provinces has led to irregular appointments to the Provincial Education Service. In order to correct this situation it is recommended that independent Public Service Commissions should be appointed in all provinces, on the model of the independent Public Service Commission of the Central Government with the same powers and functions within the province. The Members of the Provincial Public Service Commissions also should be appointed by the Constitutional Council.*
 105. *The training of officers, principals and teachers should form an integral part of a package of sound personnel development and placement policies. Training should necessarily be need-based and selection for such training and foreign scholarships should be done on the basis of a set of strict criteria and transparent procedures.*
 106. *Linkage, coordination and cordial relationship should be established by the Central Ministry with the Provincial Authorities. This should take place both at the ministerial and official levels. Authorities in the Central Ministry should take initiatives and special attention to develop a suitable procedure and mechanism to establish strong linkages and effective coordination with the provincial and zonal authorities.*
 107. *Divisional Offices should be abolished and Zonal Education Offices strengthened to perform administrative, monitoring and supervisory functions. The number of Zonal Education Offices should be increased where necessary in order to implement this proposal effectively. The boundaries of new zones should be co-terminus with the existing administrative boundaries.*
 108. *School Based Management (SBM) should be introduced in stages to the school system as early as possible. All Principals and selected teachers should be specially trained in SBM and an effective awareness programme should be launched to create an awareness of SBM in the education system and among the general public.*

109. *There is a great need to introduce e-governance to the education system in Sri Lanka. All essential data and information relating to our island-wide education system should be available in a data bank for immediate retrieval. These data and information should be upto-date, accurate and should be available to political leaders and executive officers instantaneously for decision making. Therefore, the development and maintenance of the National Education Information Network to its full capacity should be given highest priority.*
- a. *The major components of the proposed National Education Information Network are, (i) Education Management Information system (EMIS), (ii) Financial Management Information system (FMIS), (iii) Geographical Information System (GIS), and (iv) General Services, which include e-mail facility, internet and web-based services.*
 - b. *This network at Isurupaya should be linked to all Provincial Offices and Zonal Offices spread throughout the island. Links should be established also to all schools with computer units through the Zonal Offices.*
110. *The following three major contributory factors have been clearly identified as reasons for the overall inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the system.*
- (i) *extreme politicisation of the system at all levels*
 - (ii) *lack of coordination (a) within the Ministry, (b) between the Ministry and Provincial authorities and (c) between the Ministry and other agencies coming under the Ministry.*
 - (iii) *inefficiency, incompetence and indifference of officials and principals, and lack of motivation among the teachers.*

Factor (i) has serious consequences and it has contributed extensively towards the development of factor (iii). Furthermore, lack of continuity of policies and programmes, and reversal of policy and termination of programmes after change of governments or even change of Ministers in the same government have seriously affected education development in Sri Lanka.

Political will at the highest level is needed to correct this situation. Unless politicisation is eliminated from the Education System no amount of policy reforms, structural and organisational changes can prevent the breakdown of the system. Hence, leaders of all political parties should agree to eliminate political interference in the education system, make a 'joint declaration' in this regard and implement an action plan to achieve this goal on a priority basis in the best interests of the nation.

Allocation of Resources for Education

111. *Expenditure on education should be increased from the current level of 3% of GDP to at least 4% to reach the long term target of 5% GDP. Similarly, government expenditure on education as a proportion of total government expenditure should be increased from the present 9% level to 12% in the next three years to reach about 15% in the long-term.*
112. *Private sector investment in education should be facilitated and promoted with a monitoring mechanism to maintain standards. A set of new legislation should be formulated and enacted in this regard. This will certainly contribute towards the increase of percentage GDP expenditure on education.*
113. *More foreign aid should be attracted to the education sector. Projects should be formulated by the respective Ministries in specific areas where support is needed particularly to improve the quality and relevance of education. At least 10% of foreign donor assistance should be directed to the education sector.*
114. *As the scope for cost recovery in general education is very restricted in Sri Lanka, generation of funds from other sources should be promoted in the school system wherever possible. Funds may be generated for instance, by providing services, renting/ hiring facilities, computer/IT services/ IT training. The schools that generate resources from outside may be given matching grants at the rate of 50-100% by the government. Furthermore, freedom should be given to the schools to use the internally generated funds plus the matching grants for the improvement of the quality of education. Such internally generated funds should not be deducted from the recurrent grants of the government.*
115. *In the allocation of resources, well computed unit costs should be employed for each category of school. The unit costs should be estimated in detail by using various components and items of expenditure. A norm-based unit cost resource allocation mechanism is recommended for this purpose (see pages 259-260).*

In principle, once the norms are set and costs calculated, the proposed formula would provide a rational and equitable resource allocation mechanism.

116. *The mechanism to transfer funds to the Ministry, Provinces, Institutions/schools is inefficient at present, and as such this mechanism and procedures should be streamlined for enhanced efficiency.*
117. *The Principal with the direction and advice from the School Development (Management) Board should be given adequate autonomy with accountability for the financial management of the school.*

Education Legislation

New Education Act

118. *The formulation and enactment of a development oriented, simple and broad-based new Education Act incorporating all relevant aspects of existing Ordinances, Acts, Laws and Regulations relating to general education and introducing new features where necessary is recommended. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution devolving the subject of education to the provincial authorities should also be taken into consideration in developing the new Act (pages 263-265).*

Acts relating to Statutory Boards

119. *Continuation of the National Education Commission Act, No. 19 of 1991 with the NEC serving as the apex body for policy formulation and monitoring in the education sector.*
120. *The National Institute of Education Act No. 28 of 1985 should be amended appropriately to avoid any duplication of functions with the Ministry, National Education Commission, Colleges of Education Board, and to strengthen its role in curriculum development and educational research.*
121. *Legislation should be introduced to replace the Public Examinations Act No. 25 of 1968 and to convert the Department of Examinations to an independent National Commission for Examinations coming within the purview of the Ministry of Education.*
122. *The Colleges of Education Act No. 30 of 1986 should be amended to vest therein certain functions of the National Authority on Teacher education (NATE) established under Act No. 32 of 1997 and the NATE Act should be repealed. The clauses that should be included in the amended Act are specified in chapter 6.1*