



## National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) launched



**NEPF (2020-2030) was handed over to the Minister of Education Dr. Susil Premajayantha on June 17, 2022 and it will be handed over to the President soon.**

The Full Text of the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF 2020-2030) provides detailed analyses of the national education system and its sub-sectors, policy, and review documents referred in during the policy planning process. In summary, the review of the education sector has revealed that although past reforms in the education sector have helped to improve the performance of the sector in terms of improving access to lower levels of education, enrollment in education at the pre-primary level as well as at higher level needs significant improvements. Especially, education participation at the tertiary level is particularly low in Sri Lanka compared to upper-middle-income countries in the region. In addition, very little is known about the access to Special and Inclusive Education and Adult and Non-Formal Education and the performance of those sectors. In addition, limited information on the learning outcomes in Sri Lanka, compared to international standards, suggests that learning outcomes in Sri Lanka do not meet international standards.

At the same time, the above analyses also suggested that Sri Lanka needs to diversify education opportunities (i.e., expand access to Science and Technology education both at the Senior Secondary and Tertiary Level) for its citizens.

Lastly, all sectors of education need significant modernization and quality improvements to meet the changing demands due to technological changes. As a large part of education from the primary to the undergraduate level is provided by public institutions, to carry out the above-mentioned reforms, the country needs to improve investments in education substantially.

Therefore, NEC as the apex body for national education policy formulation has taken step forward to formulate the sector-specific policy proposals and recommended strategic activities are prescribed for 8 sub-sectors of education.

### Our Vision

Holistic society of productive, progressive and lifelong learners for a peaceful and cohesive Sri Lankan society attuned to facing local and global challenges

### Tagline

Society of Productive, Progressive and Caring Citizens

### Our Mission

Function as the premier organization in formulating national education policy and goals, national learning competency framework, setting standards of education and undertaking monitoring for continuous improvement of quality and relevance, and utility of education



## a) Early Childhood Care and Education

Despite the expansion in the provision of ECCE services by many stakeholders, problems pertaining to ECCE seem to continue. These issues such as lack of clarity in role definition (i.e. by the Centre and Provinces) in the provision of ECCD/ECCE services, inequalities for access and enrollment, substandard quality of ECCE provisions, inadequate focus on the holistic nature of ECCE, inadequacies of public investment, government regulation, coordination and oversight, poor quality of ECCE teachers and caregivers and poor remuneration and inadequate social recognition, lack of enforceable legal provisions for ECCE and limited engagement by parents appear to curtail the quality of the ECCE service provision in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a need for an effective enforceable national policy on ECCE. The policy document on the ECCE sector prescribed policy proposals and recommended strategic activities on 6 core areas that include; i. Access, Equity, and Inclusiveness, ii. Holistic Development - Physical, Cognitive, and Socioemotional Development, iii. Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education - Structure, Processes and Outcomes, iv. Benchmarking and Quality Assurance, v. Financing of Early Childhood Care and Education, and vi. Regulation, and Governance and Management.



In this context, the key areas which require strategic interventions backed by sound policies are detailed under 12 core areas that include, i) Access, Equity and Inclusiveness; ii) Duration of School Education, Curriculum Design, Content, and Learning Outcomes; iii) Medium of Instruction, Teaching-learning Process, and Assessments; iv) Learners and Learner Support, Learning Environment and Learners' Welfare; v) Benchmarking and Quality Assurance; vi) Personality Development; vii) Civic Consciousness and Patriotism; viii) Financing of General Education; ix) Physical Resources - Teaching Facilities and Common Amenities; x) Physical Resources - Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity, Content, and Capacity; xi) Quality of Human Resources, and xii) Regulation, and Governance and Management.



## b) General Education

Though the Sri Lankan General Education system has made steady progress over the past seven decades, paving the way to produce world-class scientists, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and sportsmen, there are still issues and gaps that hinder the reaping of full benefits that the system potentially offers.

## c) Higher Education

It is well-conceived that Sri Lanka lags behind the group of upper-middle-income countries, in terms of financing, access, and quality and relevance of higher educational offerings. Addressing these three key issues to reach the desired objectives requires a series of synchronized actions and reforms in all aspects of higher education. The prescribed policies and recommended strategic activities are detailed under 11 core areas that include: i) Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness; ii) Academic Calendar, Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes; iii) Teaching-Learning Process and Assessments; iv) Learners and Learning Environment and Learners' Welfare; v) Benchmarking and Quality Assurance; vi) Research and Innovations, Technology Transfer, and Nurturing of Art and Culture; vii) Personality Development, Civic Consciousness, Patriotism, Employability and Entrepreneurial Skills; viii) Financing of Higher Education; ix) Quality of Human Resources; x) Quality of Physical Resources, and xi) Regulation, and Governance and Management.



## d) Technical and Vocational Education and Training(TVET)

The TVET sector has an indispensable role in providing training in technical and vocational occupations to enable people of the country to realize their employment aspirations and for the industry to have a skilled workforce. The TVET sector is confronted with many issues related to access, qualification framework, training delivery and physical resources, quality assurance, human resources, financing, governance and management, information management and research. Accordingly, 24 policy proposals along with accompanying recommended strategic activities addressing the issues and gaps identified are formulated under 8 core areas that include: i) Access and Enrolment; ii) Qualification Framework, National Competency Standards, and Curricula; iii) Training Facilities and Learning Environment; iv) Quality Assurance in Technical and Vocational Education and Training; v) Human Resources Development and Management; vi) Financing of Technical and Vocational Education and Training; vii) Regulation, and Governance and Management; and viii) Information Management and Research.



## d) Piriven Education

සම්බුද්ධ ශාසනයේ විරපැවැත්ම උදෙසා හික්ෂුන් වහස්සේලාට අධ්‍යාපනය ලබා දීමේ අරමුණින් පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන ආයතන සකස් විය. එසේ වුවත්, පරිභෝජනවාදී සංස්කෘතිය, යටත්විජිතකරණය, කාර්මීකරණය, ගෝලීයකරණය, විද්‍යාව, තාක්ෂණය හා සන්නිවේදනයේ දියුණුව ආදිය මගින් සමාජයේ ඇති කර ඇති විචල්‍යතා හා සමාජයේ ඇති වූ ශීඝ්‍ර නවීකරණයන් සියළු අංශයන් කෙරෙහි බලපා ඇති බව ප්‍රත්‍යක්ෂ කරුණකි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ පිරිවෙන් සම්ප්‍රදායන්, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනයන්, සම්බුද්ධ ශාසනයන් මෙබඳු හේතූන් නිසා යම් යම් ගැටලු හා අභියෝග වලට මුහුණු පා ඇත. එබැවින් දීර්ඝ ඉතිහාසයකට උරුමකම් කියන පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය ආරක්ෂා කර ගනිමින් ශාසනයේ විර පැවැත්ම උදෙසා අදාළ වන පරිදි එය ප්‍රතිසංවිධානය කිරීම අධ්‍යාපනික මෙන්ම ජාතික හා ශාසනික අවශ්‍යතාවක් වේ. එසේම එය පවතින සමාජ විචල්‍යතාවලට ඔරොත්තු දෙන සහ අනාගත තාක්ෂණික ලෝකයේ ඇති විය හැකි අභියෝගයන් පිළිබඳ අවබෝධයෙන් යුතුව කළයුත්තක් වේ. පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය ආරක්ෂා කර ගැනීමේ දී විශේෂයෙන් ම පිරිවෙන් ශිෂ්‍යයා හා ගුරුවරයා ආරක්ෂා කර ගැනීම මූලික අවශ්‍යතාවකි. ඒ අනුව, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පද්ධතිය තවදුරටත් සුරක්ෂිතව පවත්වා ගැනීමත්, පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපන පනත මගින් දක්වා ඇති පරමාර්ථ සාධනය කර ගැනීමත් සඳහා කාලානුරූපීව සිදුවී ඇති සමාජ විචල්‍යතාවන්ට අනුගත වෙමින් මෙම පිරිවෙන් අධ්‍යාපනය සඳහා වන ජාතික ප්‍රතිපත්තිය සකස් කරන ලදී.



## d) Special and inclusive Education

The special and inclusive education sector is faced with many problems and gaps. The main reason for this situation is the absence of national policies and strategies regarding the provision of early identification and interventions and appropriate education for children with special needs.

In the absence of a clear national policy, the special and inclusive education sector, in general, has been operationalized based on general education policy statements and general education relevant circular instructions. Moreover, there has not been much coordination and interaction among the health and social care services agencies with the education sector in this regard. Therefore, an urgent need has arisen to address the sector in a systematic manner while addressing the immediate issues and gaps. An integrated approach backed by a well-formulated national policy and robust policy implementation framework with clearly defined mandate and powers and functions at central, provincial, and school levels authorities is therefore necessary for ensuring the provision of improved service delivery in the special and inclusive education sector. Accordingly, policy proposals and recommended strategic activities are prescribed under 10 core areas that include: i) Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Early Childhood Care and Education; ii) Access for Children with Special Education Needs to Regular Education System; iii) Learners and Learning Environment; iv) Curriculum and Teaching-Learning Process; v) Quality of Human Resources; vi) Quality of Physical Resources; vii) Financing of Special and Inclusive Education; viii) Regulation, and Governance and Management; ix) Quality Assurance; and x) Data Management and Research



### g) Non-formal Education (NFE)

The NFE sector is playing a subservient role throughout history in providing education and training to needy people. The failure of formal education to provide solutions to many problems faced by society, particularly in terms of its educational and social needs, has overwhelmingly endorsed the need for a strong and well-organized NFE system for the country. However, it is regrettable to state that there is no well-defined policy framework for the NFE sector in Sri Lanka at present to guide and

promote the establishment of its place and maintain the overall integration and coordination among all NFE providers and liaise with the formal education sector. As such, it is expected that the proposed policy framework will provide a firm foundation for strengthening the activities of the NFE sector in Sri Lanka and developing a collaborative and cooperative culture among the diverse players of the NFE sector. The policies and recommended strategic activities are detailed under 8 core areas that include: i) Regulation, and Governance and Management; ii) Access, and Equity and Inclusiveness; iii) Learners and Learning Environment; iv) Curriculum Design, Content and Learning Outcomes; v) Teaching-Learning Process, Assessments and Quality Assurance; vi) Patriotism, Civic Consciousness, and Life Skills; vii) Quality of Human and Physical Resources; and viii) Financing of Non-Formal Education.



### h) International School Education

International schools in Sri Lanka function as business entities with registration with the Registrar of Companies under Companies Act No. 07 of 2007, or with the Departments of Business Registration under the Business Names Registration Ordinance (8 of 1938 & 7 of 1987), and without any formal registration with or supervision of the Ministry of Education. These schools differ in types of offerings with respect to curricula, the number of students, the quality and adequacy of physical and human resources, and the quality and standards of education provisions. Given the above context, policy proposals and recommended strategic activities to address the shortcoming and gaps are detailed under 8 core areas that include: i) Regulation, and Governance and Management; ii) Medium of Instruction and Curriculum; iii) Learners and Learning Environment; iv) Teaching-Learning and Assessment; v) Personality Development and Civic Consciousness; vi) Human Resources; vii) Physical Resources; and viii) Quality Assurance and Certification.

## 2. 1<sup>st</sup> National Education Commission Research Symposium (1<sup>st</sup> NERCS)

As a fulfillment of its mandate, the NEC has commenced a new initiative to host the National Education Commission Research Symposium (NECRS)

which will be held biennially commencing from 2022 to create a national platform for those who are in diverse institutions engaged in education research to meet and share research findings and exchange views and opinions, and to bring together a wide audience of political leadership, policy planners, officers of implementing agencies, educationists and academics, and undergraduate and postgraduate students for scholarly discourses and debates. The 1<sup>st</sup> NECRS is scheduled on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022 at the BMICH, Colombo, and the symposium covers four main Tracks including General Education, Early Childhood Care and Education, Higher Education and Tertiary and Vocational Education.

Hon State Minister of Education, Dr. Suren Ragahavan as the chief guest will grace the occasion and 8 keynote and guest speeches and 26 research communications are lined up at the symposium.



### 3. NEC is to Launch an Issue of Statistical Digest

As a fulfillment of its mandate, the NEC has commenced a new initiative to compile and publish Statistical Digest on Education on annual basis. The first volume of the Statistical Digest on Education (2022) will be issued by the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2023. The objective of this activity is to provide key statistics and performance indices of the education sector based on data and information collected from many sources, both government and private, and results of surveys, and research. The Statistical Digest on Education (2022) consists of two parts: Part I includes key statistics, performance indices, trends and projections of Early child care and development, General education, TVET, and Higher education and International comparison of educational performances; and Part 2 of the statistical digest of volume 1 will also include a status review on Teachers in Sri Lanka: Situational analysis of teacher establishment and deployment.

### 4. Policy Analysis and Research

#### Review of University Admission Policy and Practices

The NEC jointly with the UGC has conducted a review of university admission policy and practices as there have been some concerns over the government policy on university admission and attendant matters such as long delays in finalizing results, Z-score standardization of G.C.E. (A/L) examination marks, and UGC selection process of students for national universities and prolonged delays in admission notification and enrollment and delays and asynchrony of commencements of academic programmes within universities and among universities, thus resulting considerable wastage of resources and student times. The study was carried out with the concurrence of the Cabinet of Ministers by a team of reviewers nominated jointly by the NEC and the UGC and the final report has already been submitted to the Hon. Minister of Education for submission to the Cabinet of Ministers for consideration and approval.



## a) Assessment of Structural and Process Quality of Care and Education Provided to Preschool Children in Sri Lanka

Early Childhood Development (ECD) refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of a child from the prenatal stage up to age eight. The objectives of the study were to assess 1) the structural quality of ECD centres 2) the process quality of ECD centres and 3) make suggestions based on the evidence to improve the quality of ECD centres. Results revealed that though most of the centres have demonstrated a satisfactory quality of the structural and process features, there is still a sizable fraction of ECD centres which are grossly deficient in most of the structural and quality aspects. As such, the findings of the study suggest that tightening regulations and monitoring of ECCE sector coupled with the introduction of a quality assurance system that prescribes standards and best practices is vital to enhance the quality and standards of ECCE provisions across all ECD centres.

## b) STEM/STEAM Education in Sri Lankan General Education System: Current Status and Way Forward

Many countries in the world have incorporated the STEM/STEAM education approach to preparing students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to meet the demand of the job market. Though Sri Lanka has taken a few initiatives in this matter and has not yet fully implemented them in the school system. Therefore, the National Education Commission has designed a study with the main objective of assessing the degree of awareness and perceptions of the key stakeholders on the STEM/STEAM educational approach, the availability of human and physical resources including the teachers, teaching material and facilities in the school system, and the availability of professional development opportunities on STEM/STEAM educational approach for teachers. Results of the study show that the general school system is not geared to internalize the STEM/STEAM education approach yet due to the unavailability of well-informed, enthusiastic and trained human resources, required physical resources and learning aids. As such, if the Sri Lankan general education system is to adopt the STEM/STEAM education approach it has to be promoted through an appropriate policy framework with clearly defined strategic activities supported by substantial financial investment aimed to provide appropriate training for building the human resources and to build the required physical resources at school level.

## c) Current Status of Professional Development of Teachers in Sri Lanka: Policy, Programs and Practices Towards the Professionalization of Teachers

Teacher professionalism is interpreted as the commitment of teachers to the continuing improvement of their competencies and professional standings. Though many countries have institutionalized mechanisms for promoting teacher professionalism, Sri Lanka is yet to take decisive efforts in this regard. As a prelude to addressing this issue, a study was conducted adopting a descriptive research approach with a questionnaire survey as the primary tool of data collection. The findings of the study suggest that the CPD programmes offered to teachers need to be further strengthened in terms of availability, coverage, scope, and quality. In addition, if the full benefits of CPD programmes are to be accrued, a parallel improvement in school infrastructure and teaching-learning facilities coupled with easing out establishment matters must be ensured. Further, the finding of this study highlights the need of institutionalizing a mechanism backed by clear policies and strategies coupled with regulations to promote teacher professionalism in Sri Lanka.

## d) TVET Diploma Programmes (NVQ 5 / 6): Demand and Supply, Physical and Human Resources and Success Rates

A nation's technical and vocational education system is a major factor in meeting its need for middle-level human resources. Therefore, to meet this need University colleges (UCs) and Colleges of Technology (CoTs) were established in Sri Lanka. These colleges admit both NVQ and G.C.E. A/L-qualified students. However, it has not yet been thoroughly investigated if these colleges are bringing about the desired benefits. In order to determine the status of the implementation of Diploma programs at CoTs and UCs, this survey study was carried out. Researchers physically visited colleges to administer questionnaires to students and teachers, while data was gathered through interviews with college heads. Results revealed that although the overall perception of students both on the transition as well as the core programmes is above average, both the NVQ 5 and 6 programmes experience relatively high dropout rates and low success rates to graduate at the first attempt. As regards the operational aspects, the academic staff and the higher management cited issues related to inadequacies of human and physical resources, the competency-based assessment system implemented

by TVEC and communication and coordination among the institutions as the major limiting factors and challenges faced by the training institutions. In conclusion, the results of the study suggest that the focus and content and duration of the transition programme, student assessment procedures, staff recruitment, teaching-training facilities, and students' learning difficulties must be re-evaluated and redressed to overcome the associated implementation issues. Further, considering high drop rates and low success rates at the first attempt to graduate, the possibility of providing a suitable financial support system for students must be examined.

## d) Congruence of Human Resources Produced by Universities with Employment Market

Despite the low enrolment rate, graduates from State universities face difficulties in finding gainful employment. In order to analyze this issue, a study has been initiated with the aim of analysing the university intake and output data, trends in graduate employment, the relationship between the employment rate and the outcome of the quality assurance review, and ascertaining employers' perceptions of university graduates. The study has been implemented in three phases: Phase I: Analysis of secondary data; Phase II: Review of Quality Assurance (QA) Review reports; and Phase III: Study of employer's perceptions. Analysis of secondary data on university admission (1940 - 2020) revealed that State universities historically enrol a higher number of undergraduates into arts (social sciences and humanities), management, and commerce study programmes compared with science-based study programmes. This pattern parallels closely with the number of students sitting for the G.C.E. (A/L) examination and the number of qualifying from different study streams which have historically been skewed towards arts and commerce. Consequently, State universities turn out more graduates in the disciplines of social sciences and humanities (SSH). Secondary data analysis also showed that graduate unemployment has continued over the years with an increasing trend from 1992 to 2020. In 2019, graduates from the crowded SSH disciplines experienced the lowest average employment rate (30%) compared to science, agriculture, management, engineering and medicine whose average employment rates were 74%, 63%, 68%, 94%, and 98% respectively. Analysis of QA review reports revealed that the

study programmes in SSH have not adopted the best practices prescribed to a satisfactory level and reached the quality standards stipulated by the QAC/UGC. Preliminary results of the study suggest that both the general education sector and State universities have not been responsive to the trends in the labour market that parallel transformation taking place in the Sri Lankan economy as well as in the global context, and continue to follow historical trends thus continuing to produce human resources which are not in congruence with labour market needs.

## e) An Investigation Towards Digitalization of Sustainable Higher Education in Sri Lanka

The worldwide development of information technology has been significantly influencing all sectors of every organization including education in the past decades. Therefore, higher education in Sri Lanka has no exception but to leverage the potential of technological developments for a sustainable future. A study was conducted to assess the current status of the digital transformation of higher education in Sri Lanka regarding ICT and human resource preparedness, and the integration of digital transformation into academic and administrative activities. The preliminary results revealed that the availability of digital devices such as desktops, laptops, and mobile phones for online education varies among different users. Interestingly, 94% of students reported using mobile phones for their learning. Further, preliminary data suggested a significant difference in the use of computers and multimedia-like classroom technologies in teaching based on the availability and use of emerging ICT technologies for education. From this survey, it could be noticed that digital platforms like LMS (Moodle, Google classroom), video conferencing (Zoom, Google meet, MS team), social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), Cloud office applications (Google workspace) and Cloud storage (Google Drive) tools are mostly available for all the users. A detailed analysis of data revealed that there is a significant difference in the usage of such services among academics and administrative personnel. Among all, limited digital devices, stable Internet connectivity, and training on emerging ICT technologies remain the key challenges for going forward.

## f) Current Status of International Schools in Sri Lanka

The International School (IS) sector has now become an important cohort of the national education system, and the need has arisen to bring them under a systematic regulatory and monitoring mechanism. As a first step towards this goal, the National Education Commission (NEC), through its policy document, the National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) has recommended the establishment of a proper regulatory and monitoring mechanism that encompasses aspects of their operations. As a preliminary step towards reaching this goal, the NEC conducted this study to assess the current status of the IS sector. The preliminary results suggest there exists a diversity among international schools with respect to the place of registration, the curriculum offered and medium of instruction, human and physical resources and quality assurance. Considering the impact on national education systems, there is an urgent need for bringing international schools under government regulation and monitoring and quality assurance, and accreditation mechanisms.

## 5. Activity Schedule for - 2023

### a) Launching of Statistical Digest on Education (2022) – in 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2023

### b) Policy analysis and Research Agenda

## Policy Analysis

- **Review of the implementation of 13<sup>th</sup> year of guaranteed education.**

- **Bilingual Education: Current Policy and Practices and Way forward**

This activity will be done as a joint activity with the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education with expertise drawn from the Open University of Sri Lanka.

# Research Agenda - 2023

- Effectiveness of Non-Formal Education in reaching expected target groups
- Online teaching, learning and assessment in **general education**: Effectiveness of achieving educational goals, losses and mitigating measures
- Sri Lankan parents and **preschool teacher's** engagement in the development of children's school readiness skills.
- Assessment of **Career Guidance Services** in preparing undergraduates for the employment market
- Gender-based perceptions on TVET course selection and comparative education performance.
- A Study on the teachers' knowledge, attitudes and practices of **Special and Inclusive Education** in Sri Lanka

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**Your comments and suggestions are welcomed and will assist us in improving the future volumes of our newsletter.**

**Please send your comments and suggestions to:**

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