



## 8<sup>th</sup> NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION ASSUMED DUTIES ON 12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2020

The National Education Commission (NEC) was established by the enactment of National Education Commission Act No.19 of 1991, and as prescribed by the NEC Act, the NEC shall function as the apex policy formulation body to make recommendations to His Excellency the President on a wide spectrum of matters connected with education.

The 8<sup>th</sup> National Education Commission, appointed by his Excellency the President Gotabhaya Rajapaksha assumed duties on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020. New Commission is headed by Professor Harischandra Abeygunawardena, former Vice-Chancellor of University of Peradeniya as the Chairman and Mrs. Padmini Ranaweera retired educationists at UNICEF serves as the Vice Chairperson (Policy) while Mr. Kingsly Fernando, Former Senior Additional Secretary of the Presidential Secretariat functions as the Vice Chairman (Planning).

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From the outset, the new commission having reviewed the past work of the NEC and human and physical resource capacity of the NEC Secretariat, and through a lengthy consultative process, has prepared its Strategic Plan (2020-2025). The Vision and the Roadmap outlined in the Strategic Plan (2020-2025) envisage the NEC to reposition itself as the apex policy making body of education with multiple roles. It intends to widen its mandate through appropriate amendments to NEC Act No.19 of 1991 so as to function as the apex policy formulation body with the mandate to prescribe national education standards and guidelines with provision to play an oversight role.

### VISION OF NEC

Nurture a holistic society of progressive and life-long learners for a peaceful, cohesive Sri Lankan society attuned to face the local and global challenges.

## NEW COMMISSION



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I am glad to provide this message as the Chairman of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Education Commission which assumed duties in March 2020. Though the current Commission assumed duties in March 2020, it commenced its work only from the latter part of June 2020 due to the 1<sup>st</sup> wave of COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, the work was disrupted again from the latter part of October due to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave of COVID 19 pandemic. Amidst these interruptions, new Commission has taken several progressive steps to reform and strengthen the National Education Commission to cater for the needs of progressively expanding and changing education sector.

New Commission is cognizant of the NEC's potential role as the apex body in the education sector and the new roles it could play, particularly in areas where no other apex/regulatory body of education could fulfill such functions. In this context, it is very conceivable, that Sri Lanka is in need of a national agency for prescribing and updating National Learning Competency Framework (*i.e. national educational goals, basic competencies and level descriptors or learning outcomes for different levels of education - early childhood, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, collegiate and post-secondary education*), and National Education Standards and Guidelines, and reviewing of educational institutions and programs for compliance with prescribed National Learning Competency Framework and National Education Standards and Guidelines.

Therefore, the new Commission has embarked on several progressive reforms and as the first step towards this exercise, the Strategic Plan (2020-2025) of the NEC was prepared and approved, and commenced the implementation in vigorous manner. I am of the firm belief, that the NEC could reposition itself to emerge within the lifespan of the current Commission as the apex body of education sector fulfilling multiple roles as envisioned in its new vision and mission.



#### MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHAIRPERSON (POLICY)

It gives me immense pleasure as the National Education Commission is bringing out NEC Newsletter of the year 2021 within a very short period. I congratulate the contributors and the editorial board for this creative initiation and I trust this is a good opportunity to showcase our commitment to our mission on national education policy development. Also, we would be able to continue to share top scholarly work on a range of diverse topics related to the present system of education using this platform as well as through the NEC Statistical Digest that we plan to put out on annual basis in future.



#### MESSAGE FROM THE VICE CHAIRMAN (PLANNING)

I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the NEC staff on this attempt of issuing the NEC Newsletter of the year 2021. As I embark on this journey with a great institution such as this, I wish to engage with lot of meaningful works over the period. We encourage and invite all stakeholders to work with us towards the advancement of education. I look forward to contribute towards the fulfilment of the core mandate of the National Education Commission.

#### MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

##### **Prof. Sampath Amaratunga**

*Chairman, University Grants Commission*

##### **Prof. Dayantha Wijeyesekera**

*Chairman, Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission (until 27.01.2021)*

##### **Eng. B.K.U.A. Wickramasinghe**

*Chairman, Tertiary & Vocational Education Commission (From 2021.01.27 onwards)*

##### **Prof. K. Kapila C.K. Perera**

*Secretary, Ministry of Education*

##### **Mr. T.M.J. Bandara**

*Director, Department of National Planning*

##### **Mr. M.M. Nayeemudeen**

*Additional Secretary, Ministry of Public Administrative, Home Affairs, Provincial Councils & Local Government*

##### **Dr. T.A. Piyasiri**

*Former Vice Chancellor, University of Vocational Technology*

##### **Dr. Kapila Bandara**

*Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Colombo*

##### **Dr. Anuruddha Padeniya**

*Pediatric Neurologist, Lady Ridgeway Hospital*

##### **Dr. Indrani Talagala**

*Former Head of the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Open University of Sri Lanka.*

##### **Mr. D.M.A.R.B. Dissanayake**

*Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Technology & Innovation*

##### **Dr. Harsha Alles**

*Chairman, Gateway International School*

##### **Mr. Swaminathan Wimal**

## NEW INITIATIVES AT THE NEC

### Restructuring of the NEC Secretariate

Steps have been taken to establish three technical divisions (namely Policy Analysis and Research, Information and Publication and Standards and Certification Divisions) in addition to administration and finance divisions to improve its technical capacity and functional efficiency.

### Recruitment of staff

Steps have been taken to fill existing vacancies of scientific staff cadre positions. Recruitment process was completed and recruited 9 staff members - 5 senior policy research officers, 2 research officers and 2 program officers, and all of them have assumed duties with effect 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021.

### Shifting of the NEC Secretariat to Government Building

At present the NEC Secretariate is housed in a dilapidated private building located at Nawala. Steps have been taken to establish NEC Secretariat at the premises of the BMICH. Operations of the BMICH premises will commence from 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2021.

### Updating of Scheme of Recruitment Procedures (SoRs)

NEC has been saddled with the problem of attracting and retaining quality human resources as the wages and promotional prospects are not attractive. Steps have been taken to revise SoRs in line with wages and promotional prospects granted to officers of similar statutory organizations.

### Formulation of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs)

NEC since its inception has been functioning without adopting Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs), and therefore, steps have been taken to prepare SoPs by taking into consideration all government rules and regulations, and the nature of functions that the NEC has to perform.

### Review and Amend the NEC Act No. 19 of 1991 to Broaden the Mandate, Functions and Powers of NEC

NEC since its inception in 1991 has been functioning as a monofunctional apex body concentrating only on policy role, and therefore, steps have been taken to broaden its mandate, particularly to function as a standards and monitoring body in addition to its policy role. For this purpose, it is proposed to establish a Standards and Certification Unit, initially under the purview of NEC, and with the proposed amendments, the NEC is expected to upgrade the Unit into a Standards and Certification Council.

### Preparation of National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030)

On the directive of His Excellency the President, steps have been taken to formulate National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) for 2020-2030 period by taking into Consideration of the Government policies on education that is outlined in government Manifesto, "*Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour*", and by taking into account the proposals made in other policy documents prepared by the NEC, Presidential Task Force and Ministry of Education, and also by perusing education sectors review reports published recently by international donor and development agencies. NEC plans to complete this task by 31<sup>st</sup> June 2021

### Preparation of National Learning Competency Framework (NLCF)

Steps have been taken to prepare the National Learning Competency Framework that includes the Vision of Education, National Education Goals, Basic Competencies, and Level Descriptors or Learning Outcomes for 6 levels of Education, namely for, i) early childhood, ii) primary, iii) junior secondary, iv) senior secondary, v) collegiate, and v) post-secondary education. The NLCF shall form the basis for development of curricula of all levels of general education, and also for regular updating the national qualification frameworks such as Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) and National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF).



The first draft of the NLCF was submitted for validation at a workshop of stakeholders conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at the Kannangara Auditorium of the National Institute of Education, Maharagama. A large number of participants representing different sub-sectors of education sectors very, enthusiastically got involved in group activities throughout the day, and many constructive comments and views on different aspects were emerged at this workshop. Hon. Susil Premajayantha, Minister, State Minister for Education Reforms, Open Universities and Distance Learning Promotion graced the event as chief guest. The final stakeholder meeting to introduce the draft of the NLCF and to get the feedback of a cross section of key stakeholder is scheduled to be held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at the CWW Kannangara Auditorium of the National Institute of Education, Maharagama



## Development and Maintenance of National Education Database and Publication of Statistical Digest

NEC as mandated by its Act, requires to maintain a database on education. Going along with that mandate, the NEC has commenced the activities to maintain an updated minimal database by regular collection of data from key ministries, departments, commissions, universities and private education institutes/schools and agencies. Besides that, NEC will compile Statistical Digest on Education on annual basis that will include aggregate data on key aspects of all sub-sectors of education, and a review of performance of all sub-sectors of education as measured by direct and proxy measure or indices, including a comparison with global and regional performance indices. This digest will also include a section dedicated to present a status review on a selected theme relevant to education. Annual Statistical Digest would be a source of information to all the key stakeholders of education - policy makers, planners, administrators, managers, academic staff, teachers, school children and undergraduate, and postgraduate students.

## National Symposium on Education

NEC has embarked on another new initiative to organize and host “National Symposium on Education” on biennial basis. This will provide a valuable forum for university academics, NIE academic staff, educationists, researchers and postgraduate students to share their research and scholarly work. The first symposium is scheduled for the first quarter of 2022.

### Academic Staff Members of the NEC

Policy Analysis and Research Division		
Dr. Ms.R.K.R.S.Ranasinghe - Senior Policy Research Officer	Dr. Mr.V.P. Ranawakage -Senior Policy Research Officer	Dr. Ms.W.W.P.N.Weerakoon - Senior Policy Research Officer
Dr. Ms.S.V.G.N.Priyadarshani Policy Research Officer	Mr. N.P.J.Hewage Policy Research Officer	Mr. R.A.R.Karunarathna - Policy Research Officer
Mr. K.H.S.Lakmal -Policy Research Officer	Ms. W.D.A.K. Damayanthi -Program Officer	Mr. C.Mayuran - Program Officer
Information and Publication Division		
Dr. Ms.T.Somarathna - Senior Policy Research Officer	Ms.W.A.D.T.Jayasinghe Program Officer	Ms.M.C.B.Guruge Program Officer
Standards and Certification Division		
Ms.A.N.L.M.De Silva - Senior Policy Research Officer	Ms. M.Kasyapani Program Officer (Policy Research)	

## NEW RESEARCH INITIATIVES

### 1. **STEM/STEAM Education in Sri Lanka - Current Status and Way Forward**

The term, STEM is an abbreviation which stands for Science, Technology, Mathematics and Engineering. STEM education is an interdisciplinary learning approach where academic teaching-learning is combined with examples from the real world in such a way that the learners build connections between the classroom and the world around them. With new addition of another subject element, Aesthetics, it is also referred as STEAM.

The ongoing research study by the NEC research team is aimed to assess the extent of adoption of elements of STEM/STEAM approach in Sri Lankan General Education System and recommend the ways of further promoting STEM/STEAM education approach. In doing so, it envisages to examine and assess the status with respect to several key elements, namely, the degree of awareness of key stakeholders on STEM/STEAM education approach, availability of physical and human resources, teaching material, and facilities in schools for adopting the STEM/STEAM education approach, and also the assess the extent of opportunities available for the continuing professional developments for teachers on STEM/STEAM education approach. Finally, it plans to identify a set of criteria and prepare a scorecard template to explore how STEM/STEAM related activities/elements are being practiced in the General Education System in Sri Lanka, and explore the ways of further strengthening of STEM/STEAM approach in General Education.

### 2. **Assessment of Status of Implementation of NVQ 5/6 Diploma Program in Sri Lanka**

The NVQ Level 5 and 6 diploma programs offered by TVET institutions allow a student to leave the system at the end of NVQ Level 5 with a National Diploma of NVQ Level 5 qualification or proceed further, on studies and leave at the end of Level 6 with a National Diploma of

NVQ Level 6 qualification. The program is developed so that persons with NVQ Level 5 or 6 qualifiers will have supervisory and/or process management competencies. It is therefore necessary to ensure those entering NVQ Level 5 program would process the necessary theoretical and hands-on skills to pursue the prescribed study program. To ensure this requirement, a bridging program, called, "Foundation Studies" program that intends to impart the necessary competencies in Mathematics, Science, English and Computer Literacy is offered for those students who lack required prior learning. The current bridging and gap-filling programs were introduced to facilitate smooth transition of students from NVQ 3/4 programs to corresponding NVQ Level 5 programs. However, with the opening of NVQ 5/6 program to students with G.C.E. A/L qualifications, the relevance and applicability of the existing bridging and gap-filling programs to such students need to be reviewed.

Against this background, the NEC has embarked on a research study, titled, "Assessment of Status of Implementation of NVQ 5/6 Diploma Program" with the aim of conducting a systematic investigation to assess the status of implementation of NVQ 5/6 Diploma Program, including the relevance and applicability of bridging and gap-filling programs so as to examine whether they are being designed and implemented as per the requirements of developing middle level manpower required for the economic development of the country. Further, it will assess the effectiveness of the regulatory mechanisms of TVEC with respect to implementation of NVQ 5/6 programs, and whether there are misalignments, and if required, to identify policy interventions necessary to rectify the shortcomings.

### 3. **Current Status of Professional Development of Teachers in Sri Lanka: Policy, Programs and Practices Towards the Professionalization of Teachers**

National Education Commission has paid continuous attention to upgrading the teaching profession in Sri Lanka. It has conducted a study on the professional development of teachers and teacher educators in Sri Lanka in 2014, and presented 12 recommendations.

In 2016, including those recommendations, NEC has compiled “Proposals for a National Policy on General Education in Sri Lanka” with 35 recommendations on teacher training and professional development.

Against this background, NEC has decided to embark on a new study, titled “Current Status of Teacher Education System in Sri Lanka: Policy, Programs and Practices Towards Professionalization of Teachers” with the aim of designing a suitable policy and strategic framework of interventions to address the gaps and shortcomings on teacher professional development in line with the national needs and the global trends. The study aims to overview the current system of teacher education and assess the extent of adoption of recommended policy level initiatives, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing teacher education and professionalization programs and practices, and finally to recommend a national policy and strategic development framework on teacher education towards teacher professionalization.

#### **4. An Investigation Towards Digitalization of Sustainable Higher Education in Sri Lanka**

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Higher Education since in 2020 has been experiencing unprecedented and extraordinary situations like any other sphere in life due to the pandemic of COVID 19. Higher education providers have been compelled to go digital almost overnight at the outset of the pandemic in order to keep their programs active. Even in the post - COVID atmosphere (whenever it is going to be), it is unlikely that conditions would go back to the pre COVID “normalcy”. It is very likely that there would be a “new normal” situation which higher education providers would have to deal with. In order to effectively face this challenge, providers would have to be prepared starting now to

go digital and also be effective in realizing its full potential. Thus, the objective of this study is to determine the preparedness of higher education providers to digitalize their programs for effective delivery and secure expected outcomes. It will also determine the extent to which digitalization is possible in the range of programs offered by education providers and how this would be supported by the institutions, in terms of IT infrastructure and IT governance and management.

#### **5. An investigation of the congruence of the human resources produced by the education sector with the national needs of Sri Lanka**

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Free education to all is a fundamental right of Sri Lankans provided by the country’s Constitution. From its beginning in early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the sole provider of Higher Education (HE) has been the State. In recent times, alternative HE providers have entered this arena, and at present there are 16 State Universities and many number of Non-State Higher Education Institutes (NSHEIs) and 18 Advanced Technological Institutes (ATI), providing higher education to Sri Lanka’s population. These institutions provide opportunities for only around 25% of those students who become eligible on annual basis for higher education. Yet, many of these graduates find difficulties to secure employment and remain unemployed or underemployed over an extend period. This situation could very well be due to the inability of the country to grow its employment opportunities as well as due to the failure of graduates to satisfy the employment market expectations and requirement.

Thus, the objective of this study is to determine the reforms required in the Sri Lankan higher education system so as to produce graduates who would be equipped with necessary competencies to secure a gainful employment and to contribute to national development. And also, to determine the changes needed in the secondary school education to produce school leavers who have the requisite abilities to take on higher education geared to producing employable and productive graduates.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

### Public Hearings / Forums to Seek Views of the Public in Issues and Problems in Education Sector and on Suggested Remedies and Reforms.

**Scheduled Date – April - May 2021**

NEC has commenced the formulation of the National Education Policy framework (NEPF) for 2020-2030 period, and the process commenced in October 2020 and is expected to be completed by June/July 2021. Public hearings to seek views and opinions of the public will be conducted during the period of April-May 2021.

### National Workshops to validate the National Education Policy framework (2020-2030)

**Scheduled Dates – April - May 2021**

NEC has planned to conduct a series of validation workshops commencing from mid-April until mid-May 2021 to finalize the drafts of policy proposal and recommended strategies for 8 sub-sectors/themes of education. Final workshop to validate the composite draft of the National Education Policy Framework (2020-2030) is scheduled in early June 2021.

### National Symposium on Education

NEC has decided to hold a symposium on Education biennially to provide a forum for those who are engaged in research and development activities in the field of education. The 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium is scheduled to be held on First quarter of 2022.

#### Advisory Board :

Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena  
Mrs. Padmini Ranaweera  
Mr. Kingsly Fernando

## Statistical Digest on Education

The first volume of the Statistical Digest on Education will be issued by the month of December 2021. The primary purpose of the Statistical Digest on Education is to provide a compilation of statistical information covering the education sector in Sri Lanka. The digest comprises data and information collected from many sources, both government and private, and results of surveys, and researches on education. Performance indicators, trends and projections of various sub-sectors of the education system will also be presented in this. In addition, Statistical Digest will also include a status review on a selected theme relevant to education.

### Preparation of Guidelines and Standards for Private and International Schools.

NEC will soon commence the preparation of guidelines and standards for private and international schools with the view to foster and improve the quality and relevance of education provisions, and learner support services and learning environment offered by them.

#### Editor's Note

It is a pleasure to continue the publishing the NEC Newsletter on annual basis.

Acknowledged herein is the encouragement and guidance given by the Chairman and Vice Chairpersons, and cooperation received from my colleagues in undertaking this exciting task of showcasing the work done by the NEC.

**Chief Editor**

#### Editorial Board:

Mrs. W.D.Achala Damayanthi (Chief Editor)  
Mr. N.P.Jayalath Hewage  
Mr. R.A.Rasika Karunarathna  
Mrs. W.A.Dumani Jayasinghe  
Mr. Mayuran Christy

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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