

**STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF
SPECIAL EDUCATION AND
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION**



**NATIONAL EDUCATION COMMISSION
NAWALA ROAD, NUGEGODA
SRI LANKA**

Research Series (2014) – No. 10

Study on Development of Special Education and Non-formal Education

A Research conducted for the National Education Commission

Funded by

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Preface

The National Education Commission (NEC) commenced formulating National Education Policy for its third ten year policy reviewing cycle. As a part of the above policy formulating process NEC has commissioned ten research studies in order to identify the important policy issues in General Education System in Sri Lanka. The research teams were asked to recommend changes to the present policies where necessary and suggest new policies to the National Education Commission based on their findings.

The Standing Committee on General Education (SCGE) of NEC has identified ten different study areas in the General Education System and prepared relevant Terms of Reference (TORs) for these studies after several discussions at SCGE meetings. The research reports published in this study series were prepared over a period of around nine months by ten research teams selected for their expertise in the different aspects of General Education. The draft reports of research studies were reviewed by a panel of reviewers before finalizing the research reports.

The National Education Commission appreciates the support given by the World Bank in allocating funds from the Transforming School Education System as the foundation of a knowledge hub Project (TSEP) at Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils. The Commission also thanks Sri Lanka Institute of Development Administration (SLIDA) for their services provided in financial administration of the research studies.

It is hoped that the publication of these studies will contribute to the extension of the knowledge base necessary for educational change and will stimulate interest and participation in improving the quality of education in Sri Lanka. These studies can also provide points of departure for future researches.

Prof Lakshman Jayatileke
Chairman
National Education Commission

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Definition of the Theme and Changes over Time.....	1
1.2. The Purpose and Objectives of the Study	2
1.3. Conceptual Framework and Scope of the Subject	3
2. THE TRAJECTORY OF EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SRI LANKA.....	6
2.1. Gifted and Talented Children	9
3. METHODOLOGY.....	11
3.1. Data Collection Mechanism, Objective 1 - To Study the Experiences of Special Education in Other Countries with a View to Identifying 'Best Practices'	11
3.2. Data Collection Mechanisms, Objective 2 - To Review the Current Status of Special Education in Sri Lanka :.....	11
3.2.1. Review of key relevant literature	11
3.2.2. Structured and semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews	12
3.2.3. Observational visits	12
3.3. Objective 3 - To Make Policy Recommendations for the Development of Special Education in Sri Lanka.....	13
4. EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITH A VIEW TO IDENTIFYING 'BEST PRACTICE' GUIDELINES.	14
4.1. Lessons from the 'Western' Educational Context	14
4.1.1. Europe	14
4.1.2. Germany	15
4.2. Lessons from the Region	16
4.2.1. India	16
4.2.2. Japan.....	18
4.3.3. Hong Kong	18
4.3.4. Malawi/Sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa	19
5. CURRENT STATUS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA : DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....	21
5.1. Current Structure and Functioning of Special Education in Sri Lanka.....	21
5.2. Information Gathered via School Visits and Correspondence on the Functioning of Some of the Existing Special Schools, Special Education Units, Inclusive Educational Placements and Special Education Resource Centres.	22
5.2.1 Special schools in the different Provinces.....	23
5.2.2 Special Education Resource Centres	27

5.2.3 Special Educational units in schools.....	28
5.2.4. Inclusive setting in mainstream classrooms.....	29
5.3. Interviews with the Director of the Non-Formal Special Education unit at the Ministry of Education and Officials of the National Institute of Education.....	30
5.4. Interviews with Parents of Children with Special Needs.....	31
5.5. Interviews with Principals/Staff Members of Private/International Schools.....	31
5.6 Review of Existing Documents/Research Studies Relevant to Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka.	32
5.6.1. Study 1 : Danapala (2009).	32
5.6.2. Study 2 : UNICEF (2003).....	33
5.6.3. Study 3 : University students with disabilities (Hettiarachchi et al., 2013).....	35
5.6.4. Study 4 : Teachers supporting students with disabilities within mainstream schools, special school or special units (Hettiarachchi and Das, 2012).	35
5.7. Review of Key Existing Services for Persons With Disabilities.....	36
5.7.1. Ministry of Social Services.	36
5.7.2. Ministry of Health.....	39
6. RECOMMENDATIONS	41
REFERENCES	47
A STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION	54
1.0 Introduction, definition, historical scenario	55
1.1 Summary.....	55
1.2 Origins of the Concept of Non-Formal Education	56
1.2.1 Definition of Terms.....	56
1.2.2 Issues related to terminology.....	56
1.2.3 Overtime Changes in the Conceptual Framework	57
1.3 Global Trends - Global Trends/Comparative experiences in selected countries and Sri Lankan experiences	57
1.3.1 Defining non-formal education	57
1.3.2 Non-formal education in the field: from the 1980s to today.....	58
1.3.3 Non-formal education and lifelong learning/education	59
1.4 Towards a new paradigm	59
2.0 Comparative experiences	61
2.1 Thailand	61
2.2 South Korea - Non-formal Education	62
2.3 India- Non Formal Education in the context of education for all in India	63

2.4 Sri Lanka.....	64
3.0 Studies on NFE programmes in Sri Lanka	72
4.0 Issues due to absence of diversions	76
5.0 Situation analysis - Observations of Centres / Existing facilities	85
6.0 National Level Vocational Education Institutions:	89
7.0 Overall view of Technical and Vocational Education in Sri Lanka	93
8.0 Conflicts related to Terminology:	100
9.0 Policy recommendations	102
10.0 Brief overview of the recommendations.....	112
11.0 Conclusion	114
Annexure - Methodology	116
Bibliography.....	117

1. INTRODUCTION

Basic education is not just an arrangement for training to develop skills (important as that is); it is also recognition of the nature of the world, with its diversity and richness, and an appreciation of the importance of freedom and reasoning as well as friendship. The need for that understanding - that vision- has never been stronger.

Sen (2004)

As Thomas and Loxley (2001) propose, ‘the essence of thinking of inclusion is in the acceptance of diversity and striving for equality for all members within a system’ (p. 116). There is now consensus on the right to education for all children, irrespective of differences. While Sri Lanka has made positive strides towards achieving ‘Education for All’ through educational reforms and school options, the realization of a policy inclusive education for all remains elusive. In this report, we will define the main themes and changing paradigms associated with education options for children with disabilities, situating it within the changes internationally within the disability rights movement and legislation connected to special education; outline the conceptual framework and scope of the subject; summarise the historical and current educational provision for children with disabilities or special needs¹ in Sri Lanka; briefly touch on the predicament of the gifted and talented children within our education system; draw on salient learning points from the western world and the majority world of Asia and make recommendations for the provision of better educational facilities for children with special needs in Sri Lanka in the future.

1.1. Definition of the Theme and Changes over Time

‘**Special Education**, also called **Special Needs Education**, the education of children who differ socially, mentally, or physically from the average to such an extent that they require modifications of usual school practices. Special education serves children with emotional, behavioural, or cognitive impairments or with

¹ The terms ‘children with special needs’ and ‘children with disabilities’ are used interchangeably throughout this report. There is, however, a bias towards the use of the term ‘children with special needs’ due to the brief given to compile a report on special education. It is also acknowledged that in one sense, all children accessing education will have ‘special needs’ with regard to specific learning styles and individual requirements to best access the curriculum.

intellectual, hearing, vision, speech, or learning disabilities; gifted children with advanced academic abilities; and children with orthopedic or neurological impairments’.

(Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014).

‘Special Education’ refers to provision of formal or non-formal education opportunities for children with disabilities or special needs. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1966) and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 13 (1966) upholds the right to free and compulsory education for all children and to mandatory universal primary education. In addition, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which Sri Lanka is a signatory, guarantees the right of all children to access education without discrimination. Therefore, all children have a fundamental human right to access education, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, language or ability/disability.

The World Declaration on Education for All (the Jomtien Declaration in 1990) marked the first agreement to work towards ensuring access to education for all children. This was strengthened further by legislation confirming equal rights to education to all children in the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) Rule 6 that also stipulated the provision of education in both ‘integrated school’ and ‘general school’ contexts. Field (1998, in Eleweke & Rodda, 2002) define inclusive education as ‘the integration and education of most students with disabilities in general education classes’ (p.347).

1.2. The Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The National Education Commission (NEC) has initiated a process to formulate a set of policies on General Education. As part of the remit of this process, the NEC has identified several key areas in General Education and has decided to carry out a series of independent research

studies, the findings of which could influence the formulation of a policy framework on General Education in Sri Lanka. The current report details the study undertaken on the area of “Development of Special Education in Sri Lanka”.

Objectives of the study

The study was carried out to achieve the following three objectives:

- (i) To study the experiences of Special Education in other countries with a view to identifying ‘best practices’, appropriate to Sri Lanka.
- (ii) To review the current status of Special Education in Sri Lanka
- (iii) To make policy recommendations for the development of Special Education in Sri Lanka.

1.3. Conceptual Framework and Scope of the Subject

The paradigm shift from segregated instruction to inclusive education for children with special educational needs worldwide reflects the move towards achieving Education For All (EFA) by 2015 (UNESCO, 2010). There is, however, no consensus on the definition of 'Inclusive education', which remains a complex, somewhat contentious and contested ideology. The term 'inclusion' has been used interchangeably with 'integration' and 'mainstreaming'.

The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) captures the right to education for all, young and old as:

'an education that includes learning to know, to do, to live together and to be. It is an education geared to tapping each individual's talents and potential, and developing learners' personalities, so they can improve their lives and transform their societies' (p. 8)

In simple terms, inclusive education promotes the assimilation of children with special needs into the regular classroom, with necessary environmental and pedagogical accommodations made to help the students access the mainstream curriculum.

The move to adopt inclusive educational policies is rooted in the rights-based disability movement that promotes the ideology of the right to education for all, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background or ability. Internationally, this ideology and movement have gained in strength from cross-cultural conventions including the Salamanca World Declaration (1994), the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs, 2000 and updated in 2010) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Articles 1 and 24 (UNCRPD, 2008).

Article 1 of the UNCRPD states:

Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis to others.

This stresses the right of all persons with disabilities to 'full and effective participation in society', which includes an end to exclusionary teaching contexts in favor of inclusive educational facilities. Although the MDGs do not specify disability, there is a growing consensus that the goals can only be achieved if children with disability and young people are included within education, given the close association between disability, poverty and limited access to education (United Nations Secretary General, 2007). A local report on the National Human Resources and Employment Policy for Sri Lanka (Secretariat for Senior Ministers, 2012) makes this connection between a lack of access to education impacting a majority of people with disabilities living in poverty.

The move towards adopting inclusive education policies across 'developing' or resource-limited countries, including Sri Lanka has been bolstered by international calls for action with suggestions for reforming education in general and access to education for children with disabilities in particular. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, United Nations, 1998) as well as UNESCO and other NGO and INGO initiatives have encouraged a worldwide discussion on inclusion (Mittler, 2005; World Vision, 2007; UNESCO, 2006) with the promise of achieving Education for All (EFA). This was further bolstered by the World Disability Report (WHO, 2011) with its reiteration of the right to education to all children and its call to 'disable' barriers people with disabilities suffer to participate fully in their communities.

The concept of Education for All (EFA) gained strength through the disability rights movement worldwide and the firm belief that exclusion from education and segregated education is a human rights issue. However, Lavia (2007) critiques the EFA campaign stating that although its 'a progress on previous global initiatives, yet, despite current rhetoric about the inclusive purposes of the EFA agenda and encouraging moves at modernization of curricula, there is a dearth about the cultural education and wider implications of developing pedagogies for social transformation' (pg. 284). She encourages a serious look at 'the intersection between education and schooling and issues of culture, power and politics' (Lavia, 2007; pg. 284). The access to education, i.e. who gets to go to school, to which school, where and why, is rife with differing ideologies of politics, power and culture.

'Inclusive education' remains an evolving concept. With historical ties to special education, inclusive education is perceived as an ideological change in the provision of education to children with special needs; closely connected to the disability rights movement (Oliver, 2000). Inherent within the concept of inclusion are the principles of human rights, equality and equity, social justice and anti-discrimination, with a push for similar access to mainstream education for all children with or without disabilities (Knight, 1999; Slee, 2001; UNESCO, 2006). Within this ideology, accessing education via targeted specialized settings is claimed to reinforce a sense of marginalization for children with disabilities (Stubbs, 2008). Therefore, the philosophy underpinning inclusive education moves beyond notions of assimilation to capture the representation of 'difference' and the right to 'Education for All'. It contends that education is a right beyond differences of ethnicity, race, gender, language or ability/disability. As Lindqvist, a UN rapporteur explained:

All children and young people of the world, with their individual strengths and weaknesses, with their hopes and expectations, have the right to education. It is not our education systems that have a right to certain types of children. Therefore, it is the school system of a country that must be adjusted to meet the needs of all children (Lindqvist, 1994 in UNESCO, 2005: p.13).

Nonetheless, the lack of consensus on the ideology and terminology associated with inclusion, together with the interchangeable use of terms such as 'integration' and 'inclusion' may be influencing practice. This lack of agreement and divergent perspectives of international agencies surrounding the conceptual framework of inclusion has led to much misperception (Miles & Singal, 2010). As the World Vision organization notes, there is 'insufficient clarity on policy approaches, particularly the differences between 'integration' (location of individual children in current provision) and 'inclusion' (systematic change to accommodate diversity)' (2007; p.2). Yet another model of inclusion proposed is for the student to be based in a resource room but attend regular mainstream classes according to his/her ability in each subject. Therefore, a student may access Mathematics at grade 1 level, language at grade 3 level and so on, allowing for inter-class movement (Cornelius & Balakrishnan, 2012).

In addition, while the broad perspective of inclusive education encompasses the rights of all students and the benefits to all, a more narrow approach targeting primarily the exclusion of children with disabilities from education or from mainstream education may be contributing to the continued omission of children with disabilities from schooling (Croft, 2010). However, the counterargument is that the reason for specifically focusing on the inclusion of children with disabilities in school is the extensive exclusion of these children from learning in resource-poor countries (British Council of Disabled People, 2005; Filmer, 2005; Thomas, 2005). Going beyond the right to education and to accessing a local school, is the notion within inclusive education of the benefit of a diverse school environment to all children (with or without disabilities), resulting in a more tolerant and respectful inclusive society (Croft, 2010; Slee, 2001). An inclusive educational setting provides for increased opportunities for social interaction and communication, offers active participation in school life, promotes age-appropriate models of communication and behaviour, access to a rich core curriculum and the identification of student-centred individualized education goals (Grenot-Scheyer et al., 1996). It has the potential to defy stereotypes, engage in a discourse on disability, and thereby challenge preconceived notions and societal barriers towards accepting diversity. That said, there is a lack of consensus on inclusion at the level of policy and practice (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006; Barton & Armstrong, 2001; Booth & Ainscow, 1998; Campbell, 2002; Sheehy et al., 2004), which may be hindering its establishment.

The next two sections of this report will set out a brief history of providing education for children with special needs in Sri Lanka and look at how the educational needs of such children are catered to in other countries. This will enable us to learn from global practices and, together with the findings of this study, to make policy recommendations regarding the provision of education for children with special needs in Sri Lanka.

2. THE TRAJECTORY OF EDUCATION PROVISION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SRI LANKA

The World Report on Disability (WHO, 2011) estimated the prevalence of disability to be higher than previously estimated, with a suggestion of up to 15% of the population said to experience disabilities in resource limited countries. More local prevalence figures, though largely disputed by disability rights activists, acknowledged that 1.6% of the population experience disabilities in Sri Lanka (Population Census, 2001), although the specifics of this remains vague.

The Sri Lankan culture places a premium on education. Formally the prerogative of those able to afford education, the introduction of 'free education' in 1938 by the late Hon. Dr. C. W. W. Kannangara and the establishment of state Madhya Maha Vidyalayas or Central Colleges (Ministry of Education, 2012), arguably redressed, at least to some extent, the disparities in the equality of access to education at all levels. The access to education is seen by many as the doorway to social mobility. It is within this very competitive context that legislation supportive of inclusive education for children with disabilities or 'special educational needs' has arisen.

From the establishment of a special school for children with hearing and visual impairment way back in 1912, Sri Lanka has made strides towards offering better access to education for children with disabilities. Missionaries and groups engaged in charitable welfare undertook considerable initiatives and responsibility for the welfare of the disabled people in Sri Lanka at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first residential special school for children with visual and hearing impairment established in 1912 by the Church of England was the 'Deaf and Blind school' at Ratmalana (Roberts, 2003).

By 1956, nearly 515 children were benefitting by the schools catering for special needs. As a result of taking full governmental responsibility for the education of all children by 1960, the first government school for children with physical and cognitive/intellectual impairment was built in 1964. By 1965, the number of special schools had risen to 10 in total. These schools were managed either by Christian/Catholic missionaries or Buddhist organisations. However, education in these schools was limited to children with hearing and visual impairment. By 1977, there were 26 residential schools for students with disabilities. The number of students in these schools was approximately 1900 and the average teacher - student ratio was roughly 1:10 (Matthews et al., 1977).

Initially, special schools served the purpose of offering opportunities for children with disabilities who had hitherto been excluded from any formal education. These schools followed the regular government syllabus; a modified government syllabus; or more often than not, the 'special education' syllabus provided by the Department of Education or a curriculum devised by the particular school. The schools were largely organized on the lines of the particular 'disability' - e.g. children with visual impairment in one school; children experiencing cognitive or

learning difficulties in yet another school. This had led to not only the segregated teaching of children with disabilities away from their mainstream peers but also separation within the community of children with disabilities.

The 1960s saw the emergence of special education units attached to mainstream government schools. These provided an 'integrated special education' programme for children with disabilities in separate learning contexts (Piyasena, 2002; Rajapakse, 1993) within the wider mainstream school. Although the specifics of this programme remain arguably somewhat ambiguous, it appears that this education option included part-time resource room-aided instruction in a self-contained classroom (location integration) within a mainstream school with possibilities of inclusion into the regular classroom for some lessons/activities. The adoption of a model of integrated education by the Sri Lankan government in 1968 was prompted by the following two factors:

- The human rights movement took up the cause of disabled children facing challenges through lack of education.
- The global change from segregated schooling to integrated forms of schooling.

Initially, 17 children with visual impairment were integrated or 'main streamed' into the first grade of six regular schools near their homes. These students had followed the same programme as their mainstream peers. They were assisted by a special teacher who visited the school to tutor, counsel and provide special learning aids (UNICEF, 2003).

In 1969, the Ministry of Education had procured direct responsibility for special education and developed integrated programmes for children with hearing impairment, cognitive/intellectual impairment or learning difficulties and students identified as 'slow learners' (Piyasena, 2002). At the beginning, these children were supported by specially trained teachers in the mainstream classroom. However, later these teachers were replaced by the Special Education unit teachers. In an integrated system, special needs children were placed in the special unit in the school. Children with diverse disabilities were studying in the same unit with provisions made only for limited categories of special needs children to be included. Arguably, the integrated system was successful to some extent in offering educational placements to children with disabilities who thus far had little or no access to formal education. There are at present about 1200 units and 1250 specially trained teachers working in these units throughout the country (Ministry of Education, 2006).

By 1977, there were 26 residential special schools for children with special needs. Presently, there are 25 such assisted schools all over the country. The majority of students in these schools are with visual or hearing impairment. Most of these schools are situated in urban areas and are not in a position to extend their services all over the country. This created a two-tiered system of special schools and units for integration. The challenge to this view from the disability movement was an acknowledgement of disability as a social construct, where

'the disability resides in the context not in the person' (Broderick et al., 2005; p. 200) with a push for full inclusion of children with disabilities into the mainstream classroom.

The 1970s marked a transition from segregated teaching to mixed learning environments with the offer of 'integrated education' with adaptations made to the regular classroom environment (Ministry of Social Welfare, 2003). This programme was assisted through the 1970s and 1980s by SIDA, although the lack of financial assistance (and arguably ideological commitment) led to it halting by the 1990s (National Education Commission, 2003).

In the past 10 years', Sri Lanka has moved towards adopting a policy of inclusive education, in-line with current international concepts and discourse. Sri Lanka's commitment to inclusive education is proposed within its legislation, which emphasizes every 5-16 year old child's right to 'compulsory education', regardless of ability (Parliament of Sri Lanka, 1997). The general Education Reforms (1997) prepared by the Presidential Task Force on General Education together with the National Education Commission, which came almost three years after the Salamanca Statement (1994), gave special importance to the issues of special education. The reforms emphasized the need to integrate the learners with special educational needs into the regular system and eventually the community.

The adoption of the Education Act of 1997, afforded all students 'free and compulsory' education. Although not clearly articulated within the legislation, this Act can be extended to include free and compulsory education for all children 5 to 16 years, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, religion and ability (or disability). There have been useful circulars that have promoted better support for children with disabilities to access education in the past 50 years post-independence. This has included amendments to the ratio of the number of students with disabilities to teachers in special education units (National Institute of Education, 2001). Strengthened by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), the impact of the world disability movement and the determination to achieve Education for All by 2015 (UNESCO, 2010), and current local legislation, Sri Lanka has moved towards imbibing concepts of inclusion. This movement for change was also reinforced more locally by the Mahinda Chinthana Development Policy Framework (2010) that promotes access for all children to complete primary and secondary education and for education to be child-centred taking account of the child's needs. Added to this, the Cabinet approval in 2013 for the implementation of the proposed National Action Plan for Disability (2013), focusing specifically on seven interconnected pillars including 'Education', 'Work and Employment' and 'Mainstreaming and Enabling Environments' holds great promise to forge forward a rights-based agenda to promote the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of community living and development.

The New National Policies and Proposals for General Education in 2003 proposed that students who are 'differently abled' and those experiencing learning difficulties should be enrolled into inclusive education. To achieve this, at least three primary and one secondary inclusive school were to be established in each Divisional Secretariat, with sufficient infrastructure services, pedagogical resources and teacher training. However, regrettably, this recommendation has not been fulfilled and what is required may be more of an incentive for schools in a Divisional Secretariat to practice a policy of inclusion.

Furthermore, one special school per district was also recommended to accommodate children with severe disabilities, with residential facilities. The policy document also suggests the upgrading of courses to degree-level, with a six month compulsory training component on children with special needs. This was said to foster a positive attitude towards inclusive education. Unfortunately, 10 years on, there has only been some marginal change.

At policy level, inclusive education has referred to the inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds such as children from poor socio-economic backgrounds, from the estate-sector or with children with no fixed abode (living on the street) as well as children who are 'differently abled' (Special Parliamentary Advisory Committee of Education, 2003) or 'children with disability' (National Education Commission, 2003). The recommendation of the National Education Commission (2003) a decade ago was to establish at least three primary schools and one secondary school with all necessary adaptations and requirements including trained teachers to support inclusive education of children with disabilities in each Divisional Secretariat (Special Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Education, 2003). In addition, each Divisional Secretariat was also recommended to have one special school with residential hostel facilities to accommodate children diagnosed with severe impairments. Ten years on, it is time for honest reflection and critical evaluation of the progress made towards achieving these recommendations.

2.1. Gifted and Talented Children

Despite the fact that special attention has been given to children with special needs, the education system of Sri Lanka has given little attention to very able children or gifted and talented children. The literature reveals that gifted and talented children should be considered together with children with special needs due to many reasons. This is because intellectual development is a dynamic process between the interaction of genetic patterns and environmental opportunities. In order to acquire such interactions, the gifted students, like all other students, need challenges presented to them by their educational experience at a level appropriate to their ability and development (Clark, 2008). Issues such as an inadequate curriculum, unsupportive educators, social and emotional difficulties, peer pressure, and inadequate parenting can extinguish the potentially high accomplishment of gifted children and adolescents

(Colangelo & Davis, 2003). As a result, such children may end up as school 'dropouts'.

Proposals for a National Policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka (National Education Commission, 2003, p. 264) places emphasis on the special needs of gifted children and children with learning difficulties. The only criterion adopted to identify the 'academically best' students at the primary level in Sri Lanka is the island-wide Grade five scholarship examination. However, it was identified that the pressure on the children by parents and teachers to engage in monotonous academic activities towards the Grade five scholarship examination has caused the gifted children to become 'gifted underachievers' (Ariyaratne, 2008). The examination also fails to identify children with the potential to be gifted and talented. Furthermore, since there is no proper mechanism to identify the gifted and talented children in the system at present, most of these children remain unidentified. They learn together with 'normal' children and often feel bored and may even become school dropouts (Ariyaratne, 2008).

Among the more common categorisation of children with special needs are children diagnosed with learning disabilities, communication disabilities, emotional and behavioural disorders, physical disabilities and developmental disabilities. Within the context of post-war Sri Lanka, we must also acknowledge the potential impact of trauma and stress on children and their influence on their psycho-social wellbeing, which may remain undetected. 'Intellectual giftedness' is also a different type of 'special need', which also goes unrecognized. Children under this category need curriculum modifications and can also benefit from specialized teaching techniques or different educational programmes. In addition, children with high intelligence can be underprepared if their education was disrupted by internal displacement as during the civil war in the country.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research methodology was favored in order to gain in depth information on the current facilities and experiences of several stakeholders: students, teachers, principals and parents. Several different data collection methods were employed to achieve the objectives. During this study, attention was focused on primary schools, junior secondary schools and senior secondary schools, including mostly government schools and a few private schools. In addition, attention was given to the special schools situated in particular areas of the country, with a view to gain a balanced and representative view of special educational provision.

3.1. Data Collection Mechanism, Objective 1 - To Study the Experiences of Special Education in Other Countries with a View to Identifying 'Best Practices'.

The data was collected to get experiences of Special Education in other countries to identify 'best practice' guidelines socio-culturally appropriate to the Sri Lankan context. Educational policies and practices pursued in the 'Western world' or the 'Global North' as well as those in the 'Global South', particularly in the South-Asian region were identified. This was accomplished by undertaking a comprehensive literature review of relevant journal articles, research studies and information via the internet.

3.2. Data Collection Mechanisms, Objective 2 - To Review the Current Status of Special Education in Sri Lanka :

To review the current status of Special Education in Sri Lanka, the team used a variety of data collection methods as follows:

3.2.1. Review of key relevant literature

- (i) Extensive database searches and comprehensive and systematic examination of grey literature on the Sri Lankan context.
- (ii) Review of existing documents/research studies relevant to special needs and inclusive education in Sri Lanka.
- (iii) Review of key existing services for persons with disabilities.

The aim of the review of the literature was to gain a better understanding of the trajectory of educational provision for children with special needs in Sri Lanka. It also hoped to uncover barriers and facilitators to educational provision for children with special needs across the world, including the establishment of inclusive education and the 'lessons learnt' in this process.

3.2.2. Structured and semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews

- (i) Interview with the Director and one officer of the Non-Formal and Special Education unit of the Ministry of Education in person.

The purpose of these interviews was to identify the current structure of functioning of special education in Sri Lanka. Face to face interviews were carried out using a semi structured interview schedule, with telephone conversations from time to time to clarify several key aspects.

- (ii) Face-to face interview with the officers of the Department of Inclusive Education, National Institute of Education, Maharagama.
- (iii) Telephone interviews with prominent members of the Additional Directors of Special Education and face-to-face interviews with provincial in-service advisors of Special Education.
- (iv) Interviews with two groups of parents whose special needs children attend either a special education unit or who are accessing mainstream educational contexts.
- (v) Interviews with principals and members of staff of private/international schools in which special needs children are accommodated.
- (vi) Visits to special schools and interviews with principals and members of staff.

3.2.3. Observational visits

- (i) Visits to different educational settings and observations of classroom situations including mainstream classrooms where children with special needs have been accommodated and special educational units in government schools that only support children with special needs.
- (ii) Visits to special schools and observations of the teaching contexts.

The above activities were carried out in order to complete the following tasks:

- a. To review the existing facilities, equipment and organizational arrangements for Special Education.
- b. To review the existing curricula, teaching materials and teaching/learning methods for Special Education.
- c. To review the existing teacher recruitment and deployment procedures for Special Education.
- d. To review the present role and capacity of Special Education teachers and to identify further training needs.
- e. To study the opportunities available for parental guidance and counseling relevant to students with special needs.

3.3. Objective 3 - To Make Policy Recommendations for the Development of Special Education in Sri Lanka.

Finally, based on the findings of the comprehensive literature review and data collection undertaken from objectives 1 and 2, specific recommendations were compiled with a view to improve Special Education and access to education for children with special needs in Sri Lanka.

4. EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITH A VIEW TO IDENTIFYING 'BEST PRACTICE' GUIDELINES.

4.1. Lessons from the 'Western' Educational Context

4.1.1. Europe

According to a study by Meijer (2010) and another on-line review by the European agency (2012), many countries in Europe have moved to adopt a more 'educational approach', focusing on the outcomes of disability on education. This process has been strengthened by the passing of appropriate and progressive legislation regarding SE within mainstream schools in many European countries. Also, some countries have made necessary adjustments to their funding systems while others are acutely aware of the need for adequate funding to promote inclusive education.

However, even within resource-rich countries of Europe, countries are said to be 'currently struggling with the practical implementation of this philosophy' due to the complex and nuanced nature of the concept (Meijer, 2010). Individual education programmes or Individual Educational Plans have been key tools in determining the implementation of appropriate education for children with disabilities. As a total, 2% of all students with disabilities are reported to be offered a special school or special classroom facility, although this can range from 1% particularly in Scandinavian and southern European countries and go up to 6% in countries of northwest Europe. Currently in Europe, the trend is towards a two-track system; a comparatively bigger provision of special education systems alongside mainstream school placements, with a 'continuum of services' connecting the systems.

The position of special schools with regard to the implementation of an inclusive education policy is strongly dependent on the overall educational policy of each country. Therefore, the lack of prominence given to special schools in Norway and Italy is reflective of the dwindling number of special schools in existence. Many of the former state-run special schools in Norway, for instance, have been reclassified as regional/national resource centres. There has also been a new, progressive move towards establishing new special schools within the same locale as mainstream schools, thus increasing the likelihood of opportunities for inclusion, seen in countries such as Cyprus. Having said that, in other parts of Europe such as Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, special schools are reported to feel 'threatened' by the process of inclusion as a result of the comparatively substantial special school system (Meijer, 2010). Given the 'expert' status of special school teachers and other professionals working within a special education context, this highlights the need to get them on board with the ethos of inclusion, prior to rolling out a country-wide policy of inclusive education.

Among the other challenges to the establishment of inclusive education, noted is the 'tension' between the inclusion of 'vulnerable' students and state-wide school performances as measured by 'league tables' in the UK. This measurement of 'success' via school output has undermined the establishment of inclusive education. Perhaps it is time to place greater value on the inclusion of students with varying levels of academic success than to view the success of a school purely on academic achievement. Furthermore, inclusion at secondary school level remains an area of concern. Meijer (2010) recommends in-service training and working towards inculcating affirmative attitudes towards children with disabilities.

4.1.2. Germany

Looking specifically at Germany, children with disabilities are offered both separate and inclusive early years educational placements; special Kindergartens or Supported Kindergartens as well as Integration-Kindergartens. Beyond Kindergarten, students with special educational needs can access mainstream schools if all necessary adaptations and support mechanisms are offered. Special education teachers are deployed to support students with special needs within the mainstream classroom. Support is offered within or outside of the mainstream classroom. 'Transitional schools' are to offer remedial support for students with speech or behavior difficulties, and are to be placed back in a mainstream setting when the difficulties have decreased to an acceptable level. In addition, vocational training is also offered in separate or inclusive settings. If enrollment in a standard occupation is impractical, these students are to be offered individualized training, catering to their competencies and level of skill to work in specific workshops for persons with disabilities and to be as independent as possible.

A sizeable proportion of students with disabilities are also offered special educational placements by the private sector, monitored by the state. These include churches and private and welfare organisations, primarily in connection with residential homes. The schools provide specific pedagogical methods and remedial support mechanisms. Additionally, there is also a trend towards establishing 'special pedagogical support centres' by converting special schools into resource centres. These are local, accessible resource centres with specialist members of staff. These centres provide individualized special needs support.

Two, mainly Western, Anglo-Saxon concepts, namely, of innate and arguably static levels of ability (Alexander, 2000) and individualism (Croft, 2002) had governed early conceptualisations of learner-centred teaching in the UK and USA. Teacher attitudes have been highlighted as a crucial factor determining the success of inclusive educational policies worldwide (Hammend and Ingalls, 2003; Sideridis and Chandler, 1996; Van Reusen, Shoho and Barker, 2001). Positive teacher attitudes towards inclusive education will strengthen the implementation of a policy of 'mainstreaming' (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Prakash, 2012). Arguably, to hold positive attitudes towards inclusive education, teachers

need to have a clear conceptual understanding of inclusion, in-line with their own views on education for children with disabilities. Zambelli and Bonni (2004) identified the two factors - the level of knowledge on inclusion and understanding of disabilities - as contributing to a positive attitude towards inclusive education.

Another factor impeding the implementation of inclusive education is the lack of competence among mainstream teachers to use diverse pedagogical methods to address the instructional needs of children with disabilities (DeSimone and Parmar, 2006; Maccini and Gagnon, 2006). A study conducted in New Mexico, USA, reported that 65% of the mainstream teachers included suggested a lack of competence or 'preparedness' to teach pupils with disabilities (Cummings, 2003). The teachers had identified teaching students of varying levels of competence, maintaining the interest of and focus on topic of all students as challenges faced in the inclusive classroom. There is a body of research documenting mainstream teacher reports of a mismatch between the knowledge and skills acquired within pre-service training and the ground realities encountered within the classroom context (Holdheide and Reschly, 2008; Philpott, Furey and Penny, 2010).

Extending this point further, the need for continued professional development or in-service training in inclusive education is also evident within legislative and policy levels. For instance, the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) in the USA and the Warnock Report (1978) in the UK both place importance on the in-service training of regular classroom teachers. The obstacles to the successful implementation of in-service programmes include factors such as the non-involvement of mainstream teachers in the designing of training courses and because the programmes were non-specific and did not address teacher needs (Philpott et al., 2010).

4.2. Lessons from the Region

A review of inclusive practices in 26 countries found that 'relatively strong policy environments are just not being put into practice' (Modern et al., 2010; p.14). There has also been some discussion on the cultural relevance, contextual-sensitivity and socio-economic and political feasibility of introducing borrowed notions of inclusive education in countries of the South or in the Majority World (Cornelius and Balakrishnan, 2012; Lewis and Doorlag, 2003; Pather, 2007; Peterson and Hittie, 2003; Salend, 2005). These reservations regarding the implementation of a mainly 'western' concept of inclusion may have resulted in the 'considerably slower pace, if at all, in developing countries' (Cornelius and Balakrishnan, 2012; p. 82) at adopting inclusive educational policies.

4.2.1. India

Following the formation of a National Policy on Education in 1986, India has taken positive steps towards implementing an inclusive education policy. The

past three decades have seen the emergence of many relevant policies and legislation such as the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995 and the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in 2006 as well as government initiatives including the Project Integrated Education for the Disabled in 1987, 'Sarva Siksha Abhiyan' or Education for All Movement in 2001 and the Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities of 2005 (Das, Gichuru and Singh, 2013). The Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995 failed to offer equitable opportunities for children with disabilities to access education in India resulting in a large proportion of children with disabilities still excluded from formal education (Alur, 2002). There is, therefore a chasm between the written policy documents and its implementation in India.

Although teachers in Kerala were found to hold positive views towards inclusion during pre-service training, they had limited core knowledge on inclusive education (Gafoor and Asaraf, 2009). Teachers in Maharashtra too displayed positive attitudes towards inclusion but raised some apprehensions on the limited classroom resources (Sharma, Morre and Sonawane, 2009). Similarly, Prakash (2012) in her study of teachers' attitudes to the inclusion of children with hearing impairment in mainstream schools in Andhra Pradesh in India, reports on a mainly positive attitude towards inclusion. The 100 regular classroom teachers in her study indicated more favorable attitudes towards inclusive education if employed within the government sector. The author hypothesises that this may be due to the access these teachers have to teaching resources, special education teachers and to allied health professionals such as speech and language therapists. That said, she goes on to explain significant variation in attitudes based on teacher qualifications and training, experience and expertise at supporting students with disabilities, the degree of involvement (e.g. primary school, secondary school etc.) in teaching and gender. However, the literature suggests that the influence of gender on teacher attitudes towards inclusion remains inconclusive (Avramidi et al., 2000; Cornoldi et al., 1998; Kuester, 2000; Lampropoulou and Padelliadu, 1997; Leyser and Tappendorf, 2001; Pearman et al., 1992; Prakash, 2012). Many of these studies have employed a methodology of self-report, which needs to be considered in the interpretation of the results.

Another challenge connected to the operationalisation of an inclusive education policy in India has been the ability (or lack thereof) of the regular classroom teacher to offer such programmes within his/her classroom (Das et al., 2013). A lack of consensus on what inclusion entails and more critically, its implications for the mainstream teacher is also a significant barrier to its establishment in practice (Miles and Singal, 2010). As hitherto general education teachers, these teachers require training and competence to support children with disabilities within the mainstream classroom, together with engaging all the students in the classroom. Research thus far has indicated that a majority of Indian mainstream teachers perceive a need for more comprehensive training on the teaching and management of students with disabilities within the regular classroom (Das et al., 2013; Jangira, Singh and Yadav, 1995).

At a policy level, India has legislation promoting the provision of in-service training to all mainstream teachers, for instance, as stipulated within the Action Plan for Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities of 2005. Notwithstanding the legislation, there remains an ambiguity in policy and interpretation (Bhatnagar and Das, 2013). A recent study by Das and his colleagues (2013) explored teacher preferences for professional development delivery models. In their questionnaire-based investigation of 223 primary and 130 secondary mainstream school teachers, both groups preferred conferences/conventions related to inclusion and workshops conducted by experts from outside India in contrast to other more local possibilities of training from the Ministry of Education, university academics, fulltime or correspondence courses by universities and formalized self-study programmes. In addition, many teachers had suggested school visits and observation of model inclusive classrooms and training at the school site and training by school principals as extra delivery modes not specified in the questionnaire.

4.2.2. Japan

Japanese cultural values, which are central to its culture, may explain the 'reluctance of Japanese schools to fully embrace a Western model of inclusive education' (Mitchell and Desai, 2005, 190). The Japanese education system has remained largely unaltered by Western, Anglo-Saxon or ethnocentric philosophies on education. It continues to perpetuate a more traditional 'collectivist' cultural perspective, paying little heed to individual diversity in favor of collective effort (Mitchell and Desai, 2005). Therefore, all students are seen as having the potential to excel academically with the offering of any extra support seen as 'discriminatory' (Mitchell and Desai, 2005). Connected to this concept of all children possessing equivalent abilities to succeed is the perception of self-discipline honed by hardship. There is also an emphasis on social and emotional growth via formulating peer relationships. The Japanese example questions the whole-sale employment of inclusive or a neoliberal approach (Alexander, 2000), without adequate consideration for cultural sensitivity and relevance.

4.3.3. Hong Kong

Focusing specifically on the educational provision for children with hearing impairment or deaf children (the preferred term in the country) in Hong Kong, an estimated 1,000 children are reported to have three diverse options: a mainstream placement offering an oral approach, a Deaf school using a sign language approach or mainstream school adopting bilingual approach. Of these options, mainstream schools using an oralist tradition is favoured by over half of all the children with less than 100 pupils attached to sign language schools and less than 40 students attending bilingual school placements (Chu and Lo, 2013). Having said that, the Jockey Club Sign Bilingualism and Co-enrolment in Deaf Education Programme commenced in 2006 in Hong Kong Jockey Club Sign

Bilingualism and Co-enrolment in Deaf Education Programme, (2013) is an exception. It has been highlighted in the UNESCO International Bureau of Education's database as an example of good practices for inclusive education. Begun as an experimental programme at preschool and primary school levels to co-facilitate both deaf and hearing pupils within the same school, it brings together a team of speech therapists, sign bilingual instructors, deaf instructors and school teachers. The programme is closely monitored and documented by a team of overseas and local researchers. It uses a 'bi-modal learning environment' focusing on bilingual language acquisition (sign and spoken language), incorporating sign language to enrich both sign and spoken language development. This experimental mainstream school setting now has a waiting list for children with no hearing loss, whose parents are keen to offer their children the mainstream bilingual experience.

Nevertheless, summarising the educational attainment of the Deaf community, Chu and Lo (2013) note that 2.9% of this population have attained a Bachelor's degree or higher, a similar number of 2.9% have received diplomas or certificates, there are no vocational training options (0%) and a high rate of 34.6% not accessing schooling/pre-primary level. In addition, although Hong Kong Sign Language is recognised as the language of deaf people and deaf culture in the country, it remains unacknowledged by the government.

4.3.4. Malawi/Sub-Saharan Africa and South Africa

African primary teachers adopt 'whole class' teaching practices on the assumption of student homogeneity; that all children in the group possess a similar ability (Akyeampong, Pryor and Ghartey Ampiah, 2006). This is evident in the detailed teaching guides offered to teachers in Malawi (Croft, 2002a). Therefore, children are all expected to succeed with no differentiation of curricula. This notion of keeping the class together reflects the collectivist perspective within Malawi culture and sub-Saharan Africa (Croft, 2002b). It is, however, incongruent with the UNESCO (2005) assertion to policy makers that 'curricula expect all pupils to learn the same things, at the same time and by the same means and methods. But pupils are different and have different abilities and needs.' (p.25).

Progression to the next grade depends on successful completion at the year end examination. Not securing the required grades, often due to absenteeism related to poverty, results in the opportunity to repeat the year, avoiding failure as a consequence of progression to the next year (Croft, 2006). Within this system, children may feel compelled to adapt to group rather than individual expectations.

With a school dropout rate as high as 50% or more in 11 countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2010), the influence of the whole-class pedagogical method and a rigid curriculum and lack of a differentiated syllabus remains uncertain. The reasons for underachievement are often located within the child's locus of control

rather than external of him/her. Thus, while the promotion of similar expectations from all students may be a positive, the disregard for pupil diversity as a cause for underachievement and the high school dropout rate may in fact be a barrier to inclusion.

The inflexibility of curricula and rigid teaching pedagogy has been also reported from Botswana, where the 'dominant positivist view of curriculum knowledge as uncontested 'facts' (Tafa, 2004, p. 757) disregards pupil heterogeneity. The lack of differentiation of curricula has led to inconsistencies and inequalities and discrimination based on ethnicity, class, culture, language, religion and gender more specifically in the post-colonial Ghanian and more generally in the African context.

Concerning expert or classroom support within the mainstream context, Lynch and McCall (2009) found that expert visiting teachers for children with visual impairment were at times viewed as a relief to the duty of supporting these children by the Malawian mainstream teachers. This was particularly apparent when the students with disabilities were 'pulled out' of the mainstream classroom for special individual instruction. Better results were observed when the specialist teacher remained in the mainstream classroom to support the student with special needs (Lynch and McCall, 2009).

Historically, South Africa has espoused traditional theories and practices of pedagogy and learning while accounting for sociological considerations. This emphasises the urgent need for teacher training. Nevertheless, Johnstone and Chapman's (2009) experience in Lesotho was of a lack of weight given to differentiation of curricula and to taking learner needs into account.

As a whole-class teaching dictum is followed, the teachers tend to offer additional support after the lesson to pupils who are struggling to access the lesson content during the stipulated work period (Johnstone and Chapman, 2009). In doing so, Lesotho teachers are able to keep the class working together, even if it is at a surface level.

5. CURRENT STATUS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA : DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

5.1. Current Structure and Functioning of Special Education in Sri Lanka

Four categories of student settings: special units of the schools, inclusive mainstream classrooms, special schools and special resource centres were identified from the data collected through interviews with the Director and one officer of the Non-Formal and Special Education unit at the Ministry of Education. The number of special units in schools and the approximate number of students attached to these units as well as the number of students in special schools is listed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Special Units in Government schools

Altogether, there are 525 special units in schools in Sri Lanka: 78 special units are in National schools and 447 special units are attached to Provisional schools (Table 3.1).

Province	National schools	Provisional schools Schools
Western	16	141
Central	07	58
Southern	15	49
North Western	09	77
North Central	03	30
Northern	02	12
Eastern	07	24
Uva	12	11
Sabaragamuwa	07	45
Total	78	447

Table 5.1 Distribution of special units in Sri Lanka

Special schools (under Ministry of Education) in Sri Lanka

Altogether there are 25 Special schools in Sri Lanka and approximately 2795 students attached to these schools (Table 3.2).

Province	Number of Special schools	Number of students in Special schools
Western	10	1187
Central	02	186
Southern	04	544
North Western	02	227
North Central	01	17

Northern	01	217
Eastern	07	24
Uva	02	224
Sabaragamuwa	02	157
Total	25	2795

Table 5.2 Distribution of Special schools in Sri Lanka

Government schools in Sri Lanka

Apart from the 2795 (approximately) students in special schools, in National schools and Provisional schools, about 5088 students with special needs are accessing education in the government schools. These children can be positioned in inclusive educational settings or in the special units in the schools (Table 3.3).

Province	Number of students in National schools	Number of students in Provisional schools
Western	200	1356
Central	27	498
Southern	201	454
North Western	102	707
North Central	43	245
Northern	18	83
Eastern	87	288
Uva	131	125
Sabaragamuwa	122	401
Total	931	4157

Table 5.3 Distribution of students with special needs in government schools

Overall, the number of children with special needs in Sri Lanka is close upon 52000. Considering the student numbers in the tables above, there are approximately 7883 children within the mainstream or regular school system or in special schools. However, it was not possible to find reliable records on the number of students with special needs in private or international schools.

5.2. Information Gathered via School Visits and Correspondence on the Functioning of Some of the Existing Special Schools, Special Education Units, Inclusive Educational Placements and Special Education Resource Centres.

There are 25 government-assisted special schools in Sri Lanka. The salaries of the teachers appointed by the government are paid by the government. So, all the expenditure and salaries for other workers are borne by the schools. Therefore, these schools are dependent on the donations of well wishes and supporters. However, the facilities in most of the schools are offered free to the students. The distribution of these special schools across the country are indicated in the tables above. In addition, as of 2002, there are 95 special schools funded by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) registered with the Department of Social

Services and the Ministry of Education (Department of Non-formal, Continuing and Special Education).

5.2.1 Special schools in the different Provinces.

The members of the research group were able to visit several schools and collect information through the help of research assistants on five special schools in the Central, Southern and Northern provinces of the country.

Special Schools in the Central Province

1. Blue-Rose Special Education School

The Blue-Rose Special Education School in Kandy was started in 1981 as a Service Civil International (SCI) project for children with cognitive or intellectual disabilities². Now it has 30 students of ages ranging from 7 to 37 years. Gender wise, there are equal numbers. Ethnicity wise, there are two Tamil children and the others are Sinhalese. The children are selected on the basis of certificates issued by psychiatrists. The school is being conducted as a fee levying day school. Though the school charges Rs. 3500 per month only 10 parents are capable of in paying the full amount. The others pay Rs. 500 or less. Apart from the School fee the school is financed by a SCI established a trust fund and donations which seems to be inadequate for it to carry out its normal tasks.

The principal has postgraduate qualifications in special education as well as experience in special education in foreign countries. With the principal it has 7 full time academic staff that has had training in special education methods. There are also 4 part-time members for subjects like music, speech, physiotherapy and swimming.

The curriculum has been developed by the school after going through similar programmes in Sri Lanka and abroad. The basics are taught by devising Individual Education Programmes (IEPs). These students are said to have difficulties with concentrating on one subject area for a long time. Therefore, a lot of practical activities are being used such as music, dancing etc. as special pedagogical methods to support their development. Singing seems to be the favorite activity of all of them. In addition, Girl- guides, swimming, conducting a weekly fair are done as co-curricular activities. They are taken once a week to a swimming pool and to a gym nearby. The students take part in various sports and arts competitions organized by various institutions in Kandy as well as in Colombo. The children who are over 18 years of age are offered vocational training in subjects like sewing, leatherwork, pottery etc.

² The terms cognitive impairment and intellectual impairment or disabilities will be used interchangeably to denote students who display an IQ level below their chronological age.

The school receives professional guidance from the Medical Faculty and Psychology Department of the University of Peradeniya and Kandy General Hospital. The programme conducted with parents of children with cognitive/intellectual impairment at the Kandy Hospital is attended by the school staff, which provides them some exposure to the problems and solutions identified by parents.

The SCI has launched a 6 month programme for pre-school and primary teachers to identify children with special needs and 'slow-learners' who could be found in large numbers in the mainstream school system. Unlike the other students with disabilities such as those with motor, visual or communication impairment children, severe cognitive impairment may not always be able to be taught with other mainstream students as the teaching methods unless pedagogical methods are revised. In addition, often, these children are at risk of being bullied or ridiculed by their mainstream peers, which could result in very negative experiences. On the other hand, parents of children without disabilities protest that their children are being taught in the same class with children with cognitive impairment.

The facilities available for these students in Sri Lanka compared to children abroad are totally inadequate. The children in developed countries are taught using a standard curriculum. They use facilities such as Inter-active White Boards, Light and Sound Rooms for hyper-active children. Every child is given an ID with basic information about him/her. The transport facilities with facilities suitable for children with disabilities are provided free of charge. The needs in general identified by the school include a common Resource Centre with state of the art facilities, library on Special Education materials, awareness programmes for parents and the general public on needs of disabled children, special training to identify children with cognitive impairment and 'slow learners' from early childhood.

2. Mahinda Special Education School - Ampitiya (Kandy)

Mahinda Special Education School, started in 1998, is the only government controlled school for children with cognitive impairment in the Central Province. It is situated on the Ampitiya Road in the Kandy Education Zone. The school is run by the Education Department, the residential facilities are provided in the adjoining hostel by an NGO (i.e. Kantha Pihita) and the land and buildings of the hostel belongs to the Social Services Department.

At present, there are 21 children and 6 teachers including the principal. The teachers are provided on the basis of 1 teacher for 5 students as stipulated in the teacher cadre circular. The principal and the deputy have had their training at the Maharagama Teacher Training College in Special Education. There is another teacher trained at the Hapitigama College of Education in Special Education. The other three teachers have under gone a two-week short-term training course in Special Education. There are no teachers to teach Aesthetic Subjects or Technical Subjects. The students are admitted to the school with the Provincial Department

Special Education Assistant Director's approval. In age, the students range from 6 to 18 years. Although there is increased awareness about these types of educational facilities among the general public and an increase in demand for such educational placements, the lack of availability of suitable teachers is deterring the school authorities from admitting all children who would benefit from such an educational setting. Therefore, most of these children seem to be attending mainstream schools, which may in fact be a positive step towards implementing an inclusive educational policy. That said, it is questionable whether these students receive an adequate education in mainstream schools where teachers are not specifically trained and even if they are trained, may not have time to attend to each student's specific special need. There also seems to be a lack of specialist to train these teachers at formal training institutes and within in-service training.

The school is housed in two buildings with classrooms separated by boards. At present they do not have enough space for physical training or sports activities, which are needed for their physical development. The teachers' quarters are unoccupied as it is not in a condition for use. The students come to the school from the hostel at 7.15 am and start cleaning the school premises. After that they prepare for religious activities at 7.45 am. Everyday, one child is assigned as the leader to organise the religious activities and they take Pan-Sil with teachers. Then under the Thri-basha programme they learn one word each day in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Afterwards, they engage in physical training activities. Before the class-room activities begin after these outdoor activities they are provided a nutritious meal prepared according to a menu given for all schools by the Department of Education. A private person prepares them and children have that meal in a room prepared for this purpose. The Department pays Rs. 21.50 for each child towards their meal.

As there is no standard curriculum for this type of schools, the school uses the common primary curriculum prepared, adapting it to suite the students. Accordingly, every student starts from grade 1 and progresses gradually to grade 5 depending on the ability of each child. Although these children may not be able to achieve high standards in academic subjects, they have found that the parents expect certain levels of achievement in these subjects. The exercises done by grade 5 students on display in the classroom showed that they are on par with children without special needs. Those students who achieve the required academic standards are sent to mainstream schools.

The students engage in sports and religious activities. The teachers use the training they received at their respective training programmes. Occasionally, the Education Department conducts in-service training very often with a guest lecturer on the subject. Although the school does not have facilities to teach technical subjects at the hostel, they provide vocational training for students over 18 years of age.

The school gets about Rs. 19000/ per year from the Quality Inputs Fund to be used for class-room activities. Although a fee of Rs. 900 hundred (or 300 per

term) is charged from students, very few parents pay this as they are not compelled to do so. The Rotary Club has donated the desks and chairs for the children. Well-wishers have helped them to have a place for religious activities and a computer facility. The NGO provides boarding and meals. Students are expected to go home fortnightly during weekends. But some parents, due to various reasons, do not take their children home as expected.

The staff believes that the children with intellectual impairment could not get proper attention and education at a mainstream school. So they question the value of the concept of integration as far as these children are concerned.

3. Special School in the Southern Province

A visit to the Rohana Special School situated in Walgama in the Matara district provided valuable information on the history and current functioning of the school. The school was founded in 1963 by Venerable NaraddeVedanandaThero, a Buddhist monk. Other than the salaries for government appointed teachers, the school does not get any assistance from the government. Therefore, the school is highly dependent on the donations of well wishes and supporters. However, the facilities in the school are free for the students.

Most of the students are hearing impaired or deaf, a few are blind or have visual impairment and a few other children have cognitive/intellectual impairment or learning difficulties. Today, the school offers formal education to 120 -125 students from the ages of 6-20 years, enrolled in Grades 1 through 11 and up to the O-L examination. The students seem very happy and friendly with each other. A girl who was in this school has entered the university and is now a special education teacher at some other school. The children are provided with vocational training and job placements for graduates in collaboration with RuhunuSumaga Circle of the Deaf. There are 7 teachers in total. These teachers attend training sessions and seminars conducted by the Province.

It has residential facilities for more than 70 students, with separate dormitories for male and female students, and 50 students use the hostel facilities at present. This helps children from distant locations to receive specialized education that they would not otherwise receive in their villages. The hostels are very clean with minimum amenities like a bed, small cupboard for each student and a mosquito net. They also provide clean, modern toilet facilities, a playground, and a pavilion for quiet outdoor activities, together with a small but clean dining hall. Most of the children in the hostel are deaf students or hearing impaired and the Matron of the hostel is able to engage in communication through sign language. The school conducts sign language classes for the staff.

The classrooms have many resources providing an environment that is conducive to learning with a lot of visual teaching aids (for deaf students). They also have modern teaching materials such as whiteboards and display boards and a small but well-arranged library with more than 1000 books, including

Braille books and sign language dictionaries. Although there is no special librarian, the Matron of the hostel acts as the librarian during the day.

Even though the students are cared for, getting suitable education addressing their needs, they have very little social interaction outside of the school, although there are opportunities for social interaction within the school. However, according to the principal, they go to formal schools for special days and participate in the district sports meet as well. Having hostel facilities is a great help for parents, but the children in the hostel are separated from the parents.

4. Special Schools in the Northern Province

J/Kaithady Nuffield Deaf and Blind School in Jaffna, one of the government-registered private special schools in the North. This school consists of a total number of 177 students; 11 students with visual impairment and the others with hearing impairment. It has residential facilities. The total number of teachers stands at 20 and all the teachers participate in training programmes and seminars conducted by zonal and provincial departments.

Sivapoomy is another school in the North where special children with special needs are accommodated Children diagnosed as 'slow learners', on the autistic spectrum or with Down syndrome are admitted The total number of students stands at 247 pupils at present. Unlike the 25 government aided Special schools, it is a private school conducted by a charity with no residential facilities. The students are facilitated by 20 teachers who are said to participate in training programmes conducted in India.

Considering the services provided by the above mentioned special schools, it is fair to conclude that these special schools are engaging in a significant and valuable service. The staff of these special institutions possesses the expertise needed for early screening and identification of the children with disabilities and are able to provide appropriate provisions according to the needs of children. However, even though these special schools provide an enormous service to the children with special needs, it was identified that those special schools faced the challenge of continuing due to the minimum financial support they received from the government as well as from the private sector, non -governmental agencies, foreign agencies or from the community.

5.2.2 Special Education Resource Centres .

In addition to the special schools, there are also some special education resource centres operating in some provinces of the country. The main purpose of these centres is to provide awareness on special education to teachers, principals, officers, parents and to train teachers who are teaching students with disabilities at special units in schools and mainstream classrooms. The centres are under the Provincial Director of Education. Information collected on such a special resource centre at Ampitiya (Kandy District) is presented below.

Special Education Resource Centre in the Central Province - Ampitiya

The centre originated in 2001 on a project proposal prepared by a Special Education Teacher at Berawats College, Ampitiya. With the assistance from a NGO it was started at a building on the premises of Berawats College. However it got damaged due to a landslide and with the provincial funds the present building was constructed and had come to operation in 2012. The teacher who prepared the project proposal is functioning as the Centre Coordinator at present

The main purpose of this centre is (a) to provide awareness on special education to teachers, principals, officers, parents and student leaders (b) to train teachers who are teaching disabled students at special units in schools and normal classrooms. The Centre is governed by a Board of Control consisting of the Provincial Secretary of Education, Provincial Director of Education, Provincial Ministry Assistant Secretary, Chief Accountants of the Provincial Ministry and the Department, Provincial ADE (Special Education) and the Centre Coordinator cum Zonal ADE (Special Education). The Board meets once a year to discuss the annual plan and to give the approval. The Board also meets whenever necessary.

The Officer in Charge and a peon are the only permanent staff given to the centre. All the lecturers for various programmes are hired by the centre. The National Institute of education also conducts its training sessions at this centre. One of the problems in this regard is that the approval rates per hour are not sufficient to hire some professional lecturers such as medical doctors.

At present the allocations they get from the government are being divided equally to Non Formal and Special Education which is hardly sufficient even for training purposes. The provincial council provides allocations for staff and maintenance. The centre needs a lot of facilities and equipment for training and a library with the latest publications and other audio-visual materials. Then it could be developed not only as a training centre but as a resource centre to match its name board. Such a centre will be useful not only for the government schools but for private special education schools also. However that kind of a development project will cost a considerable sum of money. The public sector may not be in a position to finance such a project in the near future. In such case they will have to provide similar assistance to all the nine provinces.

5.2.3 Special Educational units in schools.

There are about 525 special education units in government schools and about 1200 teachers are engaged in teaching at these units. There are about 2- 5 children per unit (in the units that were visited by members of the research team). The teachers in these units devoted their time to improving the children in their units. They are maintaining a portfolio of the students and in-service advisors monitor their work. According to the teachers, they are able to improve the students adequately to fit into the inclusive classroom and the school placed such students in the mainstream class with time. According to the Director of Special Needs,

there are many teachers who are trained for special education engaged in teaching in the mainstream or regular classroom and with teaching mainstream subjects and not contributing towards supporting children with special needs.

5.2.4. Inclusive setting in mainstream classrooms.

Managing the children

Out of the schools visited, in one school, two children with special needs are studying in the mainstream classroom. The class teacher is not even a primary teacher but an English trained teacher. She has never received training on working with children with special needs, but according to her, at one of the in-service training sessions, they were given brief instructions on supporting special needs children. However, the teacher managed with the two children successfully in spite of not having training. She said she read a lot on special needs children. The school has no special unit or special teacher to help this teacher. One of the children was in a wheel chair since he has a problem with his spine and has limited mobility. The most remarkable observation was that all the children were very kind to him and ready to help at any time, even to feed him. The child with mobility difficulties is capable of enjoying all the activities in the classroom. The other child is on the autistic spectrum whose mother and father are doctors. He has a nanny in the classroom to help him. According to the teacher, the nanny is very caring as well as intelligent and therefore helps the child in activities and the child has improved a lot as a result. This is a very good example of what that with proper guidance and training, the mainstream teachers can handle children with special needs.

In the other school there were two special units: for children with hearing impairment and for children with intellectual disabilities. However, in that school, an inclusive teaching environment was prominent. There were children who were directly admitted to the mainstream classroom (children with hearing impairment) and doing well in the classroom. At the same time, the children who display severe impairments are admitted to the special unit and once the child has progressed to a certain level, they are admitted to the mainstream class. This practice was common in several schools.

Principals and the teachers highlighted the problem of handling children with special needs in the classrooms due to the large number of students per classroom. They claimed that the maximum number of children with special needs they can accommodate in a classroom is two in the present classroom-size situation.

Physical environment

The physical environment of the schools was not conducive to children with special needs. For example, the child in the wheel chair has to climb up one step (it was a ground floor classroom). His peers used to lift the chair near the steps. There were also no special washrooms in the schools. Inside the classroom, there

was no room to move around in the wheel chair. The student could only reach the teacher, but could not move freely in the classroom to mix with his peers at leisure.

Peer support

In every school, peers were very kind and helpful towards the children with special needs. The children were always ready to help them.

Parents' attitudes

According to the teachers, at the very beginning, some parents of children who do not have disabilities were not happy with educating their children together with children with special needs, and were even unhappy to see the children with special needs sitting next to their children. However, the teachers' experiences are that this situation changes with time.

5.3. Interviews with the Director of the Non-Formal Special Education unit at the Ministry of Education and Officials of the National Institute of Education

Data was gathered through interviews with the Director and an official at the Non-Formal Special Education branch in Ministry of Education and National Institute of Education, Maharagama. In summary, the following information was collated.

Role and Function of the Non-Formal Special Education (NSFE) branch-

The main role of the branch is Curriculum development and conducting teacher training programmes. The branch trains the in-service advisers who are the trainers of teachers of special education. As revealed by the Director NFSE, Maharagama training college they train teachers especially to support children with visual or hearing impairments. Three Colleges of Education train teachers in Special Education (30 teachers per year). According to these officials, the number of teachers who graduate from these schools is not enough for the school system. One of the major concerns is that most of these specially trained teachers work in regular classrooms with mainstream students rather than serving in special education units or facilitating children with disabilities within inclusive settings. In addition, these officials claim that the in-service training provided to teachers is not adequate. They further mentioned it is very difficult to change the negative attitudes of teachers' towards special needs children. There is a need to improve the attitudes of teachers.

Inclusive Education - The policy of inclusive education has failed in practice in the country

The main reason for this failure is that teachers have not been given any special training on how to support children with disabilities in the regular, mainstream classroom context. Therefore, a component on inclusive education should be

incorporated into the curriculum of all Colleges of Education. These Colleges should also take a lead in conducting in-service training for teachers.

Implementation of Inclusive education

Proposed special education unit - The Director/Special Needs proposed that in order to implement inclusive education more effectively; we should develop a Special Education Unit in each Zone. He further stated that even though the teachers are trained in inclusive education, they may need Assistant Teachers who are specially trained for special needs children to address specific issues that arise when they are in the formal mainstream classroom.

Role and Function of the National Institute of Education

The National Institute of Education has a special department for Inclusive Education. They Offer a programme Diploma in Special Education to enhance the teachers' skills and knowledge on special education. In addition, they are in the process of preparing curriculum material for mathematics for children with visual impairment and for children with hearing impairment. Further, they conduct awareness programmes on Inclusive Education from time to time.

5.4. Interviews with Parents of Children with Special Needs.

Two categories of parents were interviewed: those with children in mainstream schools and those with children attending special units in schools. Parents in the first category were very happy to see their children in the mainstream. They acknowledged that they don't have a feeling that their children have 'defects' when they are in the mainstream classroom and they believe their children also feel the same. They said that the children are very happy in the classroom and that their peers are very friendly and supportive. These parents are reluctant to get any assistance from the teacher of the special education unit of the school.

On the other hand, parents in the second category were very satisfied with the current provision, because they believed their children are getting special attention at the special unit. Unlike the parents in the first category, when the children of this unit are transferred to the mainstream classroom, the parents wished to get further support from the special education teachers in the unit.

5.5. Interviews with Principals/Staff Members of Private/International Schools.

By interviewing the principals of the schools and through the websites of the schools it was identified that out of the selected six schools, three schools were not providing education for children with special needs. The authorities of one school explained that the school does not have any provisions for children with special needs at school, but they are managing a separate centre for children with special needs in some other location. One school is supporting the education of

children with special needs and the classes are provided with shadow teachers to help the class teachers. Also, another international school provides learning support for students with mild to moderate special learning needs through the services of a specialist teacher at the primary and secondary sections of the school. In a leading international school, a resource centre was available with specialist teachers, including part-time speech and language therapists supporting the centre. Wherever possible, an inclusion model of services was followed, but there may be times when students will be pulled out of regular classrooms for special assistance, depending on individual needs.

5.6 Review of Existing Documents/Research Studies Relevant to Special Needs and Inclusive Education in Sri Lanka.

5.6.1. Study 1 : Danapala (2009).

A study carried out by Danapala (2009) revealed the present status and understanding of inclusive education in Sri Lanka. This was a study which incorporated a qualitative methodology. In it, the author reviewed official documents and conducted interviews with nearly 25 participants connected to the field. Some of the main findings of this study are,

1. Due to the absence of a solid set of acceptable policies, Sri Lanka has still failed to create a better understanding of inclusive education and to develop a broad inclusive culture in the regular classrooms.
2. Even though the Ministry of Social Welfare announced a National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka in 2003, which emphasizes the concept of inclusion, the Ministry of Education has not formulated guidelines for the practice of inclusive education.
3. About 56% interviewees (professionals, administrators, policy makers, practitioners etc.) have a good understanding of inclusive education and also a positive attitude towards the concept.
4. The importance of providing required facilities (including the environment and other required physical facilities) and teacher development.
5. Still no plan of action has been prepared for effective implementation of inclusive education.
6. The exam-oriented rigid curriculum (leaving little flexibility for local adaptation or teachers to try out new approaches) is often unable to meet the needs of a wide range of learners.

Some recommendations made in the study (Danapala, 2009) are :

1. NEC and MOE play a key role in the provision of inclusive education.
2. Reforms on inclusion must improve the system to enable early identification and early intervention to ensure inclusion.

3. A policy to provide inclusive education services can be delivered through the non-formal education system and community-based rehabilitation programmes, in addition to the formal education system.
4. Appropriate teacher education and teacher training related to inclusive education needs to be developed by Faculties of Universities, Colleges of Education and Teachers' Colleges.
5. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education should adopt strategies for children's development by soliciting the contribution of all relevant professionals.
6. The role of special schools should be recognized and developed to actively involve them in the process of inclusive education.

5.6.2. Study 2 : UNICEF (2003).

A research study by UNICEF (2003) had identified the following practices in Dharmapala Vidyalaya (inclusive school) where inclusive education had been initiated at the request of parents. In this school, some practices of inclusive education could be found to some extent. On the request of parents, some students had been admitted to the regular class, and teacher of the special education unit had helped them to cope with their academic work. Some children with disabilities were admitted to the special education unit. Special education with the help of a modified curriculum prepared these children to cope with the course work of the regular classroom. During this period, children were provided with opportunities to interact socially with children from the regular school, especially in co-curricular activities. The special education teacher assesses the achievement of pupils annually and based on this assessment, the teacher and principal decide to which class in the regular school the child can be admitted. Parents and the community actively take part in the provision of physical facilities and special resources for the school.

The children are the sole responsibility of the special education teacher until they join the regular school. Teachers and parents do not have access to other ancillary services that can support children with special needs such as physiotherapists and speech and language therapists. This shows the need for a formal supportive system for children with special needs in Sri Lanka. Teachers in the regular school have limited skills for handling children with special needs. Adding to this discussion, an almost similar situation had been found in Teppanawa Kumara MahaVidyalaya, an inclusive school.

Recommendations of the study (UNICEF, 2003):

- A substantial effort has to be made to raise the level of awareness regarding inclusive education among regular classroom teachers. There is also a need for student teachers to learn about teaching all types of children in the same classroom. A comprehensive training package on inclusive education needs to be developed. Curricula developers and subject teachers should also be aware of the concept. Capable and

interested parties can be mobilized to sponsor awareness through mass media.

- The teacher is the most important human resource for promoting inclusive education. The regular classroom teacher has little support. The role of the special education teacher needs to change to become a facilitator for the entire school. The setting up of a teacher support team in every school can provide on-site support as a matter of policy.
- Professionals, practitioners and stakeholders hold contradictory views regarding inclusive education. Training on special education should not be confined to teachers and resource teachers; it should include other key personnel such as principals, supervisors, directors etc., particularly those who are directly concerned with the promotion of inclusive education. Training should go beyond special teaching techniques, and cover issues of planning, management, organization, implementation and evaluation of special education programmes.
- Core-team training should be made more informal at school level so that there is more involvement of parents and community members in acquiring knowledge and skills. • Community-based rehabilitation programmes should be strengthened so that support in the form of promoting access to inclusive education, introducing reforms in schools, and providing supporting materials is facilitated.
- Support to children with disabilities could be built up through the creation of a support network of non-disabled peers. This would help not only in sharing the responsibility but also in promoting a non-discriminative social relationship in the school environment. • Sharing of ideas and information about inclusive practice is central to developing skills, knowledge and understanding, and reinforcing changes in attitudes and values. The National Institute of Education and the provincial Departments of Education should encourage information dissemination.
- In order to strengthen the impact of inclusive education in Sri Lanka, action research should be undertaken on practices of inclusion; the findings should be disseminated.
- Simultaneous initiatives in special education and inclusive education tend to obscure the focus on education of children with disabilities in regular school settings. There is a need to review and redirect the functioning of special education units in schools so that they serve the purpose of inclusive education. Children who have disabilities should be the concern of all personnel in the school rather than that of the resource or special education teacher. Future reviews and amendments to national educational reforms and policy should emphasize inclusive practices for children with disabilities, and discourage strategies that promote their segregation (UNICEF, 2003).

5.6.3. Study 3 : University students with disabilities (Hettiarachchi et al., 2013).

This pilot study aimed to identify the barriers and facilitators to accessing higher education in two universities: the University of Kelaniya and the University of Sri Jayawardenepura (Hettiarachchi et al., 2013). Using individual semi-structured interviews and focus groups, facilitated by an interview guide, the qualitative data was analysed with reference to the key principles of Framework Analysis (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994).

Accessibility (i.e. the lack of access) to the physical space including the road to the university, lecture halls, library facilities, the canteen and residential hostel facilities, as well as to learning and issues of pedagogy and to all aspects of 'campus life' inclusive of sports and clubs emerged as the main concerns. The main facilitators to accessing higher education were the support networks of family and friends, one's own personality and the positive changes to exam regulations such as additional time and the use of specialist voice-output computer-based software. That said, the findings must be considered with caution due to the small number of participants, representing only two universities. In addition, the majority of students included in his phase had visual impairment, with the experiences of students with other disabilities (e.g. hearing impairment or psycho-social difficulties) not secured.

5.6.4. Study 4 : Teachers supporting students with disabilities within mainstream schools, special school or special units (Hettiarachchi and Das, 2012).

This study aimed to identify the perceived level of competence among teachers (regular education and special education) on working with students with disabilities. Secondly, it aimed to uncover information on the teachers' knowledge and interpretation of 'inclusion' (Hettiarachchi and Das, 2012) Teachers supporting students with disabilities in special schools, special units attached to regular schools or mainstream classrooms in the Northern and Western Provinces were included using a purposive sampling method. In total, 30 Tamil-speaking teachers from the Northern Province and 45 Sinhala-speaking teachers from the Western Province responded to the survey. The participants included from the Northern Province were all attached to special schools, which may be reflective of the current educational options available. Similarly, the majority of the teachers from the Western Province were also special education teachers; while some of them were special education teachers attached to special units within mainstream schools and a few based in mainstream inclusive settings.

The teachers completed a self-administered two-part questionnaire, modified from the original Inclusion Competencies of Sri Lankan Teachers (ICSLT) which was devised by one of the authors and validated within the Indian context (Das,

2001) and translated into Sinhala and Tamil. Part-one of the questionnaire was designed to obtain background information particularly on whether the teachers had received training in special education and their experience of teaching students with disabilities. Part-two of the questionnaire was a Likert scale indicating 1 = not at all competent to 4 = highly competent on a series of competencies. Part-two of the questionnaire was titled, Inclusion Competencies of Sri Lankan Teachers (ICSLT). Additionally, qualitative data were gathered via semi-structured interviews with eight school teachers (both regular and special education).

The special education teachers from both Provinces reported a higher level of competence in all nine competency categories of the ICSLT. In contrast, the teachers based in regular/inclusive school teachers indicated a lack of competence. Although a high percentage of the teachers specified receiving some training to support children with special educational needs, the lack of acceptable training and the need for on-going in-service training was articulated by all interview participants. However, cautious interpretation of the findings of this study is required as the results are based on 'perceived' skills, which were not substantiated by observations of classroom practices.

In conclusion, whether children experiencing disabilities would be better positioned to access education within a special education unit or in a mainstream, inclusive educational context continues to be contested and debated locally. In similar low-income countries as Sri Lanka, there is an overall under-representation in or exclusion of children with disabilities or from particular ethnic or linguistic backgrounds from education with an over-representation of the children with disabilities accessing education within special educational settings. Therefore, it is the education policy rather than the children with disabilities that requires change (Dyson and Kozleski, 2008; Morvayova, Zdenek, and Cepickova-Brtnova, 2008; UNESCO, 2010). As the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education proposed way back in 1994,

Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system(p.8).

5.7. Review of Key Existing Services for Persons With Disabilities

5.7.1. Ministry of Social Services.

The Ministry of Social Services (MSS) has a vision of moving 'Towards a caring and rights based society' with a mission to, 'Make the disadvantaged, partners in national development by providing conducive environment and opportunities

through policy initiatives in Social Welfare and Social Development'. The MSS also identifies among its objectives the following: rehabilitation and social integration of persons with disabilities, protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, promotion of living standards of women and children under difficult circumstances and to provide vocational training for the persons with disabilities. The department of Social Services (DSS) and the National Institute of Social Development (NISD) are two institutions under the MSS identified to respectively provide the services and training in order to meet these commitments. The DSS is an operational arm delivering social services.

1. *Department of Social Services*

The mission of the DSS is 'to provide relief and rehabilitation to the disadvantaged and suffering segments of the society and make them stakeholders in the development process by preventing them from falling into such conditions'. Among the objectives is the improvement of the vocational skills and rehabilitation of disabled person in order to make them employable and early intervention for the rehabilitation of disabled children. Its functions include preschool educational activities for children with special needs and providing rehabilitation services to disabled small children.

It appears the DSS plays two key roles in children with special education needs. One role is in the preschool age before they undertake formal education and the other one once after schooling is completed and they need to embark on a path to become productive members of the society. Thus, school education plays a key role in preparation of the children to undertake vocational training and employment and integrate as members into the community.

The DSS conducts the following programmes directly related to school education

1. Child Guidance Centres: preparing children with special needs to embark in formal education
2. Vocational Training Centres: preparing the children with special needs after education to become productive members of the society

2. *Early Investigation and Rehabilitation of Disabled Children*

Problems relating to the growth and development of children can occur at different ages and from a multitude of causes. Children can be born with defects and abnormalities and others manifest as time goes on as delays in development. The earlier they are identified and measures taken to correct (if feasible), delay progress or take measures to minimize consequences should be taken as early as possible. Successful correction or effective rehabilitation needs early identification of the problem and its cause and appropriate and well planned interventions. There is every possibility of correcting disabilities by the application of newly developed methods once identified of such defects well in time.

In order to fulfill this requirement the Department of Social Services commenced a model project in the District of Colombo in 2003 as a national programme to identify children with disabilities at early childhood and to develop their weak faculties appropriately, through establishment of a child guidance centre for children with disabilities as a pilot project.

Child Guidance Centre: Nawinna, Maharagama has been in existence for the past 10 years. The vision of the centre is to provide necessary assistance and guidance for maximum development of the child and raise parent's mental level and prepare them to face this situation of stunted growth of children. The objectives of the program include: introduction of a productive method of early detection of children with special needs; strengthening of the service network of various relevant institutions that could provide assistance to disabled children. Intervention to provide education to children who need special care at early childhood and thereby strengthening of inter action in society. This project was implemented in the Colombo district for about seven (7) years. It undertakes to develop the abilities of children with special needs from 6 months of age onwards until they can enter school at 5 years. According to the superintendent of the Centre who has been in place for the past 10 years, a structured and comprehensive programme of activities is carried out to achieve the objectives.

Based on the experience of conducting the child guidance centre in Maharagama, for the past 10 years, action has been taken to introduce it to three other districts, namely, Gampaha, Rathnapura and Hambanthota. In order to pilot inclusive preschools which will accommodate children with special needs with others, preschools in each district have been developed to prepare the background and the atmosphere. These preschools have been established.

This centre also provides training to preschool teachers on a voluntary basis for two days in order to sensitize them to issues pertaining to preschool children with special needs. The Wayamba provincial council under the social services department has established a special needs preschool ('Nipunatha Madhyasthanaya') where the teacher training has been given by the Navinna child guidance centre. This training provided to the teachers of the preschool comprise 10 days of theoretical inputs and 4 months of on the job training with assignments and supervised visits by the trainer.

The superintendent of the pioneer Navinna Centre with her 18 years of experience highlighted many issues.

1. The need for all stakeholders to work towards a common goal of preparation of a child for inclusive school education. These stakeholders include the Ministry of Health, Children and Women's Affairs Ministry and the Child Secretariat
2. Every child with special needs who enters school may not be able to integrate by herself/himself and comprehensively into the mainstream for inclusive education. Thus, in schools where such children are admitted

there is a need for a special education unit with trained teachers to support the education of these children

3. The parents as members of the public need to be sensitized to the ethics and rights of special needs children as equal to that of others and the need for a caring and rights-based society.
4. The need to provide equal opportunity for the children with special needs.

3. Improvement of the vocational skills and rehabilitation of disabled persons in order to make them employable.

The DSS has vocational training centres (VTC) at: Seeduwa and Amunukumbura in Gampaha; Ketawala and Wattegama in Kandy and Thelabuyaya in Hambantota. They provide rehabilitation and training in over 20 areas which can lead to employment. Those who are unmarried, between 16 and 35 years of age with acceptable disablement qualify. The objective of this programme is to ensure human rights of the disabled youth by providing them with opportunities to rise up with confidence and self-respect and be stake holders of the national economy. For this purpose they are enrolled into a productive rehabilitation process in order to develop their talent through vocational training and consequently integrate them into society. Special benefits of this training include: Sports and Cultural Activities (Local and Foreign); Youth Social Activities; Youth Social Activities Socialization Programmes Leadership Training; Mobility and Orientation Programmes for Visually Impaired; Braille and Sign Language Training.

As stated by the Additional Director of the Department of Social Services, the chances of benefiting from the vocational training was dependent on the education provided in schools. At the moment not all children with special needs had received a general education to prepare them best to undertake vocational training. Children who had visual impairment were more capable of benefiting whereas those with hearing disability were worse off. Their communication was very poor even in sign language.

4. National Institute of Social Development

The National Institute of Social Development (NISD) is according to its website the premier institution in Social Work education in Sri Lanka. NISD is committed to be an educational institution producing professional social workers to serve the social welfare system and to promote social development. According to the Director (Training) at the NISD, no special training is being provided to social workers in order to support the children with special needs. However, a certificate course in sign language is being planned to support communication and teaching of those with hearing impairment.

5.7.2. Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Health identifies children with special needs as, 'Children who have or are at increased risk for chronic physical developmental, behavioural or

emotional conditions who require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally'. A report published by the Family Health Bureau states that according to the 2001 Census, 0.27% of children under 18 years are reported to have some form of disability giving the total disabled at 16,746 of a total of 6,095,853 between ages of 0-18 years. The report highlights the complex issues of these children that require well-coordinated multi sector and multi-disciplinary interventions that include health, education, social welfare, law enforcement, parents and community groups. At the moment though there are many government and nongovernmental organizations engaged in programmes for children with special needs, most of them work in isolation.

The institutions under the Ministry of Health is taking part in providing care for children with special needs, although the comprehensiveness and coordination of their collective efforts cannot be considered as optimal (National Programme for Children with Special Needs, Ministry of Health, 2009) are:

1. National Child Health Programme
2. Directorate of youth, elderly, and disabled persons
3. Others are providing care: Pediatricians, psychiatrists, child psychiatrists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists. There is a dearth of some of these categories of healthcare workers.

In each Zone. He further stated that even though the teachers are trained in inclusive education, they may need Assistant Teachers who are specially trained for special needs children to address specific issues that arise when they are in the formal mainstream classroom.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

National Level Policy and Conceptual Framework

- A clear national policy document articulating the definition, key concepts, framework and scope of inclusive education from pre-school to tertiary level in Sri Lanka, highlighting a rights-based approach to accessing 'Education for All'.
- Clarity and consensus on the terminology to be adopted in Sinhala, Tamil and English with reference to persons with disabilities. In doing so, it is recommended that the rights of persons with disabilities are safeguarded. It is, however, acknowledged that terminology changes over time. Therefore, it is recommended that policy makers and educators are cognisant of these changes internationally and as part of the disability rights movement in order to influence local policy.
- A clear policy on whether the class placement of a student with special needs should be grade appropriate (according to the child's age) or developmentally-appropriate (according to skill level), with inter-class movement possible. Policy makers should be guided by experts and specialists in the field, including child psychologists, given the potential influence on the child's peer group on his/her social development and self-image.
- Establish a student-centred pedagogical approach where all students can reach their fullest potential and advance at their own pace.
- Adequate budgetary allocation to construct new accessible school/university buildings and to modify existing infrastructure.
- Provision of equal accessibility to all children with SN at all times- related to the UN charter.
- Laws to be promulgated to provide opportunities for youth to enter any service.

Access to Education

- The identification and establishment of specialist schools of inclusion in each Educational Zone, addressing physical, communication and attitudinal barriers and with a staff comprised of specialist trained teachers in inclusive education. Within a resource-limited context such as ours, this will enable more targeted and specific training to be offered to the members of staff, the purchase of equipment and classroom adaptations depending on the individual requirements of the students in each school.
- The profile of these specialist schools needs to be raised, with an acknowledgement of these schools as 'Centres of Excellence' in inclusive education. This should incorporate a sense of prestige and privilege, with state recognition of its contribution to education. For instance, a grading

scheme could be introduced or the current school classification system restructured, classifying these schools as Centers of Excellence.

- In an ability-based inclusion criteria is favored, opportunities for age-based participation in particular co-curricular activities for children with disabilities together with their mainstream peers.
- Wherever possible, to promote full inclusion or 'partial' inclusion of students with disabilities within a mainstream educational contexts. There may also be the need to continue a small amount of special schools in instances where the mainstream inclusive school does not have the suitable expertise or infrastructure to provide a safe and vibrant learning environment for a child with disabilities. This may promote a 'twin-track' policy of inclusive, mainstream approaches together with disability-specific programmes. In these particular cases, a special educational setting may be considered for the student on the basis that the child has a right to access education that accessible at that point. This 'twin track' approach may be reflective of a 'transitional phase' from complete seclusion and separate teaching within special education to mainstream, inclusive educational facilities for all.
- Provide opportunities for children with or without disabilities to engage in the arts, sport and extracurricular activities such as girl guides/cub scouts at inter-school level and at zonal and district levels, thereby promoting inclusive participation.
- Address the lack of educational opportunities for students with disabilities as well for very bright students in the formal system - schools and teachers.
- Provide more opportunities for SE children to enter universities and institutes of higher education.
- At tertiary level, ensure the physical accessibility of lecture halls, library services, canteens and hostel facilities for students with disabilities. Where necessary, provide students with disabilities with appropriate recording devices, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems and any other specialist equipment.

Expansion of the extension services for Children with Special Needs/Children with disabilities

- Existing special schools should be upgraded to resource centres. More resource Centres are required to provide extra support to parents and children where the children with severe disabilities cannot be accommodated into a mainstream context at present.
- As an initial step, introduce inclusive education in some selected schools and establish special education units with more resources and qualified special education teachers to provide support for mainstream teachers and children with special needs/disabilities.
- Establish centres at zonal level to guide the parents to identify and to address the needs of children with special needs/disabilities, including gifted and talented children. Such centres should provide the services in

collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Social Services and the Ministry of Education.

- Provide conducive classroom environments (physical) with necessary facilities for children with special needs/disabilities.
- Provide clear guidance to principals with advice on not to use trained SE teachers for other subjects ignoring the needs of SE children.

Curricular development and modification

- More inclusive and up-to-date curricula to be developed with teachers' guides and text books focusing on managing student diversity in whole-class teaching and advice on differentiating the syllabus according to students' needs.
- Devise learning modules to be incorporated into the curricula addressing issues of stigma and bullying of students with disabilities in schools and with opportunities for a discourse on inclusion.

Assessments

- Introduce more flexible and inclusive assessment procedures, taking different levels of written and verbal ability into account. Therefore, in addition to the extra time currently offered, provision should be made for students, for example with cerebral palsy, who may not be able to respond either verbally or in writing but able to do so when offered choices, alternative and augmentative communication devices (e.g. communication boards; choice boards; BigMac switches; computer-based AAC devices) and/or when offered a scribe.

Vocational training

- Incorporate vocational training into the inclusive education curricula from primary through to secondary education.
- Make adaptations to existing vocational training courses for persons without disabilities, particularly those offered by the National Youth Council and by the Department of Social Services, in order to make them accessible to persons with disabilities. This may include making the buildings and mode of instruction accessible. With regard to the specific courses run for persons with disabilities, it is recommended that they too be offered to young people without disabilities. Extending existing 'mainstream' courses to persons with disabilities and vice versa will encourage inclusion at the level of vocational training.

Professional Development and Pedagogical Issues

- Mandatory pre-service training in inclusive education to be offered to all teachers. The responsibility of providing this training should be given to the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka and all the Colleges of Education. All Teacher Education programmes and their curricula should be revised to incorporate inclusive education.

- Map the existing level of knowledge, skills and attitudes among teachers at preschool, primary and secondary levels in order to formulate more relevant teaching modules for pre-service and in-service training.
- The formulation of a specific training module on inclusive education with special emphasis on the key concepts, differentiation of the syllabus and the setting up of Individual Educational Plans. Particular focus needs to be paid to psychosocial issues related to children with disabilities within a post-war situation. This module should be devised by experts at the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka, Colleges of Education, and National Institute of Education in collaboration with experts in the field, promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching. This team should be comprised of generalist teachers, special education teachers, teaching assistants or 'shadow teachers', Educational Therapists, Educational Psychologists, Child Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists, Audiologists, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists, parent/primary caregivers and students with disabilities.
- The proposed training in inclusive education should also be extended to pre-schoolteachers.
- Opportunities for Continued Professional Development for all teachers with the implementation from time to time of in-service training on inclusive education.
- Continued Professional Development to be made mandatory for all teachers, with incentives of career progression attached to the completion of relevant pedagogical modules.
- The formulation of in-service training modules by the National Institute of Education in collaboration with the Faculty of Education, Open University of Sri Lanka, Colleges of Education and experts in the field, promoting a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching.
- Provide specialized training for selected teachers on children with disabilities or special needs including gifted and talented children.
- Incorporate new, innovative and culturally-relevant methods of teaching, particularly multi-sensory approaches and opportunities for experiential learning into more traditional pedagogical approaches.
- Need for literacy programmes, the curriculum to be suitably adjusted to the child's needs.
- At tertiary level, a training component on inclusion to be included into the Staff Development programme for all university academic staff.
- The provision of specific and specialist training on the use of software, recording devices and other equipment for university academic members of staff, as the need arises.

Professional development

- Commencement of the degree programmes/Master of Arts in Teacher Educators Programmes on Inclusive Education/Special Education in Faculties of Education to enhance the number of teacher trainers in the field.

Changes needed at the apex / provincial bodies

- Increased fund allocations for the benefit of children with disabilities or special needs.
- Appointment of a special education committee at the apex level.

Collaborations

- Collaborations with the Department of Social Services, the Children's Secretariat, the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training and the Ministry of Youth Affairs for post-school job-related training for students with disabilities.
- Collaborations with national level NGOs and the private sector.
- Collaboration between the Health Department, Universities and other departments and agencies - Social Services/ NGOS/UN agencies/Examinations department.

Availability of teachers, support staff and other professionals

- A clear policy for equal deployment of teachers across the Educational Zones who are specially trained to support children with disabilities to access the curriculum.
- Ensure that teachers trained for SE are deployed in SE.
- Tangible incentives, including monetary gains for specialist trained teachers in inclusive education.
- The employment of teaching assistants and/or 'shadow teachers' and sign language interpreters to support children with disabilities within the mainstream educational settings and in special educational contexts. This may facilitate a reduction in current classroom sizes and in the student: teacher ratio.
- The provision of Educational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy services within the school setting, promoting multidisciplinary support for children with disabilities. This will encourage early identification and early intervention for speech, language, communication, hearing, literacy, feeding, cognitive and motor difficulties as well as on-going therapy support.
- Encourage collaborative practice between all professionals, particularly in the identification and devising of Individual Educational Plans for students and in differentiating the syllabus for individual students to enable better access to the curriculum.

Research

- Address the lack of comprehensive research on inclusive pedagogy in resource-poor countries by documenting existing teaching practices and exploring stakeholder perceptions, particularly of students with disabilities.
- Update data on SE in Sri Lanka, including from the community regularly.

- Undertake robust comparative studies on the effectiveness of inclusive education and special education on the academic and social life and on the overall quality of life of students with or without disabilities.
- Research-based approaches to follow up children over long periods - child to adult and beyond to learn lessons / funds and institutional support.
- Investigate the barriers and facilitators to entering institutes of higher education for students with disabilities.
- Collaborative research endeavors, including action research at intra-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and multi-professional levels.

Awareness-raising

- Raise awareness on the right to free and compulsory education for all within an inclusive learning environment together with addressing issues of stigma and misconceptions surrounding disabilities and inclusive education.
- The media should be used to give awareness on equal rights and providing equal opportunities for children with special needs.
- Address the social factors associated with the reluctance of teachers to serve in SE schools / undergo SE Teacher training and even after training, the reluctance to teach such children.

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**A STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF NON-
FORMAL EDUCATION**

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

1.0 Introduction, definition, historical scenario

1.1 Summary

There is no other force that has influenced education and development in the recent past as that of Non-Formal Education (NFE). The concept in its current form did not exist in Sri Lanka or elsewhere in the world till the 1960's. This paper focuses on this major dimension of education which transcends and influences both formal education and education for development. The concepts of NFE and the relationships to fields of development are discussed, both from a historical perspective and current operational approaches and practices. The extent of involvement of both the State and the NGOs are highlighted while focusing on the need for articulating the tools of NFE for the improvement of formal education and other sectors in Sri Lanka. The imperative need for National Coordination of NFE programmes of all actors is underscored and how this could be orchestrated to achieve qualitative and quantitative outputs in achieving quality of life and Millennium Development Goals are looked into in this paper. Although NFE is as old as the hills integrally incorporated into the societal milieu, its integration as a force is a new phenomenon through which educational and socioeconomic changes are to occur at all levels. Currently it is embroiled passionately in a vision to combat poverty, ignorance, inequality, ill health and oppression. This is the relevance to developing countries. The paper discusses these ideas for possible changed scenarios in policy formulation in Sri Lanka in the context of mega trends and challenges in the field of educational development. Development of people's power that relates to the activities and needs of the people is considered as the more reliable way of making development stay with the people. It makes people to have a stake in what is done by others, to improve themselves. Consequently, the concept of development has shifted from that of looking purely on economic aggregates and indices of living and other social standards to human development dimensions including indices of happiness thus placing the spotlight on human potential and capabilities. This demands the provision of both opportunities and responsibilities. Potentials emerge from opportunities provided mainly through knowledge that comes from all sources in a learning society. NFE could fill this gap through provision of information and skill development contributing to human resource development which perhaps could be another vital role of NFE in the modern contexts. The study also attempts to bring in vocational education and other distance modes into the discussion raising a hornets nest as to where one should draw the line of NFE which focus on simpler forms of learning and skills development lending to more basic needs related to QOL in the context of modern day lives vis-à-vis TVE.

1.2 Origins of the Concept of Non-Formal Education

Non-formal education as a discipline is of recent origin during the War II which emerged to provide assistance to those in war affected areas to be literate. Though not referred to as NFE, these were education programmes for adults outside the formal school. The term NFE itself originated in Africa as a result of a workshop organized by UNESCO in the 1960s.

1.2.1 Definition of Terms

Education through different modes - NFE as the *modus operandi*

The process of defining NFE involves an analysis of the entire range of educational situations. The related terms include adult education, non-formal education, informal education, incidental education, recurrent education and lifelong education etc. all of which leading to repositioning of the excluded. NFE refers to non-school learning (Evans, 1981). The 1982 Education Reforms Committee, Sri Lanka takes a wider sweep which includes, NFE, continuing education, community education out-of-school youth education, social education and lifelong education.

For policy makers, what is important is to know the range of options to understand the benefits and the clientele group to plan for choices among the alternatives. The definition issue may, therefore, recede in importance. Although NFE has a history dating to the origins of humankind, NFE as an alternative addendum to FE is of very recent origin, It is a new force through which educational and socio-economic changes are to be brought about for both individuals and society levels. It is an exciting strategy for combating social deprivations, oppressions and supporting empowerment of an all-inclusive nature (Bock 1983, Sobhan 2010). Originally NFE formed the main source of learning but with the advent of formal education NFE receded. However, since of late disillusionment has arisen with the FE universally, due to its inability to meet the demands of the expansion of knowledge and new skills which had to be provided through other systems.

1.2.2 Issues related to terminology

There seems to be rather a disguised misconception of the term non-formal. One forgets that only a small minority who succeeds to receive this privilege of moving up in FE. The majority are left out of this Knowledge Based Education (KBE) system. Thus NFE with its Needs Based Skilled Education (NBSE/ SBE) could provide a solace to those who are left out and form critical elements in HRD of a nation. May be that the term NSBE or SBE would better reflect the true reality of the learning systems which is all an inclusive term and does not discriminate against non-achievers in the traditional education system. Both these structures, FE and NFE, possess and require skills and knowledge, would

rightly express the current realities with demeanour and dignity where as in the former knowledge is more valued while in the latter skills form the basis both of which are essential in development.

The key characteristic of NFE had the flexibility to adjust to any clientele. Learning-teaching contents were related to the needs of the participants. The venue of learning and participation was made voluntary although these seem to be more formalized today due to commercialization and complexities.

1.2.3 Overtime Changes in the Conceptual Framework

Currently, the concept has evolved into a wide connotation and covers many disciplines and activities. NFE is an important vehicle of getting information and developing skills to all those who have no access to formal means in many fields. The information explosion during the last few decades has increased the need for NFE to access multi-disciplinary knowledge and information. Thus in the developed world NFE is an important source of information provided through media and technology. NFE helps to develop skills throughout their life becoming a close ally of lifelong education as well.

It is more flexible than FE but, as you will see, more organized than Informal Education (IE). Although NFE is associated with literacy programmes, it addresses to many development needs. Hence, as stated above, need to change the nomenclature of the term.

1.3 Global Trends - Global Trends/Comparative experiences in selected countries and Sri Lankan experiences

There is a renewed interest in non-formal education (NFE) today. It is significant that this interest comes not so much from the so-called 'Third World' as the Assembly of the Council of Europe recently stated. The Assembly recognises that formal educational systems alone cannot respond to the challenges of modern society and therefore welcomes its reinforcement by non-formal educational practices, as a de facto partner in the lifelong process and make it accessible for all (Council of Europe 2000).

1.3.1 Defining non-formal education

The original version of NFE emerged in 1968 (Coombs 1968 in the context of the widespread feeling that education was failing (e.g. Illich 1973), in both developing countries and in Western (or Northern) societies as well (e.g. Bowles and Gintis 1976 among others). In all planning and policy-making in relation to education in developing countries from 1960's until about 1980's, non-formal education was seen as the panacea for all the ills (Freire 1972 and others). Most aid agencies included non-formal education in their portfolio of interventions, and substantial amounts of monies were expended on resource personnel. There

were different opinions about the impact of NFE on education, some positive while others considered NFE as inferior to formal schooling, as a 'necessary evil' (Pigozzi 1999).

The discourse of non-formal education divided the world of education into two, one of the many famous dichotomies of the period. Formal education, the highly institutionalized, chronologically graded and hierarchically structured 'education system', spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university (Coombs and Ahmed 1974:8).

But formal education was never closely defined and was assumed that everybody could recognise the formal system of education. Non-formal education was defined as every educational activity outside of formal. Every country interpreted non-formal education in their own way. For some it meant adult literacy classes while for others it meant like schooling provided by non-governmental agencies (NGOs) and all the educational and training activities of other Ministries. It also meant that NFE learning programmes for different and specific learning groups provided by the state, NGOs, commercial agencies or other civil society bodies, including radio and television programmes, the print media the third element - in this discourse was informal education where a major problem has arisen when the proponents of IFE speak about the same. They actually refer to 'informal learning', rather than informal education'. Informal education as used here is the lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills etc. at home, at work, at play. Which accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning (Coombs and Ahmed 1974:8). In other words, it is very close to what some people define as 'experiential learning' Since it is unorganised, total lifetime learning, it is clear that we are talking here about informal learning, not informal education.

1.3.2 Non-formal education in the field: from the 1980s to today

From 1986 the debate about non-formal declined but during the 1980s labelled non-formal education has spread enormously throughout Third World countries while the term has been hijacked by children's education. Children's alternative schooling (for out-of-school-youth) normally concentrated on those younger persons who were too old to go to school run under the title of non-formal education: BRAC in Bangladesh is a keen proponent of this programme. In other countries such as the Philippines and Thailand, national non-formal education programmes of accreditation and equivalency for adults have been created, offering schooling to those who missed out or did not complete their primary schooling.

Some exceptions to this trend of identifying non-formal education with alternative schools for children and adults are seen in Africa where the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) want to try to identify all forms of the non-formal education (agricultural and health extension, for example, women's programmes, income-generation training, environmental

enhancement activities etc.) and seek to integrate them into one non-formal education system, so that all such activities can be coopted by government to help in the development of the country. Ethiopia is a good example of this approach, with its national Directory of non-formal education with a smaller role for the state while civil society bodies contributing towards the national development goals.

On the whole NFE in this context (education in developing countries) now seems to refer to more informal ways of providing schooling to children which are more 'flexible', using a simplified form of curriculum, different teaching-learning materials and flexible dates of terms than the so-called formal schools with better form of schooling than the state schools but at other times, they are viewed as inferior, second-class.

1.3.3 Non-formal education and lifelong learning/education

A new interest in the concept of non-formal education has emerged. - From Western post-industrial societies, bridging NFE to the discourse of lifelong learning/education (LLE) which exists throughout life. It also means giving up of the traditional divisions into primary, secondary and higher emphasising that learning as taking place throughout the whole of life, in many different locations and times. LLE has itself been co-opted by the states for helping economic growth and promoting active citizenship. (Aspin et al 2001; Field and Leicester 2000).

But there is great uncertainty in this context as to what constitutes non-formal education, what the term refers to, what is its meaning firstly due to increasing diversity of formal education. Where does formal end and non-formal begin? Secondly, NFE now covers a very wide continuum of educational programmes from the flexible schooling model to participatory educational programmes -for 'children, youth and adults and highly, hand-knitted education and training, tailor-made' to meet particular localised needs. Although most programmes may lie in between but to say that these are NFE programmes tends to lead to confusion, for they are very different in spirit and in form.

1.4 Towards a new paradigm

The above distinction between 'flexible schooling model' and 'participatory' approach is 'conceptualised in terms of contextualisation'. Some learning activities and teaching-learning materials are highly contextualised both curriculum and learning materials. (Mocker et al 1982; Campbell and Burnaby 1999). Adult education at one time was based on this principle - adults chose what they wanted to learn, the curriculum was built by each learning group and around their particular interests. The outcomes were not pre-set but chosen by the participants. The evaluation was made by the participants in terms of their personal satisfaction.

One way of understanding this distinction is through group dynamics and organisational theory. Groups can be located on a continuum from very formal to very informal. Such a concept would help us to define formal as well as non-formal education with FE lying at one extreme of this continuum- education which does not change when new participants join and at the other extreme NFE. Each will be doing different things with different aims and purposes, and it will be harder to identify the common elements.

Most programmes will be partly formal and partly informal. Some parts of the programme will be determined by the participants, others are given by the providing agency both forms of education are important elements in the total learning experience. (Thongjoon Khankhow, Central Regional Non-formal Education Center, Thailand)

An important element of the Jomtien Education for All Framework for Action was the recognition of the need for substantive and sustained efforts focused on building linkages between basic education, non-formal education, and/or literacy and sector-specific development efforts. In short, what had been missing in many previous efforts was a clear demonstration of how basic and non-formal education activities could be used to expand and extend the efforts of development sectors like health, agriculture, environment, micro enterprise development and water and sanitation.

A large number of case studies from all over the world were studied for the above conclusion of what NFE and related forms of education provide and contribute to the development of the economy of a nation. The case studies focussed on a) processes and partnerships b) linkage between NFE and technical content c) content d) role of learners and e) challenges.

NGO efforts in non-formal education, clearly demonstrate the advantages of linking non formal education methods and approaches to a wide range of development sectors which includes health, micro finance, education, agriculture and environmental education (WORLD EDUCATION David Kahler January 2000)

2.0 Comparative experiences

2.1 Thailand

Office of the Non-Formal Education Commission (ONFEC), Thailand one of the administrative units under the Office of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education has been established since July 7, 2003 as the consequence of the education reform process through the status change of the Department of Non-Formal Education due to several factors, namely economic crisis within the country in 1997, structural adjustment, educational reform and government organizational reform led to. The crucial change in the policy and implementation strategy in non-formal education. These include the developmental vision of the Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan which stated that:

The Thai society should be a knowledge-based and learning society. Further, National Educational Act, Section 4 of which stated that: The Thai education should be a lifelong education, resulting from the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education so as to build capacity in development of continuous lifelong learning for promotion of people's quality of life. Section 15 of the Act also emphasized that: There shall be three types of education, formal, non-formal and informal education.

Non-formal education shall have flexibility in determining the aims, modalities, management procedures, duration assessment and evaluation conditional to its completion. The contents and curricula for non-formal education shall be appropriate for and responding to the requirement and meet the needs of individual groups of learners. Informal education shall enable learners to learn by themselves - according to their interest, potentialities, readiness and opportunities available from persons, society, environment, media or other sources of knowledge.

Roles of ONFEC

The main tasks of ONFEC are to provide and support the services of non-formal and informal education to promote lifelong learning among the out-of-school target groups and those having completed basic and higher education to make them obtain lifelong learning ONFEC also extends its more services to those underprivileged who lack the opportunity in basic education. These services are provided appropriate to each particular target group.

Activities of ONFEC

The three main areas: basic education, vocational education and skills training, as well as information services.

1. Basic Education

1.1. Functional Literacy Program

- 1.2. Hill Area Education Project
- 1.3. Continuing Education Program
- 2. Vocational Education and Skills Training**
 - 2.1 Interest Group
 - 2.2 Short-Term Vocational Course
 - 2.3 Vocational Certificate Curriculum
 - 2.4 NFE Occupational Certificate Curriculum
- 3. Information Service**
 - 3.1 Public Library
 - 3.2 Community Learning Centre
 - 3.3 Educational Radio and Television Programs
 - 3.4 National Science Centre for Education

2.2 South Korea - Non-formal Education

Almost all Koreans believe that they need supplemental education to excel in their educationally competitive society. Those who can afford to take private lessons in music, fine arts, information technology, and sports do. But more students take supplemental academic courses, such as math and foreign languages, in cram courses offered at commercial outfits called hagwôn ("academies"). Because of the concern that extra instruction could give unfair advantage to those who can afford more and high quality private lessons, the government has tried to control private tutoring in an effort to democratize education. For example, the 1980 Education Reform banned private tutoring in anything other than artistic subjects. This was criticized, as people expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of formal education, and demanded the right to carry on with tuition, considered as a form of NFE to counteract the issues of FE which has suffered from the high student to teacher ratio, poor instructional quality and facilities, and low morale of the teachers.

Adult Education: The Social Education Promotion Act was enacted to meet the demand for alternative educational opportunities, particularly of employed youths and adults who have not been able to attend regular schools provide support for the promotion of lifelong education and needs of their employees.

Para-schools, which give equivalence certificates to regular school programs, include civic schools (elementary), civic high schools (middle), industry-attached schools (middle and high), school-attached evening classes (middle and high), air and correspondence high schools, and industrial universities.

Even in higher learning, there are various degree alternatives that may not be available in other countries. Another option, called the Academic Credit Bank System, allows students to bank the credits earned in any accredited institution of higher learning. The government grants a pertinent degree, after KEDI certifies (Wiedman and Park).

Distance learning institutions. An examination system has been institutionalized to qualify those who have not gone through a regular school system for progress to formal schools. The Korea Air and Correspondence University (KACU) was instituted in 1972, first as a branch school of Seoul National University, offering coursework leading to B.A. and B.Sc. degrees. In 1982, it became an independent national university. The university has conducted its lectures via distance education systems, using such media as satellite TV, CDROMs, video conferencing, the Internet, printed materials, radio, and audiocassettes with access to an open, flexible education environment. The majority of students enrolled are workers in industries, government officials, soldiers, and teachers (MOE).

The number of industrial universities, which offer mid-career education, grew to 19. Classes are held in the evening, which allows students to be employed full time while attending classes.

2.3 India- Non Formal Education in the context of education for all in India

In India Non-Formal Education has been limited to providing a second chance to those children who are out-of- school. These include drop-outs and pull-outs and push-outs from school due to economic and cultural compulsions.

NFE provides opportunity to fulfill the constitutional goal of providing free and compulsory education to millions of rural and urban poor children who are not able to attend a full time day-school resulting in the need for developing a viable alternative system. Non-Formal Education has evolved as one such alternative.

This was experimented with as early as 1976, following the introduction of the National Policy on Education (1986), a full- fledged scheme of Non-Formal Education, supported by the Central Government. The scheme was introduced primarily in ten educationally backward states, as well as all over the country in urban slums, remote areas, desert and hilly regions.

The State Governments as well as Voluntary Agencies are engaged in educational programmes, especially in rural and tribal areas.

Since 1988 NFE activities clearly demonstrate that Universal Elementary Education can only be achieved if Non-Formal Education is made available as a viable alternative to formal school education. Non-Formal Education has become acceptable to a large section of the rural poor parents who are keen and willing to send their children to school but find the formal full- day school not suitable in their economic condition..

In 1988 the MHRD, established a full-fledged Department of Non- Formal Education in the NCERT.

Prior to 1988, Non- Formal Education functioned as part of other departments. With the establishment of a Department, Non-Formal Education became recognised as an alternative to elementary education. From 1988-1995 the department was also given the responsibility of overseeing Education to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In 1995, the department was re-organised and renamed Department of Education in Non-Formal and Alternative Schooling. This reorganisation has vindicated the significance of Non-Formal Education as an essential alternative to Formal Elementary Education. The department is now poised to play a significant role in the achievement of Universal Elementary Education which has been a goal for the country.

2.4 Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan short lived initiative (NIE / SBE) and current programmes (MOE)

Sri Lanka had too commenced a vibrant approach to bring NFE to meet the challenges of the Sri Lankan economy in the early 1990s. By this time it was realized that formal education following the British model was in a dilemma and not delivering what the country's economy required specially in relation to meet the growing unemployment, providing skills leading to self- employment and employment elsewhere in other countries. These countries required middle level skills which the FE did not supply since it was catering to only academic needs. On the other hand, some of the East Asian nations which were very far below the development indicators vis-à-vis Sri Lanka in the early 50s and up to around 1970s were fast catching up with Sri Lanka's development indicators partly due to the adoption of NFE strategies.

Earlier, Sri Lanka lost two golden opportunities to bring about development oriented education n. Firstly in the education reforms of the 1940s and later that of the 1970s. Both these reforms had egalitarian approaches and understanding the reality of development. However. The elite were keen to push the 'academic' perspective and thereby the critical issues and effective solutions for development were stalled.

Awareness of these gaps, the newly established NFE and TE Department at the National Institute of Education in 1990 attempted a bold and valiant approach to resurrect the gaps. Thus the newly created establishment at the NIE (1990), in support of the MOE, developed a framework to a) establish action research NFE centers all over the country combining different modus operandi to suit different needs b) provided opportunities for the rural youth to develop skills required in the trade in the above mentioned countries c) collaborated with national level technical institutions to sharpen the quality of skills to match national levels d) provided resources from donors for equipment and training of NFE personnel outside the country e) practiced competitive and business oriented projects and encouraged sales points and investments amongst the participants f) provided the participants knowledge and skills related to management, entrepreneurship

and innovative business challenges g) in -cooperated ethics and morals related to business and h) encouraged the participants to ethical leadership.

The NFE & TE department also developed a course on NFE leading to a BA degree course, perhaps first of its nature in the world with the intention of creating a cadre of professionally qualified personnel to assist NFE programmes in Sri Lanka. Unfortunately this was short lived.

Sri Lankan context - Progress from traditional learning to modern systems

The modes of learning in Sri Lanka when analysed provide us insights as to how educational programmes commenced with the support of NFE in the traditional societies. Clearly in these societies NFE is found integrally incorporated and passionately attached into its functions. In the traditional societies every function was part of a whole. Thus agricultural practices were associated with cultural norms and religious practices, all of which were part and parcel of lifelong learning passed down for generations from parents to children and so forth (Ekanayake 1990, Robert Knox, Coomaraswamy 1900). All these prevailed long before the West marched into the east and brought with them practices which were of an alien and commercial nature.

What were the educational elements of the traditional society? How did these operate and passed down to the next generations? Answers to these questions would provide guidance as to how skills were learnt and taught informally. These were more related to occupational skills, codes of behaviour, initiation into the value system within which the learner could relate to the social complexities of the community and varied situations that confront the learner in the context of religious practices and social norms. Education in such a society was a combination of all informal, non-formal and formal mechanisms and formed part of a whole well-knit structure. Learning and working were closely knit and there was a regular interaction amongst the groups which included elders, craftsmen, and religious teachers. They set the standards and imparted the skills as part of a continuing process of adult learning. This simple economy formed the background for a more complex and sophisticated formal learning that was introduced in the later centuries.

These traditional elements prevailed throughout the colonial periods specially with the British up to the time of the free education scheme in the 1940's. The social institutions that provided the traditional qualities became subservient to the new formal institutions and their roles became relatively irrelevant.

Technology demanded new skills which were not provided by the formal systems or from the traditional forms. National development plans demanded these new skills. The new skills had to be part of the demands of the various services of the State like health, agriculture and other service providers such as news media, political parties.

All these demanded new and challenging modes to educate the community and flexible enough to accommodate varied types of clientele groups. Hence the

demand from non-modern sectors, sometimes of a conflicting nature, had to be satisfied which the formal education structures could not perform. On the other hand, the traditional learning systems too became despairingly inadequate to satisfy the changing demands of the society. Hence, the need for new forms of educational programmes more oriented to development tasks emerged in the form of a non-formal nature with 'an effort to educate the whole community for development' (Marga.1974).

There were other social changes that took place in the Sri Lankan community. Increase of population, changing of the age structures of the population where more dependant and economically non- active groups increased, while at the same time increase of a backlog of unemployment and under employment was seen during the period immediately after independence. (Marga *ibid*). All these required to look at education differently from what took place in the earlier decades. One could state that this change arose from about the 1940s to accommodate the growing changes in the overall socio-economic patterns of Sri Lanka.

Tracing the steps of NFE in Sri Lanka - historical overview

When NFE did formally emerged into the system in Sri Lanka? One should remember that Sri Lanka has long experiences in attempts to introduce NFE in the modern context though not directly referred to as NFE. These go back to the 1940's especially with the Kannagara Education Reforms KER- (1943) which advocated 'rural education' and 'school and community' programs to be incorporated into the FE system. It would be pertinent to look at this programme, referred to as the 'Handessa scheme' in the KER. Its aim was to develop skills related to vocational aspects, bring about changes in the value systems as dignity of labour introducing the child to the world of work. It was expected that the child would develop responsibilities related to contributing to the development of the country. The activities contained elements of NFE since developing the above skills led the teacher and the child to be involved with the community as well reducing formalities in both learning and teaching, as is the nature of the traditional curriculum. (Administrative Report of the Director Education 1935, quoted from (Siyawasa, Centenary Volume III, 1967, Janatha Education Centres MOE, 1978).

The embryo of NFE was seen earliest in the curriculum and the related work experiences in the following subject contents. However, these aspects were never referred to as anything relate to NFE since the concept of NFE itself was not in existence at this time in Sri Lanka or elsewhere in the world.

The new curriculum introduced in 1943 included the following subject areas.

- a) Health
- b) Environmental Studies
- c) Vocational Training

d) Aesthetic Studies

Although this curriculum was an advanced and pro-development oriented programme it was not linked to industry, lacked co-relation to practices and was not precisely linked to scientific approaches and practices. However, this programme was not properly evaluated to identify its positive elements and its long term contributions to the development of the country. One could certainly identify the embryo of NFE and new diversions to relate to development tasks which were not seen in the earlier traditional curriculum. This formed as part of the formal curriculum of the school. If this curriculum and practices followed later in the school system the education system would have been useful to all and reduced the current issues which we experience to day.(M S de Silva 1967)

Unfortunately these progressive policies never emerged as accepted practices in the education system due to machinations of the western educated elite. In the 1960's there were some elements of NFE incorporated into the school system in the form of 'work experience' but these too were ineffectively implemented and the objectives were wrongly interpreted (Arulnandi K.S., Siyawasa Volume III, 1967).

Through the '1972 Educational Reforms', Sri Lanka had attempted to introduce a heavy dose of NFE concepts incorporated in the 'pre-vocational studies'. It was a more advanced form compared to 1945 Educational Reforms. In brief pre-vocational studies were aimed at providing opportunities about vocations but not moving to develop any specific professional skills. These introductory skills were to be in relation to the level of the student. Unfortunately, like the earlier reforms in 1943, the philosophy of these was not understood properly by the subsequent policy makers. The Education Reforms Commission in Sri Lanka, (Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka, 1979), NFE in Sri Lanka, (Marga 1974), the White Paper, Sri Lanka (MOE, 1982) and Education Report Sri Lanka (MOE, 1997) have strongly advocated these concepts as supportive elements of NFE .

Recent attempts in the road map to NFE in Sri Lanka

1970s

NFE has not played a prominent role in the education system in Sri Lanka and was very subservient to FE throughout. This dominance of FE was a result of the influence of the western systems and important role played by the formal certification. However, one would note that NFE was considered an important contributor to development throughout by the professionals in the country. This was seen, though implicitly stated, in the education reports and commissions all of which highlighted the significant role that NFE could play in the development of economy of Sri Lanka since 1940's. The following paragraphs will discuss these aspects in greater detail.

Though not explicitly indicated, the reforms of 1972, as indicated earlier, too contained elements of NFE programmes and activities in the pre-vocational studies. This was especially so in relation to aspects that required children to

learn from the people. These may have influenced the Education Reforms Commission of 1979 to make specific proposals related to NFE.

The activities related to adult education that was initiated during the 1970's included a Report on Janatha (Community) Education Programmes (1978) and activities related to community development in Teacher Colleges. The objectives of these programmes had been clearly indicated by the then government when it stated that "while producing a new generation through our reforms (1972), it is necessary to provide opportunities for the school drop-outs, unemployed school-leavers and unemployables, found in the community. In this respect, the school as an institution has an important role to play and teachers should be prepared to take over social responsibilities over and above their traditional roles. The Ministry of Education is now formulating plans to make the school the nucleus for development programs for the village." (Janatha Education Report, MOE, 1976.) These Community education programmes had a clear message on development which was to be developed mainly through NFE strategies. This was a very radical departure and a change from the educational norms and practices that existed in our country. In fact, had these come into operation it would have brought in drastic changes in the educational structures of the country.

These were some of the initial and practical steps in the direction of bringing in NFE to teacher training programs in the country. The Janatha Education program included a proposal for training of selected heads of schools in rural areas in community development. For this, a training college was earmarked, namely Hingurakgoda Teachers' College, in 1976. A national seminar was conducted in collaboration with UNESCO to train the trainers (Janatha Education Report, 1976). On the other hand since the 1970's a number of Teacher Colleges had also launched individual programs on a voluntary basis to provide training and expose the teachers to activities related to NFE. All these apparently influenced and strengthened the conviction of the 1979 Education Reforms Committee to advocate adult education on a national scale.

The proposed reforms in 1979 refer to the significance of aspects related to all forms of adult education that prevailed in the traditional system of education (Towards Relevance in Education, MOE, 1979).

Apparently during that time more hope had been placed on the NFE for the development of society than on the formal system which catered mostly to the young. The need for a proper balance in education for both young and old was emphasized by the methods of teaching the adults adopted by Anagarika Dharmapala, at an earlier period, who went around the countryside teaching adults and emphasizing the importance of social consciousness, cultural awakening and national awareness for a balanced socio-economic development of the country. Unfortunately today the emphasis is heavily on formal education and the thinking in relation to the national crisis has been invariably related to the changes in the school curriculum. The responsibilities placed on

the school are, therefore, heavy and invariably, other forms of education have become secondary. This is evident in the allocation of funds.

For the same reason the same report had argued very cogently about a value crisis and a clash of interests resulting in the generation gap. This could have been avoided through NFE programmes. "Adults need education of different sorts to be able to form an intelligent and sympathetic society in which the youth will be happy to play its proper role "(Towards Relevance in Education, MOE, 1979). Taking into consideration the importance of NFE, the commission had recommended the establishment of the

National Coordinating Council for Adult Education (NCCAE.). The council was to be represented by a number of Ministries, relevant non-governmental agencies and specialists in this field.

The functions of this Council were related to;

- a) Reviewing and evaluation of the activities of various agencies;
- b) Planning ways of co-ordination for better efficiency, economy;
- c) Formulation of programs;
- d) Promotion of research into the needs of communities; and
- e) Developing linkages at national and international level.

Clear indication as to the acceptance of NFE as a policy was seen in the fund allocation of 1980's by the MOE, Sri Lanka. For the first time, this allocation of funds indicated the concern of the State in the educational needs of the adult community. These were seen in the approval of the following programs during this period.

Setting of adult and education centers and appointing of adult education officers.
Promoting technical courses, short term and full time.

Organizing English teaching courses for adults.

Although all of these were not successful the initial germ of NFE formally had been accepted and was on its way on its way for confirmation of its role in development. .

The 1982 Education Proposals for Reforms (White Paper), which followed the report of 1979 reiterated, in a different form, with a new concept of 'open school'. It emphasized the importance of learning programs for those of all ages who have left the formal education system. The proposed courses were related to:

- a) Personal enrichment;
- b) Vocational training; and

- c) Programs that assist re-entry into the education system.

The last proposal apparently is very significant in that for the first time, concern is shown for the majority of those who leave school to enter the world of work. The period between leaving school and finding employment is the critical period of the youth. Nearly 80% of the labor force falls into this age group (LFSES, 1985/86). The implementation process regarding the open school has also been detailed out in the White Paper of 1982. The "open school" would use the existing infrastructural facilities of the schools, when they are free. The deputy principal of the school will be in charge of the open school, on a full time basis. The open school will seek (a) the cooperation of all line officers in various departments,

- (b) Provision to use the extension service of State, and private organizations, and
- (c) to solicit the professional services of all personnel in the locality. Thus, the open school is to be kept more open than usual, which is unusual in FE.

Under this, special emphasis is to be laid on agriculture and related activities. For this, an Agricultural Education Board (AEB) is to be established which will have power and resources to develop training programs relevant to the needs and resources of the locality. The training programs will be designed to cater to school leavers as well to higher levels.

In addition, the policies of various political parties in their manifestos have referred to the importance of NFE. For example, the UNP manifesto (1980) specifically refers to the provision of a system of recurrent education which will enable:

- a) The people to enter the education system from time to time;
- b) To provide new skills needed for development of the youth; and
- c) Provide funding for research in relation to job opportunities

Mahinda Chintanaya, "SLFP Manifesto 2005". Underscores the need for enhanced opportunities for the benefit of the young school leavers to develop their skills using the resources of the existing technical colleges. In addition it proposes the increase of vocational training centres for the benefit of the rural youth (Mahinda Chintanaya, 2005).

Training of NFE personnel - School and Community

As a result of the acceptance of the principle of NFE and related various forms of activities, there arose a need to provide training for teachers. This would be the preliminary step for any NFE program to commence in the formal school structure. In this regard, the introduction of a course on 'School and Community' in teacher education, in 1984, indicated the acceptance of this principle for the first time in Sri Lanka (Ekanayake, 1986).

The Non-Formal Education Department of the Ministry of Education concentrates on programs for out-of-school youth. Some of these are of a modest technical and vocational type programmed on a part-time basis. These are still at the formative stage and not in a position to cater to all the needs at the moment. In the light of the demand, a number of other state organizations have stepped in to fill some of the gaps. Some of these programs are nation-wide in their coverage and provide a considerable variety in the objectives of the programs. Agricultural extension programs and Co-operative development programs are two such ones where they concentrate on adults. The National Youth Services Council (NYSC) is another important organization which concentrates on the needs of the youth of both sexes. The newly established Science and Technical Centers under the Ministry of Science and Technology in Sri Lanka are the most recent such grassroots level organizations responsible for NFE programmes.

Apart from the State directed institutions, various nongovernmental organizations have undertaken programs which definitively possess elements of NFE. Most of them are on-going programmes, providing skills needed in life situations and related attitudinal changes and additional social skills.

These NGO's are making use of the various structures available in the rural community. They also conceive education in a totality encompassing all stages of learning, both vertical and horizontal and also taking the environment into its orbit.

3.0 Studies on NFE programmes in Sri Lanka

There are two important documents that have studied and evaluated the ongoing NFE programmes of Non-State Agencies. One undertaken by Marga Institute under the title 'Non Formal Education in Sri Lanka' (1974) and the other, more recent, by National Education Commission titled 'Implementation of Non-Formal Education in Sri Lanka' (Study Series No. 08, 2004). The former, been an entire publication on NFE, has delved in greater detail on the various types of NFE programme which service the rural sector. Hence agriculture based programmes are highlighted. The other document is an evaluation of NFE in Sri Lanka commissioned by the National Education Commission focussing on the more salient features on some selected NFE activities and organisations in Sri Lanka. Both are contributions towards a greater understanding of the concept of NFE in Sri Lanka.

According to the above publications / reports the major organisations that provide NFE programmes are

a) Sarvodaya Sangamaya b) Sanasa Campus for Cooperative and Development studies c) Christian Children's Fund

All these focus on a) technical skills, b) service oriented activities, c) personality development programmes, d) para professional development activities, e) vocational development projects. Some are training focussed programmes while others are manual skills development projects. Similar to AEDO in Africa these courses / programmes are for both sexes and to all age groups. Certification as in FE is provided to all the participants. Of the above Sarvodaya and Sanasa movements are widespread thorough out the country and service the needs of rural and socially deprived communities. Sarvodaya Movement is the oldest and most widespread of the NFE movements in the country. Some of these programmes are free while others are paid for by the participants. All these organisations receive foreign funds and large number of personnel are employed in these organisations.

Some of the other smaller organisations are the Sri Lanka Technical Institute, Diyagala Boys Town, Lanka Mahila Samiti Organisation, Sri Lanka Red Cross Society etc. All these NGO's, along with a number of other governmental organizations, deal with non-formal education and training programs, which cover a wide range of activities and areas. These include, skills in regard to formation and attitude development such as the creation of a sense of discipline, self-reliance, skills on animal husbandry, mixed farming, trades, crafts, etc. Some of the skills are focused towards the demands of the foreign markets as well.

After the closure of the NFE Department at the National Institute of Education prematurely, mainly due to the lack of understanding of the role of NIE in NFE by the new management in the early 1990's a new department was created to take over some of its functions, namely the Open School, referred to earlier in the

essay under the 1982 Educational Reforms. Such changes do occur in our systems without a rationale. This new department for OS at the NIE had not spelled out its protocol clearly as was done earlier by the NFE department. The Open School (OS) with a few characteristics of NFE provides access to those who have left school with a second chance. However, OS is expected to carry on where the formal system has failed but not develop new dimensions in the field of education to promote development. Some of its activities could have been accommodated in the former NFE department without having to create another institution to achieve almost similar results.

NFE can be used as an umbrella to cover all activities related to skills vis-a-vis lower type of technical activities. Social, cultural, knowledge related to environment, health, human rights, basic scientific awareness, literacy etc. as detailed out above. Seemingly creating new functionaries under different names has been part of our development policies over the decades without moving forward and not allowing the prevailing ones to mature adding to the confusion of terminology. What is important is to provide skills related to the progress of the human being which can be obtained flexibly and selectively without having to create new institutions. Such policies and practices could be harmful leading to wastage of resources and avoided as far as possible.

While NFE is more of an inclusive nature the current activities of the OS indicate exclusive characteristics focussed more on education leading to examinations for those who have dropped out of the formal system with a few activities related to vocational types. Perhaps one could question the rationale for more formal/academic types in view of the experiences of Korea and other countries including the predicament of the products FE before and after GCE 'O' and 'A' levels in the economic development of Sri Lanka. Should we promote non skilled certificate oriented education / courses as against competencies in various skills related to trades demanded by the economy locally or in the region that would bolster the economy and or provide employment as was seen in Korea?

It was revealed that with the closure of the NFE department at the NIE the resources and its activities were transferred to the Department of Distance Education (DE) at the NIE. The creation of the Open Schools Department (OSD) at the NIE seemed to have occurred simultaneously and as an administrative fiat these departments were combined and brought under the newly established OSD. It was a process of combining three concepts viz NFE, DE and OS together as a way out of an issue. Though there are commonalities amongst the activities, seemingly the change had been one of an ad hoc nature. Sri Lanka needs clarity in the conceptual formulations related to establishment of educational and development programmes.

Examination of the type of programmes initiated under the Department of DOS at the NIE

In our discussions with the current personnel at the DOS we could not find any document related to the rationale of the establishment and the protocol of this department. The ongoing activities of the OSD relate to the following

I. Formal education

- a. Provide opportunity to those who lost education due to armed conflicts and other deprivations to re-enter the formal system. The subjects taught include the normal curriculum in the formal schools. Those who complete the course successfully are qualified to be admitted to a formal school to sit the 'O' level examination. It was revealed that of the 380 students who sat the O level (2007-2013) 160 candidates were successful in completing the examination.
- b. The above is facilitated through the provision of a foundation course and a secondary education programme
- c. Use of modules provides the modus operandi in the operation of learning teaching in these programmes facilitated by the teacher
- d. Adoption of distance education mode is the status quo
- e. The centres include Jaffna (06), Hambantota (01), Matale (01), Puttlam (14), Welikada prison (01) and Deaf and Blind school (01). Thus the largest number of centres are located in the conflict affected areas in the country to service the internally displaced persons (IDP) - based on discussion with officers of the OSD / NIE
- f. Funding had been provided by GIZ up to 2013 but this facility is not available currently. Hence the gap is filled by the regular funds of the NIE. The funds are utilised for resource persons and procurement of materials.

II. Foundation courses

These consists of literacy courses (period varying from 6 months- 2 years) providing competency level of grade 9 of the FE after its full completion. OSD provides a certificate for the successful candidates which qualify them to undertake self-employment jobs for which the OSD provides training in the lower category type of skills. In addition OSD provides training in vocational skills for both boys and girls. It would be desirable to develop the norms and competencies comparable to national level authorities.

III. Vocational training courses

These courses are similar to the ones initiated by the former NFE department of the NIE. The courses include sewing, beauty parlour, training programmes related to use of modern kitchen equipment for maids seeking employment in foreign countries.

The OS at the NIE has limited functions and seemingly does not provide guidelines to the MOE to enhance their NFE extension activities in Sri Lanka, which is a major flaw in its broader vision and responsibility vis-a-vis the NIE Act as well (refer below to 3.0).

IV. Coordinating Body for NFE

All of the above is a result of short sighted understanding and skewed interpretation of the NFE in development. Thus, one could see clearly that various elements that relate to the concept of NFE prevail in various forms without explicit reference to NFE. Many of these could be considered as sources of the concept, but they are disjointed and disorganized. Hence, there is a need for a body to be developed which would be capable of development and designing projects to achieve objectives in NFE programs. It would be seen, that, in all the programmes implemented, not all elements related to the concept of lifelong education are covered. Certainly none of the formal educational programs are directed to achieve most of the objectives set by this concept. The need, therefore, is to conduct an in-depth study of the structures and identify areas that could be strengthened by various institutions, under one organization. This would avoid overlapping, repetition, wastage of meagre resources and undue competition enabling to focus on the problems better, meaningfully and in an integrated manner. It would enable to strengthen the existing practices enabling to make such experiences more common.

Evolution of the concept of NFE in Sri Lanka

There has been an evolution of the concept of NFE with its wide array of different programs over the decades, which is one positive element of all these experiments seen in Sri Lanka since the 1930's. Initially, these commenced as either alternatives, or as part of the formal education system. In either case, the objective was to enhance the individual by exposing him/her to a wide variety of activities, which normally do not take place in the formal-school.

However, it is seen that the acceptance of the principle of NFE over the years has been lukewarm until the 1970's. With 1970 reforms, innovative education programs related to NFE conducted by different institutions had bolstered the acceptance of this concept. This also reflects the scenario in international circles where the literature on 'de schooling', 'failed pedagogy' was emerging and those who were looking for 'efficiency' in education were becoming active in relation to social and economic development order. In this respect, the significance of UNESCO's contribution to strengthen the importance of NFE both as an important parallel as well as an alternative, also had a great impact on the member countries '(UNESCO, 2006) and specially so with Edgar Faure et al publication on Learning To Be (UNESCO 1972).

Thus the 1980's commenced with a great conviction about the need for alternative programs for out-of-schoolers and NFE became an acceptable alternative answer.

Apart from being acceptable as a matter of policy, introduction of programs related to NFE as part of course work and activities helped to recognize NFE as an important component of the development of the country. The wide range of programs and possibilities that could be brought into the NFE network also expanded since the 1980's which is seen in the NFE programmes developed by NIE in the early 1990's, discussed in detail later in the essay.

4.0 Issues due to absence of diversions

This section will focus on the issues related to improvement of literacy without having a clear focus of what is expected of such achievements. Thus Sri Lanka, unlike other countries in Asia with its historical and religious background, promoted learning at all levels without discrimination had been able to use these opportunities to foster literacy. However, such literacy without dimensions was inimical to meet modern day issues in later years as it was more focused on literacy per se rather than directing learning to achieve developmental goals and face emerging trends globally, woefully resulting in acquiring knowledge, collecting certificates without skills. These are succinctly dealt in the following paragraphs.

Issues

(1) Macro Issues

1. Challenges of the 21st century which cannot be attended to by a single vertical approach as through FE and the traditional structures. The complex nature require integrated approaches. The vertical approaches have to be supported by horizontal structures. The latter include environmental issues, human rights related problems and entrepreneurship etc.
2. Dilemmas of immobility beyond the 'golden plateau' of a high literacy rate in some countries such as Sri Lanka.
3. Emerging literacies related to ecology, technology, informatics, globalization etc.
4. Conflicts and conflict resolutions including 'The Ability to Live Together'
5. Importance of human competency / human capital development to meet and social needs.
6. Increasing population and longer life expectancy while decreasing resources locally and globally.
7. Generating youth as a resource needing to reduce tension and turbulence of youth.
8. Importance of the overall development of total society to enjoy and contribute to the democratic process improving the quality of life in all aspects unlike in previous decades.
9. Depending solely on one time learning and not focussing on lifelong learning
10. Inability to seek opportunities beyond the traditional home focused lacking skills to exploit these markets

(2) Micro Issues

1. Minimalist approaches of FE where the focus is learning a few 'basics' or learning less.
2. Lack of the use of multiple approaches in FE to provide learning through NFE and similar methods to deprived groups.

3. Formal education is devoid from development needs and exclusively focussed on knowledge based education (KBE).
4. Failure of schools to provide and encourage the use of tools for change, creativity and innovative.
5. Unreserved faith in the formal systems - formal examinations, formal curricula, formal evaluations, formal management, formal structures including duration of schooling, (compulsory education acts), teacher training, (school holidays), inability to exploit NFE resources and mechanisms for FE, need for flexibility to shorten the duration of schooling from the current 13 years by 1-2 years through a condensed curriculum.
6. FE structured for rigorous examinations with harsh / failure norms.
7. FE burying failures without a second chance and absence of opportunities for re-entry systems.
8. Low internal efficiency and waste in educational resources.
9. FE following the age old principles of Greco-Roman elitism and Brahminical caste and monopoly continuing to promote inequalities, catering mostly to elites both at the centre and the periphery
10. Lack of responsiveness of FE to rapid changes in the socio-economic scenarios.
11. Faith in traditional FE programmes without providing skills to engage community resources.

(3) Dilemmas in Education -Policy- Directions

- a. Formal education provided training mostly for urban, white-collar jobs.
- b. The poor receive usually an inferior form of formal education,
- c. Lack of education for critical awareness and organization,
- d. Increasing inefficiency within the school's educational system.
- e. Existence of a mismatch between school products and what employers require and resources in relation to deprived groups.
- f. Prevalence of inequalities in the distribution of educational opportunities and resources in relation to deprived groups.
- g. Formal education enhances the power of those who already have social and economic advantages than those who are without.

(Coombs, 1973, Todaro, 1980, Jayaweera ,1989, Ekanayake 2010).

(4) Ground realities: Conflicts of concepts

New Directions in NFE Policies - Ministry of Education, NIE and other Government Agencies and NGOs

A) Ministry of Education

The MOE is at the apex of all educational implementation programmes. For this MOE seeks the assistance of NIE for policy directions in most of educational activities. However, in reality this was never realized vis-à-vis NFE. In the context of NFE programmes collaboration and involvement of other state

agencies and national level NGOs become of prime importance for effectiveness and efficiency. Thus the imperative need for collaboration and integrated approaches both institutionally and activity wise.

It also happens that the MOE commissions various outside agencies to guide them. Thus a Master Plan for the development of NFE was launched in 1995 with the assistance of UNICEF. As a result NFE was activated as a special program at the MOE commencing in 1997. The main NFE programmes established under this policy included the establishment of a) full time technical units b) part time technical units c) week end English schools and d) adult education programmes. The main objective of the above programmes was to provide a second chance to those who have dropped out of the formal schools. With the establishment of the Provincial Councils the functioning of the NFE programmes were too decentralized and funding was to be the responsibility of the latter. The implementation of the programmes was the responsibility of the Provincial Councils. This dual responsibility had affected the progress of the NFE activities since there were grey areas which fell into no man's land. It affected the innovative approaches and new directions needed to use NFE for development purposes and to bring about synergies between NFE and FE. Further, the stability and development of the staff of the NFE at the provinces was affected since there was no permanent cadre for NFE. Since these officers fell into the general cadre and only covered the subject of NFE was likely to be transferred to other divisions at the provincial levels depending on the exigencies of the department (NEC Study Series No 8, 2004 DA Perera)

Traditional requirements in NFE were related to literacy and non-economic and non-monetary oriented activities. Therefore, the role of the state, NGOs and other institutions confined their program initially to the above activities that did not require sophistication in organization, methodology and infrastructural needs. There was also a lesser need for high quality training of trainers.

Economic Changes

By the end of the 1990's the scenario had changed due to the complexity and the propensity of changes in the economic policies. These demanded new skills to meet a host of many challenging requirements, which were changing rapidly, in addition to some of the traditional needs provided by NFE. The need for courses at the technical and craft level were some of the new demands. Functional nature of the literacy needs, especially in relation to English, became prominent. These were results of job opportunities created as a result of the increase in tourism, hotel business, masons, carpenters and skilled and semi-skilled persons needed in various construction works in Sri Lanka as well as in the Middle East. These were areas not looked after generally by the FE system or by the traditional NFE programs conducted both by the state and NGOs. The lack of such opportunities has delayed the development process of a country like Sri Lanka, specially so vis-à-vis skills and competencies in technical education (Warnapala, 2009). Therefore, the new policies related to NFE should be mindful of the changes of the economy. In Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world.

These relate both to agriculture and industry. A new wave of commercialism has crept into both agricultural and semi-industrial activities. These demand new skills needed by all in every sector both in the rural and the urban sectors.

Social Changes

The role of women is changing fast and simultaneously the awareness of the new role by men has to be understood. Media has tremendous impact on the people especially after the introduction of TV in the 1980's to Sri Lanka. Values are also changing rapidly. Human relationships, both inter and communal, have taken new forms and directions. The youth are more dynamic and aware of socio-economic issues than ever before. "Problems related to energy crises, ecological imbalances, changing demographic structures, value crises, malnutrition, poverty, peace are some of those major issues. Unlike in the ancient days where one could live throughout a generation possessing the same quantum of knowledge, skill and awareness with the least disruption, today the need for regular exposure to changes is, sine qua non, both in the interest of the individual and of the total society" (Ekanayake, 1986). These are areas for which FE alone cannot provide answers. Hence, the need for new directions in NFE policies and programs.

From the above, it is seen that, NFE came to be accepted as an important parallel form of education. The clientele included not only the drop outs of the school system at different levels but also those who want to improve their status and seek new information at all stages of life. Therefore, it is proposed that: **realities where NFE should not be considered as vocational educational programmes (VEP) per se but as an embryo towards VE, if and when needed at a later stage. In a way, such a vision is of a positive nature in the development of micro skilled centres in the form of NFE/SBE at the periphery.**

- a) NFE structures/ forms should be incorporated as a part of training programs for all professional courses at all levels:viz. teachers, doctors, engineers etc.;
- b) The training package should be more practical oriented and designed to be integrated with other disciplines more closely as well;
- c) Formal education programmes, which leads from GCE 'A' to University degrees, should include a strong section on NFE and the experiences of other countries in the region could be made use of this in this regard: and
- d) In-cooperation of such NFE components to higher education would enhance and facilitate the extensions services in futuristic regional development plans.

B) National Institute of Education

Since the protocol for the study emphasised the need for a depth study of the NFE activities at MOE and related institutions viz NIE, schools the focus in the following paragraphs would detail out visions and objectives of the NFE programmes of both MOE and NIE. It is expected that this would provide guidelines to all schools to commence NFE and collaborate with FE at all possible

levels. On the other hand, these activities under NFE practised at both NIE and MOE are more oriented to skills development of a basic and modest nature, literacy to a limited clientele and information on trends of development. By and large, the focus of other institutions viz State, NGOs and private sector, have wider perspectives and involve beyond the traditional NFE activities with greater resources. They undertake vocational activities leading to certification which are of a formal nature both in structure and organisation. In fact, one could categorise these as formal education programmes than NFE activities. This is also the rationale why greater emphasis is laid in this study on MOE and NIE programmes and strategies. These are less costly and more related to the resources of the institutions, flexible and cater to local needs. One sees the prevalence of a confusion on the concepts and Unlike the NFE Department of the MOE which was following a traditional path, the Department of the Non-Formal and Technical Education Department of the NIE established in 1989 commenced its work based on a conceptual framework (NFE Strategies for Human Resource Development, NIE, 1992) focussing on non-formal education as a development tool. It attempted to move away from the traditional NFE programmes of the MOE and made diversions into the needs of the clientele from new dimensions. It looked at development issues of the country in the context of a global dimension attempting to restore the neglected aspects of the formal education system. These included a) filling the gaps created by the FE

b) providing leadership programmes c) focussing on national issues and responsibilities of the youth d) linking programmes to occupational needs and upgrading the skills to national levels e) coordinating with similar organisations f) providing training to the staff of the Department of NFE, locally and internationally, g) developing a course on NFE leading to B.Ed degree to be conducted at the NIE -first of its nature in the country h) developing a framework for an national coordinating body for NFE in Sri Lanka and i) encouraging research and adopting action research approaches in NFE (Action Research Series 2, 'Non-Formal Education For Human Resource Development', NIE, 1990).

All of the above concepts are detailed out in the following paragraphs in order to highlight the significance of NFE as a development tool, enabling to break even with other developing countries in the region. In addition, the innovative activities and the principles derived from these activities are presented in order to provide the reader the amorphous nature of NFE and the possibility of its application in a wider canvass serving the community to meet their needs not served by the formal systems or through alternative strategies as seen in NFE centres in the rural areas of Thailand. Further, a model based on operational mechanisms of NFE that leads the poor in the periphery to emerge from their 'poverty trap' to a more developed state is also presented (model 1). The model explains impact of NFE in relation to skills of both technical and social nature, if followed to its logical end, on those who undergo such exposures. These exemplar materials given below would highlight how NFE could be used to synergise with FE programmes supporting one another while adding new

dimensions to its fold and differentiating NFE of MOE/NIE from vocational education as pursued by institutions referred to below.

Action Research Practices of the NIE -1990-1994

Since there were no guidelines provided for the newly established NFE and TE (Technical Education) department the first step was to develop its vision and the scope of its activities. In this the initial step was to study the NFE programmes carried out by INGOs and NGOs and the extension activities of some ministries in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world. Based on these the following objectives were arrived at to meet the lacunae of the NFE system in Sri Lanka.

- a. Research into NFE needs in Sri Lanka
- b. Developing NFE methodologies
- c. Establishing peripheral NFE centres in Sri Lanka
- d. Dissemination of information and providing services to the communities
- e. Establishing linkages with other similar organisations in the country.

The established NFE programmes were of an action research type. There were nearly 60 centres with over 60 activities all over the country with around 2000 participants which included youth, adults, middle aged both males and females the activities were focussed on the following areas / themes.

Production oriented project supported youth / school leavers using para professionals and others in the locality to develop technical skills related to building technology, mechanical skills related electrical technology and other crafts

Mother's development project focused guiding mothers to assist their children in improving competencies in language and mathematics as well as providing basic knowledge about child behaviour and health needs conducted in collaboration with teacher colleges

Home management projects aimed at developing skills in managing electrical appliances with a view to seek employment abroad. The course was for three months conducted in collaboration with reputed hotels included provision of knowledge of personnel hygiene and the culture of the countries commonly seeking employment by Sri Lankan personnel.

Village vihara (temple) integration projects were also to provide technical skills but under auspicious of priests following religious norms helping to develop moral behaviour and ethics Human resource development programmes for undergraduates. The project aimed to develop skills in understanding development issues and socio-cultural norms amongst the undergraduates, Other activities included B.A programme on NFE, first of its nature anywhere in the world, seminars, workshops. The themes for the latter were on Entrepreneurship, How adults learn, Project formulation, NFE planning etc.

These programmes were for supervisory groups but some themes were for youth as well.

Programmes for staff development included short term exposures to NFE programmes in India (NCERT) and Thailand (UNESCO) and field research exposures in Sri Lanka.

A few publications were also developed which were based on activities and others related to quality improvement of the staff such as 'Evaluation Methods of NFE' (1990), 'Learning from the People:

Strategy for Rural Development' (1993), 'Non-Formal Education for Human resource Development' (1992), 'Innovations in Adult Education: Case Study Sri Lanka' (1995).

Further as a result of the innovative approaches NIE was invited by UIE Hamburg to be a participant writer on the project developed for undergraduates along with several others representing the continents. The objective of the UIE project was to produce an exemplar document titled 'making a Difference: Innovations in Adult Education'. This was based on experiences in adult education which was presented at the UNO International Conference held in 1998.

In most of the programmes, apart from the main activity, additional components related to personality development, skills related to banking, management of business, entrepreneurship skills, moral and cultural inputs, recreational aspects etc. Were brought in on a regular basis with whatever resources available. This was to enhance the confidence and expose to whole array of soft skills of the participant.

Follow up of the trainees was part of the programme. Encouraging organisation of cooperation among centers were supported with the hope of making centres self-reliant. On the other hand, encouragement of sales of products had very salutary responses such as some centres opening Bank accounts totalling up to US \$ 2,500 (1993). Some trainees in skills development project were provided national level competencies in recognised institutions enabling them to handle modern equipment, expose to modern designs improving their quality. There was one example of a centre which was based on closed school later developed into technical college

Regular monitoring and supervision was followed which motivated the youth. Adoption of different locations such as temples, local government institutions, village level voluntary organisations, abandoned schools and using of school premises after school hours etc. provided experiences to both NIE and the participant's new opportunities for collaborating with different venues. All these if continued would have changed the rural scenarios converting them into village level mini production centres. These would have been the embryo of future development programmes.

Of the projects that appealed to an international audience was the one related to exposing of undergraduates (UGs) to human resources development. It meant providing practical exposure to UGs in working and serving people in selected villages. The UGs lack practical wisdom and the insights about issues related to working with people. Such aspects are not brought in to the learning processes at the universities as part of practices. Hence they end up learning from the people and unlearning what they learnt at the universities. It is to fill this gap that the NFE department of the NIE developed a project in collaboration with three of the universities to provide experiences from living with communities. The project referred to 'Graduate Resource Advancement Project' (GREAT) aimed to strengthen the social and other related soft skills in the UGs. It was a way of learning from the people. In this project the UGs had to a) identify the resources b) understand the nature of the development needs of the community c) design and implement relevant development programmes in collaboration with the community and other service providers - state and voluntary organisations and d) learn from the people in the process. Both the members of the community and the UGs were free to socialise and express themselves in relation to all their issues amicably than if the UGs had been employed.

The project involved university staff, NGO personnel, local community leaders in the implementation while regular evaluations were in place both at the field and university. What was significant was its methodology. Responses from the community and the UGs were very positive.

C) NFE activities in the schools

This section briefly relates to look into the NFE activities that take place in schools and similar educational institutes referred to in the protocol. All schools whether in the remotest or the most urbanised or private /international and privatenas have some form of NFE programmes which are referred to more often as 'extra-curricular activities'. These include games, societies and related programme, outdoor activities, and all forms programmes organised by the department and other institutions for schools. However, the variety, quality, depth and the number of such programmes vary with nature of the schools. The bigger, resourceful schools have a variety of activities assisting student to take part at local, provincial, national and even at international levels. The use of school personnel or specialised persons to guide the students depends on the resources of the institution.

On the other hand the vision and mission statements which are displayed and specific to each school provides the significance of extracurricular programmes to be undertaken to enhance the child to be a quality member of the community in the future. These are valuable statements, if studied carefully by the authorities that reflect the responsibilities of the school personnel. The annual reports of schools, which record school activities such as prize giving's, sports meets high lighting the successful stories of the school and successes in their extra curricula attainments, forms part and parcel of NFE programmes of the school. But the question is whether the majority of the students are involved in such work

providing them the experiences. Undoubtedly the greater the involvement of students in NFE programmes the richer and resourceful would the students become in the future.

5.0 Situation analysis - Observations of Centres / Existing facilities

The team had visited on 6 occasions, thrice to MOE including Department of SE and NFE and Department of Colleges of Education while two visits were made to NFE field centres namely Hurikaduwa (Central Province) and the NFE centre at Tambuttegamuwa (North Central Province) Discussion were held with the principal officers and observations were made on the ongoing NFE activities of the youth.

However there are a large number of NFE programmes and related activities conducted by a) government through their different departments including the Science and Technology with its Vidatha Centres catering to needs of the village youth and elders b) NGOs supporting activities beneficial to the youth both in the rural and urban areas. These activities include training, skills development which are in numerous.

The observations of two NFE centres and the discussions that followed were as follows (Field Report NEC study 2014).

1. Nanoda Vocational Education Centre (VEC) - Hurikaduwa CP

What is very striking about these centres relate to the naming of the centre (s) where these are now referred to as VEC as different from the earlier terminology which refers to these as NFE centres of the MOE / PEM . However, what is important for the stakeholders would be what goes on in these institutions rather than the nomenclature.

The Nanoda Vocational Education Centre in Hurikaduwa is located at present in a hall by about 20 x 20 which was earlier the Henawala Primary School. After its closure due to the lack of students the school building with two and half acre land is being used since 2008 mainly for Vocational Training of school leavers in the area. In the building five Certificate Courses, namely Dress Making, Beauty Culture, Photography, Electrical Wiring and IT courses are been conducted since 2013. The courses such as Landscaping, Cookery, and Dress Painting which were conducted in previous years were not included in 2013. In 2014 the centre is planning to introduce new Certificate Courses in Welding, Machinery Wood Working, Computer Hard ware Engineering Technology etc. With funds provided by the Central Provincial Council a new two storied building with separate class-rooms is coming up in the premises which can conduct six courses simultaneously.

The centre functions under the guidance, support and supervision of the Provincial Ministry of Education, Department of Education and Zonal Education. An Assistant Director of Education and Project Officer in Non Formal Education of the Wattedagama Zonal Education Office are directly assisting the Principal in the management of the centre. The Principal who is seconded from the Principals' Service and a watcher are the only permanent staff of the centre. The trainers for the courses are hired annually. They are supposed to visit the nearby

schools to find their prospective trainees who have sat O level and a level examinations. In certain instances schools send the list of names of school leavers for vocational training.

The centre authorities interview the students for selections. However the courses are open for anyone interested in vocational training. For instance in 2013 student a trainee has got enrolled from

Mahiyanganaya (50 km) to follow beauty culture course. It is revealed that sometimes unemployed university graduates get enrolled in some of the courses in order to find employment.

Some of the trainers have NVQ Level 4 qualifications and others have obtained qualifications from various private institutions in respective fields. The trainers were selected on applications and interviews and they are remunerated with Rs. 15000 per month. The course curricular including theory and practice are designed by the respective trainers. To conduct the practical sessions the centre is provided with necessary equipments. The principal has introduced few sessions on value education. The courses are conducted free of charge during week days. Course duration ranges from 3 months to 8 months depending on the complexity of the course. The successful trainees are awarded a certificate prepared by the centre.

Most of the trainees were able to find employment in public and private sectors. Some of the trainees are now self-employed in fields like Beauty Culture, Dress Making, Photography etc. owning popular business enterprises in the area. The centre principal is conducting a follow-up study on those who have followed the programmes so far.

Apart from the job oriented courses the centre is conducting awareness programmes for the benefit of the community in current issues like preventing Dengue/ AIDS/ Environment protection etc. A model preschool is being conducted as a community service by the centre. To popularize the concept of job oriented vocational training the centre organizes an exhibition annually. For the event a dignitary is invited to distribute certificates for successful course completers.

Although the centre has got a new building which solves the problem of space still a lot has to be done to improve the quality of the programmes. For instance to acquire new equipment's (ie. High speed Machines for sewing, more new computers, Motor engine for motor mechanism, Office equipments etc.), allocations for repairing equipments and for minor expenses like sending out letters for trainees are not sufficient. It was stated that sometimes the trainers have to pocket out money to send invitation letters to trainees. As the centre is located in an area without public or private transport the trainers as well as trainees are compelled to hire three wheelers at some cost. That has become a reason for dropouts. In 2013 the dropout rate was around 35%. (In 2013 Enrollment was 113 and Completion was 72) The vast land belonging to the

centre is presently underutilized. Using the vacant land the centre could introduce courses which may provide returns to solve some of the financial problems of the centre.

2. Thambuththegama -VEC (NCP)

This is located near Talawa on the way to Anuradhapura.

- According to a document prepared by the zonal office NF Education is defined as an activity designed for training of school leavers and dropouts.
- Presently under the NF vocational training programmes the zonal NF centres conduct Sewing / Handicraft / Electric Wiring / Woodwork / Welding
- Apart from the vocational courses the centres conduct programmes for interest groups. They include Patch work / Curtain sewing / Creations with coconut shells / Sewing play materials for young children (eg. Teddy Bear)
- The course duration differs from programme to programme. Most of them are conducted for either 3 months or 6 months.
- About 200 school leavers have been trained last year.
- Instructors for the courses are selected every year by calling applications.
- They are paid Rs. 4000 per month.
- Provincial stall for the products of the centres is located in Anuradhapura.
- Annual exhibition is held to promote NF programmes.
- The Zone has prepared the annual plan for 2014 and waiting for the allocations from the under the 2014 plan the Zone they have decided to conduct Literacy Classes for gypsy children.
- Non formal education was coordinated by an ISA earlier. She had retired recently. After that it was given to officers who have other responsibilities.
- Therefore now the NF activities in the zone are not coordinated properly.
- The building given by the previous provincial council has not been completed. It seems the present provincial council administration has not taken any step to complete it.

Suggestions

- NF should be developed on par with formal education.
- All the educational personnel should be educated on the importance of NF Education and various objectives and aspects of NF Education.
- More centres need to be established to enroll more and more students for those who are not getting admitted to the universities /technical Institutes etc.
- Students have to be identified at school level for these vocations training programmes.
- Media should be used to popularize vocational education.
- School Vocational Guidance programmes should be strengthened to guide students for various courses according to their abilities.
- The recruitment / training / payments for instructors have to formalize.

- Accreditation of courses have to be done properly
- Trainees should be provided a recognized certificate (eg NVQ certificate) which could help them to gain employment.
- Every Provincial and Zonal offices should have full time Officer in Charge of NF Education.
- He should be assisted by Project Officers or ISAs in Zones.
- Qualified Instructors should be recruited and their payments should be attractive.
- Separate Cadre with promotion prospects and attractive salaries has to be approved for NFE

6.0 National Level Vocational Education Institutions: NAITA and related vocational education programmes

Linkages between different educational and vocational courses - How and where could NFE synergise?

Sri Lanka has one of the highest enrolment rates in general education in Asia. Pupils leave general education at different stages. The largest number leaves after the GCE Ordinary Level examination and again a large number leaves after the GCE Advanced Level examination. In 2008, only about 20,000 students out of about 330,000 in the age cohort entered state universities for higher education.

General education has introduced subjects relating to technology at various stages. While supporting cognitive development of students, these subjects provide the fundamental knowledge necessary to embark on Technical and Vocational Education. As institutions equipped to provide technical and vocational education, TVET institutions can assist the general education system to conduct the technology subjects and to give students a technological orientation. Similarly, TVET institutions and universities can play a complementary role in the areas of research, policy development and in providing specialized teaching and learning to students. The formal TVET system in Sri Lanka has been developed over a long period and in this process, some courses have become bench mark qualifications at different levels.

While the government has committed itself to the unified National Vocational Qualifications and courses of study leading to them, there is a need to incorporate well-recognized non-NVQ programmes in the NVQ framework. This is where NFE programmes and activities initiated by NIE on an action research basis (1989-95) and other NGOs and grassroots level organizations based on traditional institutions like pirivenas, local NGOs should be accepted into the fold of the NVQ programmes. This would provide a) motivation to those at the periphery unable to make it to the urban centres, b) spread the skills development capacities enabling them to compete for the local and foreign markets, c) provide the basis for future economic / industrial development, as was so in Korea d) encourage youth to appreciate skills development vis-à-vis to pure academic education reducing the burden of the state in the provision of employment and e) commence diversions in the economy away from the traditional forms of employment. The overall message would be the acceptance of modest skills development commencing as NFE activities to be further supported as the embryo of developed technical skills at a later stage. It is in this context that the programmes organized by NAITA and other similar institutions becomes relevant in this study related to NFE, although per se the protocol of the study need not go into the details of vocational education programmes and institutions unless recognition of non NVQ programmes under NVQ are specifically to be provided.

This section briefly looks at the following areas.

- Linking technology and the world of work during general education
- Establishing pathways for school leavers to enter to TVET
- Linkages with higher education
- Recognition of non NVQ programmes under NVQ

a) Linking technology and the world of work with general education

Though initiation to technology and the World of Work is an important aspect of General Education, the school system does not have technical facilities, technical staff and linkages to the industry. In fact, the TVET sector is comparatively stronger in these areas, with an institutional network throughout the country. The TVET sector can extend this facility to the school system to have short term programmes that introduce children to Technology and the World of Work. It is expected that strengths of the TVET sector in technology and linkages with the industry should be recognized in National Educational Policies and they would focus on further facilitating the TVET sector with investment in technology development.

Possibilities of extending the resources of the TVET sector to the school system, through short term programmes on technology - Strategies for Policy Implementation

These to operate in the following manner

- During the vacations of Technical Colleges and Training Centres, make them available to conduct short term introductory programmes for school children.
- Assigning instructors of TVET institutions to conduct short courses for school children and support practical and technical skills development activities in schools enabling to bring about closer. Collaboration with school, the community and private and public sectors and job opportunities
- Assist schools in arranging short term programmes that expose school children to industry including possibilities of work experiences in industry, commerce and trades

b) Pathways for School Leavers to enter TVET

This is yet another strategy to encourage students to enter the vocational education stream in the country. TVET is a new stream which has yet to show results and get established taking out the traditional low status associated with subjects like woodwork, metal work etc. of the yester years which did not attract children from other streams in the 1960s. The contexts are different today. The facilities and the available pathways are richer which provide potentials to students to foster their skills at the any level in this stream similar to that of the other two streams in schools. This has been augmented by the establishment of a 'University of Vocational Technology' enabling students to obtain education leading to degrees, diplomas and short term training in different trades.

c) Linkages with higher education

In Sri Lanka, though education is compulsory up to age of 14 years, many children leave school at different grades. Many of them enter work places without completing the learning cycle in the school.

The TVET system will facilitate a seamless pathway for school leavers who cannot directly enter higher education, to continue their education in the TVET system. The TVET system has different levels of programmes that accommodate children with different levels of school education. Further, the TVET system will develop bridging programmes to fill gaps in general education when they enter in to the TVET system. School leavers who make direct entry into the industry and acquire competencies in this manner, will be awarded qualifications through Recognition of Prior Learning and will be provided with opportunities for further education and training in TVET courses. These opportunities open a seamless pathway for school leavers who do not have direct entry into higher education, to continue their education in the TVET system.

d) Strategies for Policy Implementation

- Develop bridging programmes to fill the gap in general education when school leavers enter the TVET system. Later these basic qualifications to be added for higher level skills a way of recognising non NVQ experiences with in a NVQ framework
- Build Recognition of Prior Learning into student enrolment for TVET courses, in order to enable school leavers who make direct entry into industry, to follow TVET. This is an opportunity for NFE programmes of a modest type to be initiated at rural levels using village institutions including schools as was demonstrated by the NIE action research programmes under the NFE department.
- The TVEC should appoint a committee to draw up the standards for recognition of non-NVQ programmes within the NVQ framework.
- Invite the organizations that conduct formal, well-established programs and evaluate them

Here the reference is about other formal programmes and not about Non-formal programmes. However,

NFE programmes where ever these exist should be brought into NVQ scheme enabling quality to be imposed while at the same time providing the participants to rise in the technical stream as indicated above.

Suggestions of National Education Commission 2009

National Policy Framework on Higher Education and Technical & Vocational Education suggested by National Education Commission (June 2009)

Policy Issues

- Considering the fact that established or well recognized vocational training programmes are available in the country, it is necessary to map the existing TVE qualifications on to the new NVQ system. The mapping may be based on a credit system that is acceptable across the range of NVQ. In this respect, it is not expected to link secondary and higher educational qualifications directly to different levels of the NVQ system.
- Recognition of Non-NVQ programmes under NVQ framework
- Provisions can be made to evaluate the competencies acquired through vocational training programs, based on an appropriate credit system that grants exemptions according to a standard system. This will enable the non-NVQ certificate holders to obtain NVQ qualifications leading to establishing a standardized system to recognize non-NVQ programmes under the NVQ framework.

7.0 Overall view of Technical and Vocational Education in Sri Lanka

The following paragraphs attempts to provide a brief overview of the current progress in TVE in SL. Although not complete it provides the reader an insight into the recent attempts to pursue a determined policy with international cooperation to raise the HRD of the population and technical literacy in relation to forming the basis for industrial growth, as was so in East Asian countries which commenced in this endeavour decades ago while SL was forging on literacy per se. Initially even the NFE programmes in SL were literacy focussed.

(A) Institutions under the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education (MVTE).

There are various government institutes under Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education offer various training programs: TVEC, HRDC, NITE, DTET, VTA, NAITA, CITA, and INGRIN.

Institute of Printing, NIBM, CGTTI, HRDC and CITI. Some of the key training methods are listed below. National Vocational Qualification Courses by Vocational Training Authority are conducted by this institute. One could obtain local and international recognized certificate, diploma or a National Vocational Qualification (NVQSL) in a particular field relevant to a job.

The NVQSL provides the opportunity to achieve international recognition for qualifications, skills and knowledge. After O-L or A-L examination one could enter into one of the government sponsored vocational technical training institutes and obtain a training in a required profession, job or get a certificate, diploma, higher national diploma or a bachelor's degree. Employed persons can follow the course while doing the job as apprentices or trainees.

Chart 1

NATIONAL VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATION COURSES - LEVELS OF QUALIFICATIONS

LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION	COURSE CERTIFICATE / COMPETENCY
1	National Certificate /core of entry level skills
2	National Certificate Level /increasing level of competency
3	Same /ditto full national craftsmanship
4	Same/ ditto
5	National Diploma/ increasing level of competency includes technical level to management level
6	Same as above
7	Bachelor's Degree / or equivalent Certificate

Certification of these levels are carried out by the institutions accredited by the TVEC and they are nationally recognized.

National Certificate from Technical Colleges

There are 37 Technical Colleges scattered throughout Sri Lanka. These institutions are managed by Department of Technical Education and Training which functions under the Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational and Technical Education. They offer National Certificates and Advanced Diplomas in Engineering technician, Engineering craft and business studies. National Diploma from College of Technology Higher National Diploma from Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education (SLIATE) Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education (SLIATE) has Advanced Technical Institutes (ATI) in every province for both Engineering and Business Studies. At present it manages and supervises 10 separate Advance Technical Institutes and 7 Sections housed in the Technical Colleges under

Department of Technical Education and Training to conduct the courses of Higher National Diplomas and National Diplomas. Institute of Engineering Technology (IET) Katunayake IET (Formerly: Technician Training Institute) offer four year National Diploma in Engineering Sciences (NDES) course. This course contains theoretical instructions and industrial training.

The academic component of the course is conducted at this institute and industrial training is imparted at recognized industrial establishment. The course provided nine specializations under the three main disciplines of Engineering Civil, Electrical and Mechanical leading to a Bachelor of Technology Degree from University of Vocational Technology. (Career pathway, from beginning to Diplomas and Degrees, Technical to degree ,Dr Sujatha Gamage, Seminar organized by studentlanka.com).

Other career options: More technical courses from Student Lanka Courser Finder German Technical Training Institute Moratuwa, National Institute of Business Management-NIBM .Sri Lanka School of Agriculture - Diplomas External Degrees in Sri Lanka Online-degrees and Online courses in Sri Lanka Jobs and vocational training from Job Bank Select university degrees in Sri Lanka.

Singapore has offered to help Sri Lanka to develop its vocational training system in key sectors identified as national priorities for development. Singapore's Temasek Foundation and Republic Polytechnic have partnered with the Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development to help Sri Lanka develop technical and vocational education expertise in hospitality, info-com and construction. Modern and more effective training methods used by the Republic Polytechnic will help to contribute to the economy of Sri Lanka by producing a competent work force. The new programme will add a new perspective to the TVET framework and system in Sri Lanka. (<http://www.list.lk/tertiary-and-vocational-education-commission.htm>)

As part of the MOU with Temasek, a two-year programme will educate 60 vocational lead trainers to apply Republic Polytechnic's Problem-Based Learning (PBL) method in the context of TVET education. With the support of Republic Polytechnic's trainers, the initial 60 lead trainers will train another 120 to multiply the benefits of the programme. Temasek Foundation has committed a grant of about US\$433,000 towards this capability-building programme that will assist the Sri Lankan trainers to develop sustainable and adaptable PBL training programmes. According to the Foundation this will enable and strengthen continued growth and development in the country's hospitality, infocomm and construction sectors. This is the third TVET training programme that Temasek Foundation is supporting in Sri Lanka. The first focused on TVET training in mechatronics and electronics at the diploma and degree levels, while the second targeted TVET pedagogy training.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority(the Megajobs.lk website) with the aim of producing creative and skilled workforce in order to meet the requirement of the National and International job market. The main purpose of joining this website is to provide knowledge and understanding to the Sri Lankan youth about training opportunities which are open at NAITA and provide practical training opportunities and job opportunities for skilled youth those who have successfully completed the training provided by National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority. At present, being one of the websites to provide job and training for youth in Sri Lanka, Megajobs.lk has become more popular among Sri Lankan youths. (<http://www.list.lk/tertiary-and-vocational-education-commission.htm>)

Sri Lanka Vocational Training System and Requirements - National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Framework

In 2005, the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MVTT) introduced the National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) framework which was an important milestone for the education, economic and social development of Sri Lanka. The NVQ system seeks to resolve the perceived mismatch between training offered and the requirements of the labour market, the duplication of training provided by institutions and the lack of consistent training courses in order to conduct nationally recognized VT training and provide NVQ certificates (Gazette Notification Regarding Registration and Accreditation). in which work may take place. It is a document that specifies the industry requirements. National CBT Curricula for NSS consist of three main documents: a Curriculum outline, a Trainer's guide and Trainee guides for teaching and learning purposes. Click here for NSS available in Tamil/ Sinhala/ English. Accredited training courses are provided by many institutions island wide. All training providers (public and private) must obtain institutional registration and course accreditation from the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC). Click here for list of registered training providers and list of accredited training courses

REGISTRATION with the TVEC is the first step in the NVQ process. Training institutions must satisfy specific criteria: infrastructure, basic services, tools and equipment, quality of instruction and staff, based on curriculum and syllabus, and quality of management and monitoring systems. After registration, training institutions can apply to TVEC for ACCREDITATION of their VT courses, which requires registered institutes to meet and maintain minimum standards relating to course content and quality, core competencies and course duration, training facilities, trainer qualifications, trainees assessment systems and support from industry and other stakeholders. Accreditation is considered as a quality assurance measure. It is considered to be one of the primary methods for maintaining and improving standards of education and training. Accreditation of a course is done through assessment of the course in relation to respective National Skills Standard (NSS) and is done by a panel of assessors comprised of a trade expert and a representative of the TVEC. Click here for information about TVEC registration and accreditation and to download applications When students complete a TVEC accredited courses they are able to sit for an NVQ exam conducted by Approved Assessors, and if successful receive a nationally recognized NVQ certificate. Quality assurance of teaching and learning comprises institutional registration, secondly accreditation of courses, and thirdly establishment of a generic Quality Management System (QMS) within the training institution. By establishing and maintaining a QMS, institutes ensure that they have the capacity to establish and maintain an environment fit for delivery of education and training to national standards. Government Ministries and Agencies involved in Vocational Training The Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MVTT) is the national government body responsible for development and implementation of national policies related to skills development and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector across the country. The overall objective of the MVTT is to provide gainful employment for youth through high quality and market oriented vocational and technical education and skills development training. Several agencies fall under MVTT: TVEC, NAITA, UNIVOTEC (formerly NITE-SL), DTET and VTA. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) was established in 1991 as the apex body in the technical and vocational education and training sector. The primary responsibility of TVEC is policy formulation, planning, quality assurance, coordination and development of tertiary and vocational education across the country. TVEC completes assessments for registration of vocational training institutions and for accreditation of vocational training courses; which is required by all institutions offering vocational training courses to government recognized standards. TVEC is responsible to monitor the maintenance of quality and standards at registered and accredited institutions. The National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) is responsible for apprenticeship training nationwide. NAITA is the lead organization for the following activities in the implementation of NVQSL. The responsibilities of NAITA in this connection are as follows

- National Competency Standards
- Competency Based Assessment Resources

- Validation of Curriculum
- Implementation of Competency Based Training (CBT)
- Conducting competency based assessments (including RPL)
- Industry placement of trainees

The National Institute for Technical Education - Sri Lanka (NITE-SL) was converted to the University of Technology (UNIVOTEC) in March 2009. UNIVOTEC will be conducting NVQ Level 7 degree courses and training instructors who will be teaching in Colleges of Technology (CoTs). UNIVOTEC is the lead organization for the following activities in the implementation of NVQSL.

- Development of CBT Curricula
- Staff Development
- Development of Learning Resources
- Implementing and Coordinating Learning Resource Development Center (LRDC)
- The Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET) is one of the key organizations providing technical education and training. DTET is responsible for managing all technical colleges across the country including the 9 Colleges of Technology that will offer NVQ Levels 5 and 6. DTET is the lead organization for the following activities in the implementation of NVQSL.
 - Implementation of Competency Based Training (CBT)
 - Conducting Competency Based Assessment
 - Implementation of career guidance and counseling activities
 - Implementation of Self Employment Promotion Initiatives
 - Implementation of entrepreneurship programs

The Vocational Training Authority (VTA) offers skills training through a network of training centers across the country (National Vocational Training Institutes, District Vocational Training Centers, Special Vocational Training Centers, and Rural Vocational Training Centers). VTA is the lead organization for the following activities in the implementation of NVQSL.

- Implementation of Competency Based Training (CBT)
- Conducting Competency Based Assessment
- Implementation of career guidance and counselling activities
- Implementation of Self Employment Promotion Initiatives
- Implementation of entrepreneurship programs

National Youth Services Council (NYSC) the lead organization for youth development is responsible for following activities in the implementation of NVQSL.

- Implementation of Competency Based Training (CBT)

- Conducting Competency Based Assessment

- Implementation of career guidance and counselling activities
- Implementation of Self Employment Promotion Initiatives
- Implementation of entrepreneurship programs

A number of other Government Ministries, Departments and Institutes are involved in Vocational Training. Private Sector Involvement in Vocational Training In addition to government vocational training providers, there are many accredited private sector and nongovernmental vocational training providers across the country. The Accredited Training Providers' (Private Sector) Association has recently been established for private sector training providers with a membership of private sector vocational training providers who are eligible to conduct National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) courses. (atpasl@yahoo.com for more information on services and becoming a member and www.humanitarian-srilanka.org for further information)

(B) The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL)

The OUSL is the premier Open and Distance learning institution in Sri Lanka where students can pursue their studies through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) methodologies.

Established in 1980, under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978 and OUSL Ordinance No. 1 of 1990, as amended, the OUSL has the same legal and academic status as any other national University in Sri Lanka. According to the Public Administration Circular No. 16/92, dated 13.03.92, issued by the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils & Home Affairs, the degrees awarded by The Open University of Sri Lanka are treated as equivalent to degrees awarded by any other University under the purview of the University Grants Commission.

Due to the nature of its teaching methodology and infrastructure, the OUSL is able to serve a large student population spread throughout the country. Currently, there are more than 35,000 students studying at the OUSL, who are being served by six Regional Centres and nineteen Study Centres located around the country (Fig. 1). The Central campus and the Colombo Regional Centre are situated at Nawala. The other five Regional Centres are situated at Kandy, Matara, Jaffna, Anuradhapura and Batticaloa.

The academic and the administrative Head of the University is the Vice-Chancellor. The Senate of the University, which is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, is the highest body that makes decisions regarding academic matters. The University has four Faculties: Natural Sciences, Engineering Technology, Humanities and Social Sciences and Education.

NEC- NFE OU studyCareer Guidance is dedicated to bridge the skill gap among OUSL students and to build well rounded individuals to meet the present day workforce requirements.

Objectives

- Enhancement of career development competencies of Open University students by organising career skill development workshops / seminars / personal career mentoring.
- Counselling on career exploration & planning for prospective students.
- Career Guidance / Counselling to all students from the first year onwards to focus on their future careers.
- Counselling with regard to behavioural competencies.
- To develop a database of online job training opportunities and job placement.
- Organize career fairs to provide opportunities for prospective employers to meet undergraduates and graduated students.
- Research to be conducted in assessing strengths and weaknesses of OUSL students who are employed with a view to increase their employability.
- Facilitation of student welfare activities
- A stand alone, Zero credit course to be introduced in view of creating a greater sense of professional responsibility, social responsiveness and ethical behaviour among students.

Though not conclusive outcomes of the above discussion related to OU would allow us to come to the following basic ideas regarding NFE and TVEC in Sri Lanka.

- Possibilities have to be sought to link NVQ qualification to the new Advance Level Technical Stream enabling to pave the way to link Formal Education with Non-Formal Education or as suggested to Skills Based Education.
- Strengthening career guidance programmes in the schools to provide guidance to school leavers to join vocational programmes. Most students do not know the opportunities available in the public and private sector.
- Provision of information by the institutes conducting vocational courses on the job opportunities available in the national and international job markets since it does not happen currently. Recent attempt made by the NAITA with Mega jobs is noteworthy.
- Charging high fees for some of the vocational courses conducted by private institutions have to be validated and monitored by the TVT commission.
- Linking of Vocational Programmes to formal education and students in schools with relevant information.
- Meeting the requirements of the job market by the vocational programmes while at the same time looking into the problems students face related to provision of required staff and facilities.
- Looking into the problems students face and trying to solve them in order to raise the Retention Rates by the OU authorities

8.0 Conflicts related to Terminology: New Concept in the Context of Technical Vocational Education (TVE)

The following discussion is specifically related to TVE programmes of a formal nature conducted by the TVC and related institutions in SL. The case of Open University is also included since it conducts courses for those in the peripheral areas to advance their knowledge allowing them further their studies promoting a knowledge hub in the country capable of absorbing changes and support such modernisation process effectively as was so in the developing countries.

a. Conceptual understandings of terminology

This section will also discuss TE from another perspective perhaps raising questions on the definitions and structures of NFE /SBE as discussed earlier in this study. It may also include the nature of the stakeholders who are to be benefitted through these programmes. The questions relate to certificates vs. skills. Thus the predicament of the original definition of NFE returns to the fore again questioning the validity of these under the TVE programmes that are discussed below. On the other hand, the new structures that are in place and their operations would fall into the new definition under SBE with more ease than under the original NFE. These new ventures do not fall strictly under either FE/ KBE programmes since these contain features of both, more or less. However, the participants of these programmes/activities would not be accommodated by the FE as equals since the stakeholders are invariably failures / drop outs of the FE at various stages from the primary to senior secondary not qualifying to enter the traditional higher education citadels .

Furthermore, FE/KBE was considered more prestigious and priori of the education system.

Hence the researcher encountered another predicament due to changes in the definitions and what the new structures attempt to provide to the beneficiaries. The understanding becomes more complicated when elements related to vocational education are also brought into the discussion. One should remember that most technical institutions are geared to providing vocational educational including the Open University. What takes place in TVS and open universities are of a different nature from that of NFE/SBE. The latter looks more into the needs of rural and urban disadvantaged groups in the communities to raise them awareness about opportunities and basic skills needed in life including changes of about development that occurs in the modern day. These help the participants to look for opportunities to improve their QOL both in terms of skills leading to employment or self-employment and knowledge about the changing environments and information about latest findings in te context of health, agriculture, disasters etc. applicable to their daily lives. Hence one has to be rather cautious in combining VE with that of NFE/SBE. The former leads its stakeholders the opportunity to seeking higher skills in formal institutions i.e. TVE institutions that are discussed below. Thus these variations have to be understood carefully when we discuss the concepts related to

FE/KE, NFE/SBE, TVE and similar employment providing institutions.

Nevertheless, attempts should be made to explore these challenges which did not prevail at the time of the origin of the term NFE when the activities were more confined and focussed to overcome literacy in the developing world. It is possible now for those who qualify in some technical centre/school at a NFE centre organised by MOE/PMOE to seek admission to the lowest level in some institutions discussed below, assisting them to move up the ladder at a later stage. This link adds value to the NFE programmes motivating students to join NFE/SBE centres.

b. Non Formal and Tertiary / Vocational Linkage

According to the UNESCO definitions (1993/ 1997) Non Formal Education include the following six areas which may not necessarily lead to certification. But Vocational Education and Tertiary Education are considered as extensions of secondary education. Therefore, it is reasonably correct to assume Non- formal Education as a intermediary step between Secondary and Tertiary/Vocational education. Income generation, Continuing education do not include Non Formal Linkages with School Education and Tertiary Education Linkages. School leavers could follow Non formal courses and if necessary they can get qualified for Vocational Programmes (Certificate / Diploma) or Tertiary / University (Degree) courses after obtaining the required level of NVQ qualifications. Therefore, it is necessary to validate all Non formal as well as Vocational programmes on the basis of NVQ standards so that students who want to further their technical skills could do so. There are instances sometimes university graduates follow Non-Formal Courses (eg. IT / Beauty Culture) due to individual interests or for income generation there were such students).

9.0 Policy recommendations

Rationale

The rationale for the recommendations consisted of the recognition of:

- a) **The importance of continuing education for socio-economic development;**
- b) **The importance of the improvement of the overall quality of life in the society;**
- c) **The presence of a wide range of clientele with unmet opportunities;**
- d) **Acknowledgment of the inability and the helplessness of the formal system to cater to drop-outs at various cycles;**
- e) **The role that NFE in tertiary education and**
- f) **The prevalence of high dropout rates at key cycles at the formal system viz primary and, secondary.**

Policy Related to Identification of Goals of NFE

Goals of NFE do not and should not remain the same for long periods of time. Since NFE is a flexible structure its purpose would be lost if changes are not accommodated as and when needed in the field of development this aspect needs to be activated regularly in order to keep abreast with the changes that occur locally and internationally. Hence the importance of following the guidelines indicated below (model 1).

1. Planning programmes in collaboration with formal education planners.
2. Studying the costs and benefits of alternative programs.
3. Research into the learning needs of different groups, sectors and prioritizing programs. Developing a data base on the out of school groups.
4. Designing pilot study projects to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of policies.
5. Compilation of the existing non-formal learning programmes, both government and non-government. This could be one of the major functions of the National Institute of Education or the MOE, Sri Lanka.

Proposed Policy Approaches

The development of a policy framework of the NFE Department of the NIE had two major objectives. Firstly to provide guidelines to facilitate the MOE as the authority empowered to formulate national policies for NFE in the country. This was in keeping with the protocol of the NIE Act which expects NIE to provide research based activities for policy formulation and action at national level. In this the NIE followed an action research approach. Hence, why action research was considered the basis for development of NFE programmes at the NFE department at the NIE to enable to identify best options for education and development. Thus the NIE NFE programmes had multiple objectives.

Firstly to provide action oriented activities enabling youth to gain technical and social skills and gather lessons for scaling the activities at national level through the MOE at a later stage.

Secondly, to provide guidelines to other agencies such as NGOs and State organisations that are involved in extension services to look at development and extension programmes as educational activities.

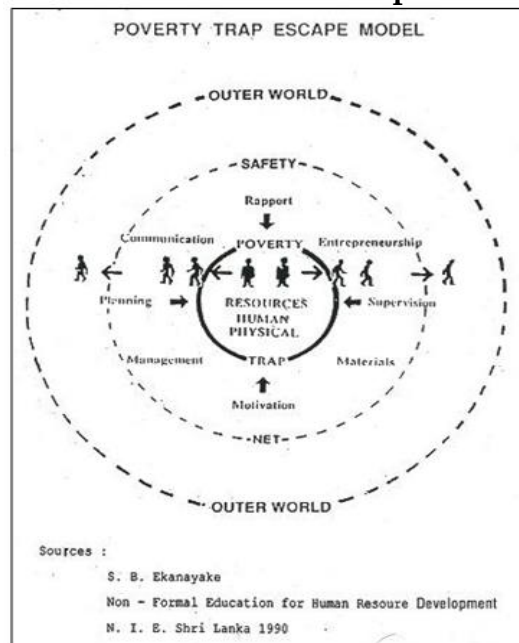
The third objective relates to introducing new dimensions to NFE, which to date had been either unaware or ignored.

On the other hand, the overarching benefits that would emerge as part of the collaboration with FE programmes of the institutions at all levels in the context of the future regional development plans. This will support the emerging concept of regional development and collaboration with technology in the Higher Education Institutes, breaking the current isolation that prevail in development today.

The ultimate objective was to develop a base for agro based industries and human resource capacities for all at the periphery. With this vision in view the possible inter-relationships between education and development is highlighted in the model below. This model is based on the action research activities conducted by the NFE Department of the NIE between 1989-1995(see below model I).

model 1

Non-formal Education Model of Development



Model 1: Poverty Trap Escape Model

The above model (1) is based on the activities carried out by the National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka. It attempts to develop a conceptual framework

for further action by interested catalysts. It was stated earlier that the overall objective of NFE is to improve the quality of life of the community and this model provides the basic principles derived from the experiment based on a number of activities carried out in village communities in Sri Lanka (Ekanayake, 1992). As discussed in the earlier pages it highlights the methodologies that could be adopted to break the poverty trap seen in the rural communities of the developing countries.

Poverty is defined to include not only material poverty but also lack of self - confidence and initiatives that are seen amongst the youth and the communities in rural and deprived communities. The poverty syndrome encompass all elements related to social, economic and cultural factors. The exogenic factors and elements used should generate motivation in the beneficiaries in terms of economic gains and social and psychological development aspects. It should lead to confidence building as shown in the above diagram. This diagram shows that the this poverty syndrome which could be reduced through persistent and concerted efforts using various processes over a period, guiding the clientele into the 'safety net' relieving them from the prevailing 'poverty trap'. Once the stakeholders are aware of their capacities it may be possible for the more energetic to venture into the highly competitive 'outer world' moving across the 'safety net'.

One of the major flaws in NFE in Sri Lanka is the 'absence of a well-defined conceptual framework for NFE providing a place and its contribution to the total development effort'. They conceive NFE from the perspective of FE which sends wrong signals and not helpful for either. Another lacuna, an outcome of the above, is the absence of a coordinating body / institution to bring about sanity, avoiding duplication and wastage of resources, bringing better quality and focus seen today in NFE activities in Sri Lanka. These aspects in operational coordination terms, as conceptualised in relation to NF development processes, are dealt in detail below. The major policy approaches could be described under a) clientele based and b) institutional based approaches.

a) Clientele Based Policy (CBP)

The main objective of this CBP would be to provide the individual learner skills that he/she would not be able to acquire from the FE system. The policy should be to assist in the development of competencies that would enhance the capacity of the individual for improving his/her quality of life. Though the competencies are individualistic these could be part of a strand combining similar skills to a larger group of clientele in the community. The approaches could even lead to an integration of methods. The policy could be flexible to accommodate many options. The policy should lead to appropriate action, with relevant resources assisting the participant to develop skills relevant to his/her needs. Some of these policy options are as follows.

1. Combination of formal and non-formal education programs at all levels of learning from primary level to university level.

2. Parallel NFE program offered for young out-of-school leavers, during their 'waiting period' for employment or till such time they want to stay to develop skills before entering the job market.
3. The NFE needs to enhance skills of adults and improve their status in employment or for those who want to develop new skills as a matter of personnel need.
4. Introduce programmes related to farming and other self-employed activities which would improve their economic sections and or provide self-employment opportunities.
5. Develop programmes related to overall improvement of the community.
6. Encourage projects related to the needs of women.
7. Continue the unfinished task of the Formal School through the concept of the 'Open School'.
8. Service the neglected groups such as pre-schoolers and those who are not in school and now are adolescents such as street children.
9. Provide basic technical skills enabling the participants to enter higher technical institutions as part of regional development programmes now available at the technical tertiary education units in the provinces
10. Establish model NFE centres at district levels

b) Organization Policy (OP)

Unlike in CBP the focus of OP would be to perceive a policy framework superseding other institutions that render services of this nature. Its purpose is to bring about an overall integration and co-ordination of all programmes that are operating in a country without specific goals. It is expected that the products of these NFE programmes are, as far as possible, inter linked and form part of development grid of a nation. Such an approach would, to a great extent, enhance the development programmes and reduce wastage of resources. This could enhance the Mini Knowledge Hubs (MKH) in development. A policy of this nature could lead to the development of the following.

- 1. A national level planning secretariat, as a work horse, with the objective of;**
 - a) **Coordination between NFE: activities; and**
 - b) **Setting up a council for exchange of information and support etc.**
- 2. The method of control in relation to goals such as self-reliance, local initiative and increased social consciousness for effective mobilization of local resources control must remain at the local level.**
- 3. The NFE should be able to appropriate both private and public finances. Since international agencies are also involved certain amount of supervision by the State would be necessary as to avoid duplication of activities without wetting the enthusiasm of NGOs thereby making NFE ineffective.**
- 4. Coordination of resources and mechanisms of different ministries appropriate to tasks to get the maximum benefits.**

5. **Developing cooperation of personnel dealing with NFE at regional levels / grassroots levels and avoiding hidden agendas of NGOs**
6. **Provision of parity of status between formal and non-formal education in relation to allocation of resources, funds and institutional power.**
7. **Researching into new hybrids of FE and NFE and developing 'home grown' models'**
8. **Adopting participatory and multi-sectorial approach to planning at national, regional and especially at village levels in particular.**
9. **Training of personnel from different Ministries and in different sectors in inter-disciplinary approaches and integrated activity planning in rural areas and the development of a cadre of specialists at all levels.**
10. **Planning for sharing of resources of FE and NFE to address the employment patterns, self-employment activities and leadership building etc.**
11. **Initiating a course leading to a degree in NFE at the NIE and continue the earlier effort of the NIE in 1994**
12. **The above new policies should integrate with universities assisting to break their 'ivory tower\ approaches resulting isolations and be part of the regional development mechanisms**

Each of the above policies could be developed and elaborated in terms of plans, programs and activities to suit the regions.

Since most programmes form a part of the continuum in relation to age or activity or purpose, programmes are not exclusive. Hence, the need for interaction between programs and organizations to avoid duplication.

Need for an Institution on NFE

In the next few pages the writer proposes a further step in the direction of formalizing the concept of Non-Formal Education into the main stream of development education. The discussion so far presented indicates the possibilities which included the theoretical aspects, the growing unmet challenges and issues in the globalization process, the limitations of FE seen over the centuries and the importance of combining FE with development through the use of NFE enabling to meet the unmet issues. For all these to operationalize there is the imperative requirement to bring about radical changes in legislation related to education in the country. The following paragraphs attempt to provide some preliminary guidelines in this direction for policy makers. Some countries such as Thailand (kit pen), South Korea, (Samuael) Philippines (accion cultural popular. Senegal (animation rural) Tanzania (ujama) have given a high priority to NFE in their national development plans. This has resulted in improving their literacy rates and levels of development including quality of life of the community. Countries that have lower literacy levels and low per capita income

relative to Sri Lanka in the 1960's had improved beyond these levels in both areas by the 1990s . These improvements in their economies were attributed to the use of NFE and related development strategies in their development plans. Sri Lanka had paid only lip service to NFE all along the years, focusing only on literacy and rudimentary vocational skills, never attempting to look for new paths.

It is in this light that the NIE in its initial phase developed the following suggestions to bring new dimensions to the development processes, using NFE as the basis of approach. These include the establishment of an Institute at the national level for NFE, viz. National Institute of Non-Formal Education, (NINFE) and related programmes which will form the apex of a planned NFE comprehensive development education centres in the country.

Objectives of the use of information about resources, opportunities for employment, facilities for training etc.

- 4. Provide opportunities as a social service centre for the local people.**
- 5. Provide general community services.**
- 6. Upgrade skills including leadership aspects.**

Organisation

- 1. Appointing a national task force (NTF) from different disciplines.**
- 2. Linking the organization at the national level to the National Institute of Education.**
- 3. At the periphery the centres to be based in the Central Colleges and Senior Secondary Schools which have facilities for technical education. LEADING TO BRING ABOUT A SYNERGY BETWEEN FE AND NFE**
- 4. Heads of schools and teachers to be oriented to the new programme.**
- 5. A committee of competent and dedicated persons from the community to serve in an advisory capacity**
- 6. Developing linkages with resource institutions at local and national levels.**

Clientele for the above would include both those attending schools and school leavers in addition to members of the community, irrespective of age and sex. The resources for these centres would be mostly from the locality such as institutional resources both material and human, local level technical support services, use of para- professionals including traditionally skilled persons and similar resources, NGOs and religious establishments. The functions could vary with the needs of the community such as functional literacy, human development skills, service coordination with the state and upgrading technical and social development skills through collaboration with Higher Educational Institutions. Especially with the Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education leading to strengthening the regional development processes.

c) Possible Co-ordination Levels - Roles and Functions

Apex Level Co-ordination

1. Provide overall policy coordination and planning and development services.
2. Develop and implement a framework for quality assurances, including financial aspects.
3. Provide supervisory services across the board vis-à-vis management, teacher education and development and, professional improvement in collaboration with NIE and other institutions referred to above.
4. Undertake a policy of affirmative action in relation to disadvantaged persons and vulnerable groups.
5. Widen the scope for participation in educational and economic opportunities.
6. Mobilise people's own resources and capabilities.
7. Development of NFE methodologies using action research approaches

Operational level Co-ordination Functions

1. Assist school leavers at different levels.
2. Provide the community information through publications and other media facilities.
3. Upgrade technical and personality enhancement skills development.
4. Develop linkages at local, national and international levels.
5. Accept inclusive principles and practices in community which will consider poverty, deprivation, disabilities, conflicts, family chores, health and nutrition.
6. Reconstruct NFE to incorporate FE structures and vice versa.
7. Be responsive to development needs, define stakeholders and circumstances.
8. Establish trade centres / outlets for sale of products of the participants

d) Policy Options and Political Issues

The above coordination of NFE / FE programmes should encompass the needs of education policymakers at national and provincial levels, professional and interest groups, civil society and community level organizations. Funding and technical aspects are equally important in the development of objectives for NFE. The type of activities to be introduced through institutional and non-institutional channels should depend on the stage of development of the specific community.

Social mobility is greatly facilitated through FE .The expectations of the young are more to be fulfilled through FE, although only a few succeed. However, NFE programmes that face serious competition from FE programmes designed for young people should be avoided.

Political pressure is likely to ensure that the bulk of the resources are directed to FE. In such situations, NFE stands a better chance in implementation

programmes firstly in areas where the governments are not in a position to keep pace with the demand for FE. Thus programmes designed for formal qualifications through NF alternative means such as correspondence courses etc. would have an advantage.

Another option would relate to programmes that address the needs of the adults which would not compete with FE programmes especially in rural areas. Rural productivity and quality of life can be increased by using extension programmes.

e) Agenda for Research and Development Work of NFE The above will include researching into

1. The political economy of alternative forms of learning;
2. The nature of integrated forms of learning;
1. 3 the establishment of a common core curriculum and identifying learning outcomes;
2. 4 the study of forms - institutional and systems, of integrating;
6. the role of the state and partnership processes;
3. 6.the nature of quality, equity and networking; and
7. the prospects of examining UNESCO's Four Pillars of education (Delorrs, UNESCO,1996) in operation in the planned activities of NFE including TE

Changes Needed in Policy in the Context of Sri Lanka

Since Sri Lanka has achieved a very high rate of literacy and is almost now on the threshold of achieving universal literacy there is a great need to look at NFE from other perspectives beyond the traditional literacy requirements. Other countries in the region which have had lower percentages in literacy in the 1960's than Sri Lanka, commenced diversions and as a result they are economically stronger and viable than Sri Lanka.

There are already stack piles of unsolved questions in education demanding new strategies which should begin on the principles of 'people-centeredness'. Hence, the need to identify a range of organized educational reforms. On the other hand, FE in its traditional form has lost its rigidity and communities are influencing the directions in the policy. Further, with the impact of EFA and related objectives, limitations of FE are realized and alternative approaches for both local and family circumstance are been sought, demanding equivalence in the programmes. The concept of integration of systems and institutions and totality of learning opportunities are other emerging demands. Of these, it is relatively easy to bring about an integration of learning opportunities, which includes all forms of learning, while the former would be too complex to be handled at the moment in Sri Lanka. However, integration of both,

FE and NFE, would reinforce mutually and bring about better results providing equal opportunities of access to education, training and the labour market. It is here, as stated earlier, that the establishment of an Institute of Non-Formal Education (INFE) becomes an imperative need of the hour. An INFE would widen the scope and participation in educational opportunities, enhances the

diversity of educational provisions, build a system that looks into the relevance, inclusiveness and diversity, support democratic participation and foster inclusiveness at the periphery, and mobilize community participation at all levels meaningfully.

The new policy on NFE should be geared to a) foster community development centres; b) attached to Madya Maha Vidyalayas- Senior Secondary Schools, with full collaboration of the other departments; c) be non-political ; d) lend learning to develop skills needed for the area but also to be outward looking to meet national and international markets in the region; e) launch policy oriented research on NFE to be undertaken by the NIE and MOE, Sri Lanka; f) support innovation; and g) incorporate development oriented social and life skills.

The policy should have three major roles. These should be complementary, supplementary and promotional looking for viable alternatives.

Finally, the NFE programmes of the school should not be viewed in terms of traditional school structures - age level, grade level, time bound and fixed programmes for ever. The NFE programmes envisaged under the NFE centres, ultimately turning out to be LLE centers, should encompass all youth, both in and outside schools, including adults. The NFE centers of learning have to provide opportunities for all to gain information and technology at the door step in the next few decades as part of the dynamics of globalization. Sri Lanka's high level of literacy which provides the solid base for this envisaged high profile technology based on NFE centers in the years to come, require meticulous planning taking into consideration the existing institutional frameworks and the gaps that should be bridged through NFE centres. The 'Vidatha Centres', referred to earlier in the essay, could be excellent sources for this purpose.

Apart from the above NFE should be seen as a new approach to learning. This would bring in dynamism to the classroom 'with the teacher playing many different roles and with the students taking very active part in the process' (NEC Study Series, 2004) Thus NFE apart from been a development tool could be harnessed to improve the teaching processes inside the school campus, for which of course the teachers have to be trained and skilled in the art of development oriented education.

NFE and Development Trends - Macro picture and its role in the modern day

The development trends relate to globalisation, world as a village, exploitation of resources, issues connected with environment and pollution, increasing illiteracy and population and many more related issues specifically in relation to poverty alleviation programmes in the developing world. In the process of development it is seen that rich nations become richer while the poor are forced to circumvent to living in ghettos with decreasing and reduced quality in life. The international communities emphasis the significance of literacy as a basis for improvement in quality of life and co-relates social indicators to levels of literacy. Illiteracy breeds ignorance, subjected to exploitation and humiliation.

Out of a total of illiterate one billion in the world of which 90 per cent live in the developing world while illiterate numbers are still increasing. This is due to the increase in poverty. It is seen that one way to attract the non-schooling population to schools is to develop mechanisms that will help the family economy and motivate the children to learn at their will and pleasure. The FE is structured in such a way that there is no room for flexibility in terms of participation. This acts as a barrier to many of those children who are 'economic' supporters of the family and in this girls suffer the most. NFE been a flexible outfit and inclusive could be used to accommodate the needs of those children who have to be the family bread winner supporting at early stages in their life. NFE materials could be developed to take care of their needs as well. In the modern world, literacy is essential for survival to gather information and latest knowledge in relation to day -to- day requirements for the improvement of quality of life. NFE would be a key vehicle in this regard.

Mega Trends in NFE in the Context of Knowledge Economy

The earlier focus of NFE on literacy which prevails even to date, in countries where the literacy level is low is not the option for Sri Lanka. NFE is a strong supporter of FE .It is also seen that NFE clientele includes persons of all ages, both male and female. Combining literacy with life skills has been a new trend to encourage the beneficiaries to participate and stay long in the programme. NFE has also been used to provide latest information and knowledge about the aspects that affect the people daily in relation to health, environment, pollution, agricultural activities, new concepts on human rights, conflicts, and other social and political issues. Thus NFE has moved from its pure literacy approach, at the beginning, to educate masses on many and varied subjects that affect them in their day to day life. It is closer to Lifelong Education. NFE is an easy way to change the life styles of the community. It is also cost friendly and learner friendly. NFE is flexible and adaptable to any situation and any environment much easily than the formal systems. The envisaged changes in life styles, increasing demands of the humanity and the dark clouds that hang over the future of mankind can be understood and their adverse effects mitigated for survival through greater involvement of NFE. More important is its role in the modern day as centres and vehicle of transforming regional development programmes at the grassroots levels

10.0 Brief overview of the recommendations

The earlier suggestions were more in relation to the socio economic scenario of Sri Lanka in the context of the world economy of the 1990s. However, the rapid changes that emerged in the 21st century with globalisation and the UN underscoring development with its Millennium Development Goals bringing new development priorities reflecting high priority to education further boosted the need for new dimensions. NFE or NSBE emerged in this list of priorities.

Point 10.0 above discusses the emergence of the challenges of the 20th century for which FE (KBE) has few answers presents the mega propositions from the field of NFE (SBE) as more reliable answers to issues through a lifelong education programmes , a continuum of the NFE /SBE. Although there is similarity in the above suggestions and may look like repetition the following provides a succinct categorisation of these critical options and changes discussed in greater detail of the above as recommendations for the government of Sri Lanka for this century.

- **National Level policy**
 - **Appointment of a commission on SE and NFE**
 - **Upgrade the level of the NFE department at the MOE**
 - **Establishment of a National Level Authority to coordinate NFE programmes**
 - **Spilt SE and NFE as two separate departments at the MOE**
- **Professional development of NFE/SBE personnel**
 - **Professional training for all NFE personnel prior to appointment**
 - **Commencement of the degree course on NFE / re-introducing the degree course at the NIE which existed earlier (1994)**
 - **Introducing NFE component in teacher education and management training along with school and community (which existed from 1978-1995)**
 - **All the educational personnel should be educated on the importance of NF Education and various objectives and aspects of NF Education / SBE and LLE**
 - **Develop / promote action research approaches in NFE/SBE to bring about changes / evaluations and new courses for development of the community**
- **Changes needed at the apex / provincial bodies**
 - **Re-establishment of the NFE/SBE department at the NIE**
 - **Combine NFE.SBE with Tech. Ed department**
 - **the recruitment / training / payments for instructors have to formalized**
 - **Accreditation of courses enabling the participants to enter higher educational institutes**
 - **Trainees should be provided a recognized certificate**

- Provincial and Zonal offices should have full time Officer in Charge of NFE assisted by Project Officers or ISAs in Zones.
- Qualified Instructors should be recruited and their payments should be attractive.
- Separate Cadre with promotion prospects with attractive salaries
- Increased fund allocations
- Collaboration with other departments
- Collaborations
 - Collaborations with national level NGOs and Ministries associated with skills development
 - Community awareness programmes on NFE / LLE of a knowledge economy and
 - Community involvement in NFE centres
 - Teacher to be allotted for NFE work in schools
 - Relationships with the TE / NVQ programmes formalised and acceptance of accreditation of NFE centres to TE / NVQ
- Expansion of the extension services of NFE
 - More centres to be established to enrol students who failed university admissions
 - Identification of students at school level for vocations and collaboration with formal
 - Systems through school vocational guidance
 - Media should be used to popularize vocational education and opportunities
 - Re-establishing nfe and tech.ed. Department at the nie
 - Schools to network with nfe centres
 - Social harmony and learning to live together to be emphasised and bringing
 - Democratic culture

11.0 Conclusion

Implications in the New Millennium

Lifelong Education (LLE) could be considered as the continuum of NFE in relation to long term perspectives of ones life, Lifelong Learning is considered to be the need of the century since there is much to learn through various sources that seemingly never ends. LLE refers to the total dynamic formation of the human person which covers the period from birth to death.

The current dilemma of the confusion in understanding the concept of NFE colliding with mainly TVE has to be clarified for better understanding of its functions.

Education is generally understood to be what is learnt and skills developed in the formal school system. Hence, limitations in terms of knowledge, skills, and expertise developed over the years working in various capacities at different levels specially over a period of time. The former meaning the formal structures and institutions, primary to tertiary, provides the basics of learning to learn. In the case of the latter, the processes involve learning throughout life or LLE. Thus LLE, is the commitment that any individual must own so as to be responsible and participative member of the communities they lives. 'Lifelong learning includes the conventional informal, formal and non-formal modalities of learning. But now enriched by recurrent, upgrading learning. Learning of this type enables the individual, in the midst of new 'Information Age', participate meaningfully in socio-cultural, religious, civic and political activities' (Varela, 1991). LLE is also an attempt to integrate and articulate all structures and stages of education along the vertical and horizontal dimensions. It is flexible in time, place and techniques and hence calls for self-directed learning, self-learning and sharing of one's learning with others. Lifelong learning is not a special form of adult education but a lifespan cognitive activity of human beings. Hence the significance of the suggested terminology above from the current usage of NFE to SBE

The present trend of change and development is such that during this century it will be essential for all progressive people to pursue LLE and pursue recurrent education gathering knowledge through different modes available using media and other communication techniques that are fast emerging. Such learning will be in relation to many day to day needs in consumer skills, health practices, environment management practices, use of leisure time, financial management and banking practices, simple technological needs of the household, needs of elders, travel and comfort etc. derived from media and other non-formal means. NFE is directly more development oriented and productive focused impacting immediately on the clientele and the community than FE. This is the most striking character in NFE programmes where the potential to change is articulate and inbuilt providing immediate solace to the beneficiaries. Unlike in FE where change is slow and impact on QOL is far flung and diffused, on the other hand, NFE brings results immediately in relation to learning, earning.

Since of late there seems to be a change in the approaches of the design of NFE in Sri Lanka. The literature refers to promotion of technical education (TE) rather than NFE in the school system. This is has emerged since TE has been brought in to the school curriculum as an additional stream to the prevailing three steams namely Arts, Commerce and Science enabling students to get into the newly established University of Science and Technology. This is a very positive and progressive step in relation to the economic development of the country. The emphasis of NFE in the schools system is relegated to the background. But the role of NFE is still valid and could play a valuable role in the knowledge economy of the country (SB Ekanayake 2012)

Annexure - Methodology

Chart 2 - Field Missions

Field missions / search	SE	NFE	No. of persons students interviewed	
			SE	NFE
Institutions *	08	07	08	25
Field centres**	04	02		
Venues	Kandy, Anuradhapura, Battaramulla, Maharagama		NFE - Hurikaduwa NFE- Tambuttegamuwa(2) (SE) Blue Rose, Getambe Kandy, Ampitiya (2)	
Observations of students at work Website searches	SE 23 NFE = 30		5 sites	

Source - study NEC/ WB 2014

NFE, VT

** MOE, NIE, PME Kandy, A'pura,

* NAITA,

The methodology also includes perusal of literature and also searching websites and internet sources.

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