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**FACULTY OF DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
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SYNDICATE GROUP NO-08

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY OF SRI LANKA AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

1 This syndicate is mainly direct towards about Higher education policy of Sri Lanka and the way forward.

2 First, we need to get oriented on this title of Higher education policy of Sri Lanka. We talk about the historical background of the Higher education policy of Sri Lanka.

3 we have tried to analyze the impact of higher education inequality on the academic success of rural and urban students. Our ultimate goal is to point out the need for a modernized education policy in Sri Lanka.

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CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	Overview of Higher Education in Both Globally and Locally	2-7
Chapter 3	The role of an Education System to the Society	8
Chapter 4	Emerging Challenges in the Education System	9-10
Chapter 5	Impact of Covid-19	11-12
Chapter 6	Main Strengths & Weaknesses in the Education System	13-17
Chapter 7	Recommendations	18-23
Chapter 8	Conclusion	24
Chapter 9	References	25-26

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OBJECTIVES

- 1 Understand the policies of higher education in Sri Lanka.
- 2 Get an idea about higher education in Sri Lanka.
- 3 Discuss about the importance, benefits, and disadvantages of current policies.
- 4 Identify the latest creative policies and suggestions of higher education in Sri Lanka.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1 People learn things from birth to death; so, it is said that ‘learning’ is a life-long journey. There are different types of education, it called as formal or informal. When we discuss about the success of the formal education system of a country is concerned, its status of the democracy is very crucial as only in Democratic Societies and States there is an attention on education that develop personal, citizenship and professional dimension considering rights and duties of the people. Education system plays a significant role in any country towards reaching a sustainable development and could be treated as the backbone of any society.

2 Schools, Universities and other educational institutes are the places which contribute immensely towards development of a country. Including improving the knowledge, skills, attitude, and competencies of its workforce. Producing competent graduate, professional or technical expert and a responsible citizen enriched with social and cultural values, which eventually enhances the quality of a country’s workforce, is one of the ways the education system contributes to the development of a country. While gaining the access to a formal education system has been a difficult or expensive exercise for the people in many countries, Sri Lankan government, since 1944, launched a free education system for the public purpose without any.

3 The history of university education in Sri Lanka goes back to the establishment of the University of Ceylon in Colombo in 1942 by the amalgamation of two reputed institutions, namely the Ceylon Medical College Estd. (1870) and the Ceylon University College Estd. (1921) by the Ceylon University Ordinance No. 20 of 194. The two leading seats of oriental learning in the country, Vidyodaya Pirivena and Vidyalandara Pirivena, were elevated into full-fledged universities in 1959.

4 With the establishment of other universities from time to time, Sri Lanka now has 15 universities in all, including the Open University. In addition, there are 11 Post Graduate Institutes affiliated to these Universities. All these Universities and Institutions function under the purview of the University Grants Commission (UGC). Undergraduate students are admitted to these Universities through a common examination, namely the GCE (Advanced Level) examination conducted by the Department of Examinations, and a selection procedure conducted by the UGC.

5 Besides the above universities, there are three other universities, namely the University of Buddhist and Pali Studies, the Kotelawala Defence University, and the University of Vocational Technology (UNIVOTEC), which are not under the UGC.

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CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN BOTH GLOBALLY AND LOCALLY

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

6 The world is changing at an ever-quickenning rate, which means that a lot of knowledge becomes obsolete and inaccurate more quickly. The emphasis is therefore shifting to teaching the skills of learning: to picking up new knowledge quickly and in as agile a way as possible. Finnish schools have begun to move away from the regular subject-focused curricula, introducing instead developments like phenomenon-based learning, where the students study concepts like climate change instead. There are also active educational interventions to implement programs and paths specific to non-traditional students, such as first-generation students.

7 A commodity no longer reserved for children; adults need it too. Some governmental bodies, like the Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra in Finland, have proposed compulsory lifelong education. Studies found that automation is likely to eliminate nearly half the jobs in developed countries during roughly the next two decades. Automation is therefore considered to be a major factor in a "race between education and technology". Automation technologies and their application may render certain currently taught skills and knowledge redundant while increasing the need for other curricula – such as material related to the application of automation.

8 It has been argued that formal education is "teaching workers the wrong things, and that deep reform is essential to facilitate the development of digital knowledge and technical skills, as well as nonroutine cognitive and noncognitive (or "soft") skills" and that the formal state-organized education system – which is built on the Industrial Revolution model and focuses on IQ and memorization is losing relevance. Furthermore, it has been argued that with contemporary education policy creativity is restricted, inquiry-based learning is not facilitated, education is not meeting the needs of knowledge economies and is largely not personalized to the students. Schools were found rarely teach in forms of "learning by doing", and many children above a certain age "hate school" in terms of the material and subjects being taught, with much of it being a "waste of time" that gets forgotten quickly and is useless in modern society.

9 The effective resolve of humanity's environmental challenges may require novel lesson plans tailored towards skills and knowledge found to be both required and reasonable to be taught today. Environmental education is not widely taught extensively or facilitated while being potentially important to the protection and generation of – often unquantified – economic value such as clean air. According to UNESCO, "for a

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country to meet the basic needs of its people, the teaching of science is a strategic imperative". Studies have shown that active learning rarely applied in schools is highly efficacious. Studies found that massive open online courses offer a pathway to employment that currently bypasses conventional universities and their degree programs while often being more relevant to contemporary economic activities and the students' interests.

HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

10 In Sri Lanka, higher education is an optional last step of formal instruction beyond secondary school. Higher education, often known as tertiary education, is most usually associated with universities or degree-granting institutions. These might be state universities, public and private degree-granting institutions, or foreign universities that issue their own degrees. Limited ability of public institutions to meet demand and opposition to privatization are two high-profile concerns.

a Free Education

I Since 1945, Sri Lanka has been enjoying what is called the Free Education Scheme, under which Education is free from primary onwards until one obtains a first degree from a University This became an integral part of social welfare system and though a massive burden on the Sri Lankan State, it is still continued because it is part and parcel of the political culture of the country. Apart from that it still offers opportunities to rural children who otherwise may not find access to both secondary and higher education.

II Sri Lanka on the basis of social welfare-oriented scheme of education, has constructed what is called the Social Demand Model of Education, through which the country has been modernized in a wide variety of ways. The free education scheme made a tremendous impact on the social, economic, and political developments in the country. On top of it, Sri Lanka has achieved the highest literacy rate in South Asia and overall, one of the highest literacy rates in Asia. Sri Lanka can be proud of such achievements as universal primary enrolment, equality of educational opportunity and near gender equality.

III Amidst such achievements, differences in income produce differences in family and social environments considerably reducing the opportunities of socially disadvantaged children who are unable to enter the universities. Though most of the students who enter the universities come from rural areas and lower economic backgrounds, there are many socially disadvantaged children, who are not provided with adequate primary and secondary educational facilities, cannot enter the higher

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education system. Though the accepted norm is that children with higher economic background are more likely to enter a university, the situation is entirely different in Sri Lanka, as a majority of students who came from rural areas.

b Expansion of The System of University Education

The impact of the Free Education Scheme came to be felt in the sixties and seventies, and the University system, in response to those pressures, some of which were political in character, made certain adjustments whereby the system underwent a change. There was immense dissatisfaction with the Oxbridge model, and nation has moved in order to accommodate the 'Redbrick' model. It was on the basis of this formula that Sri Lanka established provincial Universities to expand the opportunities for higher education. The expansion of the universities led to the policymakers being compelled to concentrate on undergraduate education at the expense of post graduate education.

c Private Education

I The university admissions procedure in Sri Lanka is quite tough. Around 60% of pupils passed the GCE A-Level examinations in 2012. According to the UGC, only approximately 17% of this cohort was accepted into a university-level institution.

II The higher education opportunities have increased significantly over the past decade in Sri Lanka. Today's younger generation is keener to study and most of them enter for higher education. Among those most of them choose private institutes/universities than government universities. Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the reasons for choosing the private institutes/universities than government universities. The data was collected through an online questionnaire among younger generation in western province, Sri Lanka. A regression was used to analyze the data. The main reason is the high competition in Advanced Level Examination and most of the student unable to get enough marks for enter a government university.

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POLICIES ASSOCIATED WITH FREE EDUCATION

11 The Ministry of Higher Education in Sri Lanka offers several scholarship options to cover the cost of school supplies and other related expenditures for the few students who make it to university. The Ministry recently established a "laptop loan program" that allows university students to get interest-free loans to buy computers worth up to \$500.

SCHOLARSHIPS

a Mahapola Scholarship

I The Mahapola scholarship is one of the most widely available scholarships, and it is awarded to deserving candidates. The University Grants Commission is in charge of the procedure, and they also decide on the criteria.

II The Mahapola Scholarship Trust Fund, which is part of the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Affairs, keeps track of payments and makes judgments about them.

b Bursaries

Bursaries, in addition to the Mahapola Scholarship, are the other major source of financial aid for students. Those who are not qualified for the Mahapola scholarship are encouraged to apply for bursaries through the welfare division. The applications will be submitted to the required selection criteria.

c Other Scholarships and Funds

With a variety of scholarships offered by the university as well as other institutions, students have access to more resources. As a result, pupils have more opportunities to get academic support. The criteria are set by the scholarship sponsors, who also have the authority to choose the recipients.

PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION

12 Private universities can be granted degree-awarding authority or program-based recognition by the Ministry of Higher Education, and the UGC presently lists 11 non-state schools having degree-granting status and 6 non-state institutions with recognized programs on its website.

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

13 Vocational education and training in Sri Lanka is managed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of the Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training. Training includes course based curriculum at vocational technical training centers and apprenticeship at private or public organizations. Higher education in vocational fields could be achieved through several universities. The National Vocational Qualifications Systems in Sri Lanka (NVQSL) provides a structured seven levels of qualifications from Level 1 to Level 7. Vocational education and training is carried out for degree level at the Open University, Sri Lanka and the University of Vocational Technology, as well as at diploma level at 37 technical colleges, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education and the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture.

14 Apart from these, the Ministry of Education has launched a non-formal vocational education program which allows school dropouts and adults who did not complete their school education, to earn a living, through self-employment. Most of these courses are held at community centers and they cover a wide range of fields such as dressmaking, beauty culture, hairdressing, stitching, carpentry, plumbing, painting and so on.

CURRENT SITUATION

15 The Ministry of Education's Higher Education (MOHE) Sector has a critical role to play in many areas, particularly in organizing and managing the higher education system. The Ministry of Education promotes relationships with international universities to facilitate two-way information exchange and to expand possibilities for Sri Lankans to study abroad through scholarships.

NEW TRENDS

16 The MOHE and the University Grant Commission (UGC) have begun to respond to the persistent criticism that Sri Lanka's universities continue to produce unemployable 'graduates, by taking a series of new measures. Establishment of new Faculties of nursing, technology, medicine, and engineering, and integrating career guidance and career counseling into undergraduate education are two major initiatives in this regard.

17 Facilitating the establishment of private higher educational institutions through flexibility of policy and concessionary process of registration is a major policy trend. It seeks to widen the access to higher education while providing opportunities, though limited, to qualified students who fail to secure entry to the state universities.

NEW CONTEXT

18 The government, the Ministry Of Higher Education (MOHE) and the University Grant Commission (UGC) have been devising new policy options, particularly aiming at modernizing undergraduate programs so that the higher education can respond adequately to changing global trends. There is at present a growing discussion in Sri Lanka too on how to respond to the global pressures through reforms encompassing the entire educational sector.

19 Renewed emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, adoption of IT in teaching, learning and evaluation processes, setting up of new Faculties, with increasing student enrollment, that provides degrees with better employment opportunities, and emphasis on enhancing the quality and relevance‘ of all degree programs, and setting up new mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation are among key reform measures already initiated in the public universities.

20 The current policy re-orientations have also led to a counter argument calling to recognize the need for universities to remain connected to their original mandate of being bastions of free speech and critical analysis in democratic society. This perspective warns that remaining unaware of the contradictory trends in modernization, development, education and employment, and also overemphasizing the utilitarian goals of education at the cost of its value as a democratic social good, could produce a new trap from which public universities might find it difficult to escape.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM TO THE SOCIETY

21 The role of education in creating, preserving and sustaining the right knowledge, skills and attitudes in the context of the social value system are crucial for the wellbeing of any civilized society. Education systems, in general, focus on creating and dissemination of knowledge, skills and values with the view of developing and empowering a holistic and a responsible citizen. This enables them to contribute towards creating and enhancing the wellbeing of the society as a whole. The focus of the world, towards achieving the development over the time, has shifted its strategic intent from physical resources to human resources, and from information to knowledge society. In today's context, it is said that the people are living in a knowledge society where the information and knowledge plays a crucial role in the social systems towards gaining strategic and competitive advantages for a country. In a knowledge society, education system facilitates to transfer and sustain the knowledge and the social value system over generations.

22 Education system of a country, while it influences the wellbeing of the society in many ways, plays a crucial role in improving the quality of human resource, in particular, that directly influences the quality of the workforce and adding value to the economy. The view of human resources as a form of capital is not new, but it has only recently been thoroughly examined and explicitly incorporated into the stream of economic thought (Schultz, 1971). According to Green, A (1997), the role of the national state and with it the place of education is now changing.

23 Following a growing awareness that many countries are moving from an industrial-based to information-based economy and that education systems must respond to this change. In this context education system influences labour market outcomes with institutional settings in which such theories provide the most likely mechanism (Werfhorst, 2011). This implies that the education has a big role to play in a society in creating, preserving and transforming the knowledge over generations. It is evident that few studies have been conducted on the role of national policy makers towards uplifting the quality of educations systems in colleges and higher education institutes. According to Steven Mintz (2014), Educational system can serve as innovation incubators and it should take steps towards advancing next-generation online learning, which will play a critical role in enhancing access, affordability, student success, and institutional sustainability; and leading the way as institutions gradually develop outcomes-driven, competency-based, career-oriented educational pathways. These suggest that a traditional education system needs a complete turnaround to cope with the emerging dynamic needs of the society.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMERGING CHALLENGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

24 Emerging challenges in the Higher education policy of Sri Lanka and free education system, though it has pushed the country forward into a leading position in the South Asian region in terms of literacy rate, school enrollment rate, gender parity in education, human quality index, etc., has been criticized for not being progressively improved and developed for a long time to cope with the changing world.

CLASSROOM PROBLEMS

25 The shortage of teaching staff, extra responsibilities with teaching a large number of students in class, unpleasant environment for teaching, non-availability of teaching aids, unawareness of teachers from learning experiences of students and uninterested/irrelevant studies are classroom problems faced by university teachers.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS

26 These problems are basically related to administration. Misuse of administrative power of officer's and promotion of teachers make the university students suffer.

ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

27 Teachers are mostly low-paid employees and same is true for university teachers as regard the demand of work expected of them. Similarly, university teachers face residence and related problems which cause low or dissatisfaction among them. They cannot teach well causing a decrease in the standard of education.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS

28 Social problems of teachers affect the quality of teaching. Teachers' position in society and their relations with community, colleagues and administrator affect the teaching process. Further, it is apparent that there are many instances of conflicts between the professional executives (state employees) and the political executives when it comes to implement education policies.

BUDGETARY PROVISION PROBLEMS

29 Low annual budgetary provision for the education sector. It is lower than 6% of the GDP. The free education policy was introduced to allow all the children in the country an equal opportunity to receive formal education. There for annual budgetary provision is very low for the higher education.

ECONOMICAL REGION PROBLEMS

30 The disparity between economical regions in higher education is another key problem that stimulus several adverse consequences in the secondary education system in Sri Lanka. such as unfair distribution of university facilities between government and private sectors. Because of that creates a huge competition among students for selecting university.

31 According to the reports of the Department of Census and Statistics there are about 300,000 students annually sit for the Advanced Level Examination and approximately only a sixty percent of them are qualified for the university entrance. Nevertheless, out of these qualified students just about 15% are selected to the state universities of Sri Lanka leaving the rest of the people (85%) losing their dream to enter state university education.

UPDATING PROBLEMS

32 There are big criticisms from many parties that the university curricular is not updated to suit with the changing world and Sri Lankan higher education is highly teacher centered rather than student centered limiting the opportunities for the students to engage in active and participatory learning process. In many cases, policy makers on higher education at the national level have taken some satisfactory efforts to bring the university curricular suit to the modern world. such as online education system, projects etc.

STUDENTS HEALTH PROBLEMS

33 Poor physical and mental health of the university students due to heavy workload, competition, and pressure from the parents for getting better results is another issue that has not been cared and concerned by the policy makers. not giving enough vacation to relax mind is another biggest problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT OF COVID – 19

IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

34 Beginning in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems throughout the world, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94 percent of the world's student population, up to 99 percent in low and lower-middle income countries. Many schools made alternative plans during the pandemic, leading to a variety of in-person, hybrid, and online-only plans, which led to challenges for many students, teachers, and families including children with learning disabilities and those learning in a language that is not their native one. As of September 30, 2020, there were 27 countries that had localized school closures.

35 In the United States, an estimated 55.1 million students were forced to cease in-person instruction as of April 10, 2020. A switch to a virtual learning experience is particularly challenging for families that cannot afford the proper technology, such as laptops, printers, or a reliable Internet connection. When schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate the learning of children at home and can struggle to perform this task. This is especially true for parents with limited education and resources. Students who require special education found it difficult to progress through the curriculum without tools and support that they require.

36 The mental health of students has been greatly impacted due to the pandemic. It is estimated that three in ten participating in school at home have had their emotional and mental health negatively impacted. Similarly, the social lives of students have also been upended and this has been detrimental to the health of students worldwide which has also negatively impacted educational quality. This will be an issue for years to come. COVID-19 has shone a light on opportunity gaps and it will be up to educators and policymakers to direct the necessary resources to mitigating them in the coming years.

LOCAL IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

37 In this context, the Sri Lankan government closed all the universities in the country on 12th March 2020 and suspended all academic activities (Adaderana, 2020). The government also imposed a nationwide curfew on 20th March 2020 (Newsfirst,2020). During this period, Sri Lanka's higher education sector faced various challenges. The closure of fifteen national universities and other higher education institutions ultimately affected the teaching and learning activities of students.

38 University admission, assessment and examination, graduation ceremonies, recruitment and promotion activities were temporarily postponed. Employees working in higher education institutions also faced severe challenges in receiving their salaries and other allowances on time because of the continuous curfew. In this situation, the government announced a strategy called Work from Home, and this move forced university teachers and other staff to carry out their academic and administrative work from their respective homes. Most of the universities started their academic and other administrative activities with the help of technological devices and applications during the period of work from home. The introduction of online education instead of the traditional academic model is viewed as a structural change in the higher education sector in Sri Lanka. This kind of online education is new for most of the academics and administrative staff of Sri Lankan universities.

39 For a long time, face-to-face teaching and learning process has been practiced in Sri Lankan universities. Thus, it is seen as a difficult one to break this tradition and carry out educational activities in an innovative online environment. Many universities have been reluctant to launch online educational activities, and university teachers and administrators have also encountered complications in undertaking their duties. Teachers, students and other staff who have a lack of skill in modern tools and technology have faced several challenges. The government took several measures to reduce the cost incurred to teachers and students engaging in online educational activities.

40 As part of this, universities used their module-based learning management systems, and the government facilitated the continuation of academic activities using the Zoom app through the Lanka Education and Research Network (LEARN). Some web providers offered free online access to universities. The government lifted the nationwide curfew at the end of April 2020 (The Siasat Daily, 2020). Subsequently, the University Grants Commission permitted universities to re-commence their academic activities on 6th July adhering health guidelines. However, online education has presently become a significant part of the educational process of Sri Lankan universities.

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CHAPTER SIX

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

- 41 Sri Lankan tertiary education system consists of
- a 15 universities,
 - b 7 post graduate institutes,
 - c 10 other higher education institutes
 - d 1,138 technical and vocational education and training institutes. All of them are public institutions.
 - e The Board of Investment (BOI) has given license to award degrees for 51 institutions.

STRENGTHS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

42 Literacy rate is very high in Sri Lanka (2012- 91.2%- male 92.6% and female 90.0%) and youth literacy rate stands at 97%. In 2012, it was 99% for female and 96% for male Sri Lanka has achieved universal primary education and gender parity in education. The Primary Enrolment rate Is 99.4% for male and 99% for female. Sri Lanka has a score of 0.691 on the Human Development Index, ranking at 97 of 187 countries and this is mainly due to its free education and health policy (UNICEF, 2011).

43 In 2012, both male and female attendance in primary education is 94%, in secondary education female attendance rate is higher than that of male (female 61% and male 56%). As a result of free education policy female enrollment in universities has increased up to 65% in 2011. Sri Lanka ranked at the 16th place at the Global Gender Gap Index Report in 2013. Sri Lanka has achieved the third Millennium Development Goal of eliminating disparities in enrollment in education in primary, secondary and higher education because of the free education policy implemented over many decades.

44 Sri Lanka literacy rate for 2018 was 91.71%, a 0.19% decline from 2017. Sri Lanka literacy rate for 2017 was 91.90%, a 0.49% decline from 2016. Sri Lanka literacy rate for 2016 was 92.39%, a 1.21% increase from 2010. Sri Lanka literacy rate for 2010 was 91.18%, a 0.62% increase from 2008.

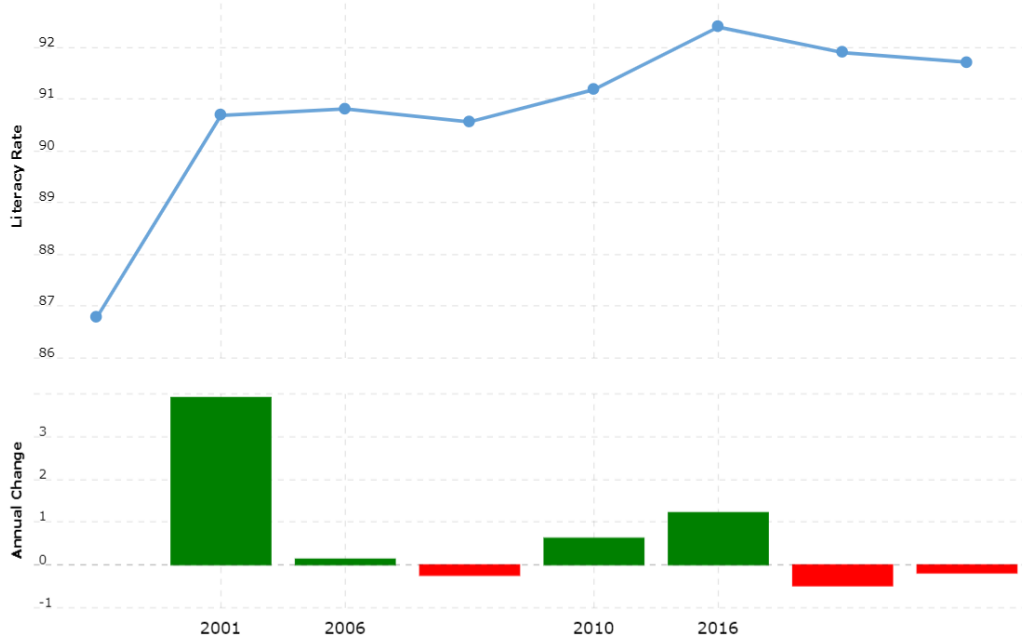


figure 1: Sri Lanka literacy rate up to 2018

45 Sri Lanka Unemployment rate, 1991 - 2020: For that indicator, data for Sri Lanka from 1991 to 2020. The average value for Sri Lanka during that period was 7.59 percent with a minimum of 3.88 percent in 2012 and a maximum of 14.66 percent in 1991. The latest value from 2020 is 4.84 percent. For comparison, the world average in 2020 based on 181 countries is 8.15 percent.

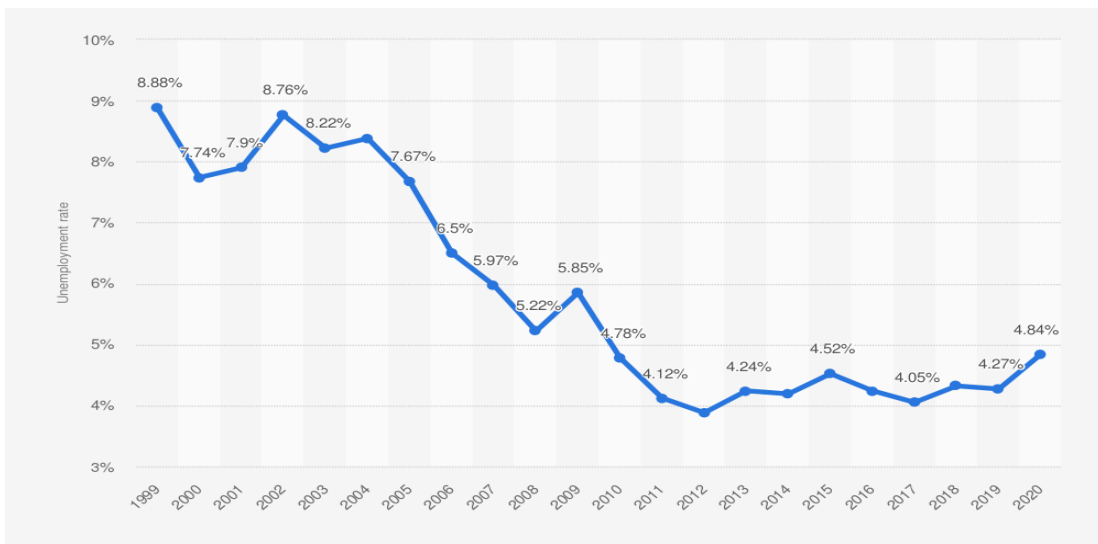


Figure 2 : Sri Lanka Unemployment rate up to 2020

46 Due to the higher education system more undergraduates could be able to apply for new job vacancies than the past. This is a good trend of development of higher education sector.

WEAKNESSES OF EDUCATION SYSTEM

47 Weaknesses of current education system can be divided into several areas.

a Students Did Not Participate in Higher Educational Institutions

Those who passed GCE O/L comprise 18.8% while those with GCE A/L was 9.4%. Only 1.8% of the total student population above age 25 record attainment of a degree. After the school education they has not participate in higher education. Because,

- a lack of food and clothing,
- b needs for the child's earnings for the family,
- c distance to universities and inadequate transport,
- d difficult terrain and frequent illness.
- e quality of education,
- f availability of lecturers
- g opportunity cost of higher education

b Lack of Opportunities to Enter The Higher Educational Institutions

I Sri Lanka has 15 public universities and only around 9% of students who sit for the GCE AL examination can obtain admission to universities as at present. This examination is highly competitive, and only about around 58% of the candidates qualifies for university admissions. (at least minimum S" pass for all 3 subjects) but, in that 58% only 9% students selected for higher education. It shows that the balance 90% of the students do not have a clear path to continue their formal education due to limited opportunities in the public universities and limited access to private sector universities, due to considerations of both affordability and quality education.

II According to the University Grant Commission Statistics- 2012 more than 79% of students who are eligible but not selected to enter higher education institutions. Compared to other developing countries, the number of students enrolled in higher education is extremely low in Sri Lanka. However, Sri Lanka is leaving out hundreds of thousands of young students from obtaining higher education. Those who cannot enter public universities have few options for pursuing higher education and only those from highly affluent families can obtain university education outside the country.

III There are around 30 degree awarding private institutions currently functioning in the country, but successive government have not recognized them as higher education institutions and there is also no

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proper quality assurance, quality control or monitoring mechanism to measure the quality of the programs offered by such institutes. Though the government tried several times to pass the Private University Bill with the objective of introducing a legal framework for such institutions due to protests came from various groups it has been shelved.

d Lack of English Language Skills

In Sri Lanka, English is taught as a second language up to GCE A/L in all schools. Only 10% of students achieve a targeted level of mastery in English language skills while English writing skills are virtually non-existent with only 1% of students exhibiting the required skills level. In higher education English is the first language. Every book, articles and other notes in higher education are written by English. including lectures also held in English.

e Less Spending on Education

Sri Lanka currently devotes a comparatively small percentage of its government expenditure towards education. Sri Lanka's public expenditure on education has remained at between 2-3 % of GDP. In 2005, it was 2% and after it has become 1.9% and in 2013 it is 1.7% of GDP. Sri Lanka's public investment in education is much less than the average of 4% spent by lower middle-income countries. General education which includes basic and secondary levels absorbs the largest share of total expenditure followed by higher education and technical and vocational education. The share of expenditure for primary is 32%, secondary 50%, higher education 14% and Technical and vocational education 3% (World Bank, 2005). Currently Sri Lanka is considered as a middle-income country but her public spending on education is smaller than the average for middle income countries.

f Mismatch Between the Labor Market Supply And Demands

The unemployment rate among Arts graduate is very high in Sri Lanka compare with the normal rates. Unemployment rates of secondary and university graduates in the 19-29 group ranges between 26% and 34%. Sri Lanka's recent economic growth has not been matched by growth in employment. And yet there are many jobs that go unfilled as employers cannot find workers with the relevant. An absence of linkages to the private sector has led universities to be too academic and impractical, demonstrated by the high levels of unemployment among university graduates. Several recent academic studies have shown that the Sri Lankan higher education system has not changed to meet the evolving demands of globalizing world.

g The Delayed in Admission

Due to university strikes and demonstrations etc. almost every year the scheduled date for new admissions is postponed. after finish A/L and after getting results students can fill the admission for universities but they can enter the university after 2 or more years.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL THE SECTORS

EVALUATE AND RESTRUCTURE THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

48 Formulate a new overarching Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, with integrated responsibilities of Early Childhood & General Education, Vocational & Technical Education, Higher Education and Education Reforms. The Ministry should function under a cabinet minister and three state/deputy Ministers may be appointed to oversee each sector respectively.

49 Develop a National Policy for Education, and review and amend existing legislation to facilitate the implementation of key recommendations made by the PTF, including, but not limited to, the University Act and the existing Education Ordinance.

50 Establish an independent Authority/Task Force to oversee reforms until necessary amendments are made to existing legislation. The National Institute of Education will fall under the purview of this authority and will focus on teacher training and the quality assurance of learning content and classrooms.

51 In order to ensure integration between the national and provincial levels, the Provincial Secretary of Education should be assigned broad functions related to overall provincial initiatives, while Provincial Directors of Education are assigned the implementation and monitoring of national education policies at the district, divisional and school levels.

FACILITATE AN INTEGRATED VALUE CHAIN AT A UNIVERSITY

52 Study, revise and establish multiple progression pathways with cross-linkages across key education sectors. c. Ensure linkages between educational content at all levels and employment market demands, by updating all curricula in line with global best practices and industry skills requirements that are conducive towards the creation of a 21st century workforce.

53 An integrated LMS system across all sectors of education, and supported by trusted external parties, such as the Lankan Education and Research Network (LEARN). It should contain the following elements, among others:

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- a Grade and syllabus specific guidelines and learning content
- b An engagement platform allowing virtual classes to be conducted
- c A portal for student assessments, grading and provision of feedback
- d A link to a digitized version of the ‘Skills passport’ (elaborated on in a later section)
- e An e-Library facility and repository of digital content
- f A provision to audit digital courses and earn certificates (possibly for a payment) without being enrolled.

54 Ensure that students receive mandatory career guidance at key stages in their schooling career. Guidance counsellors must be trained to identify students’ skills and interests and equipped to guide students and parents/guardians to potential study and career pathways accordingly. e. Introduce a comprehensive system for monitoring and collaborating with private and international schools.

REVISE CURRICULA AND LEARNING METHODOLOGIES

55 Establish an independent institution for curriculum development and assessment, as a subsidiary apex body under the National Education Commission, tasked with updating all curricula as per global best practices and industry requirements.

56 Facilitate ‘blended learning’ techniques, such that students are exposed to both traditional and digital learning avenues, while allowing the incorporation of a range of teaching methods and student engagement within the classroom.

57 Introduce blended learning concepts, such as ‘lipped classrooms’, whereby students are introduced to content at home, perhaps digitally, and then practice working through it at school, encouraging independent study and student-led research.

58 Ensure that STEAM education is incorporated into all classrooms as an overarching principle. Elements of these subject streams should be incorporated into core subject areas.

COMPREHENSIVE AND STANDARDIZED TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

59 Streamline learning pathways to gain accreditation as a teacher, such that the equivalent of a Bachelor’s in Education is required to teach. ‘Teacher Service’ established as a core government service, to give it its due recognition. Develop guidelines for the training and qualification of pre-school teachers in line with NEC and NIE requirements, focusing on provision for the protection and well-being of children, development of personal and social skills, as well as ensuring inclusivity for children with special needs. Teachers to compulsorily receive training on the following aspects:

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- a Digital tools and digitalizing content on the integrated LMS.
- b Alternative teaching methodologies to accommodate varied learning styles and abilities, to ensure an inclusive education – for instance, ensuring that students with learning disabilities are identified and catered towards.
- c The provision of psychosocial support to students.

RE-DEPLOY INVESTMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- 60 Evaluate past and current budget allocations and redirect funding based and evaluated returns on investment in education and on need.
- 61 Limit reliance on donor funding, with a renewed focus on receiving loans that have an inbuilt layer of accountability, as opposed to outright grants.
- 62 Conduct a digital needs assessment, including, but not limited to, a survey of the availability of equipment, connectivity within school premises, connectivity within the education zone, and connectivity among students and teachers.
- 63 Procurement and distribution of required devices and ensuring access to Internet connections for all educators and students, including a loan facility for students.
- 64 Introduce a textbook management system, in aid of reducing printing and environmental costs.

INCULCATING VALUE SYSTEMS WITHIN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

- 65 Empower law enforcement authorities to handle cases of ragging and violence
- 66 Ensure all educational institutions have access to trained counsellors or therapists, to ensure mental well-being and student welfare.
- 67 Evaluate and revise current measures of success within the education system, including, but not limited, to evaluations of teachers, principals and the regular review of learning content. Based on these measures of success, design an integrated quality assurance system that cuts across all sectors of education, and establish KPIs that also take into account the uptake of soft skills and the practical applicability of knowledge and skills learnt.
- 68 Establish a common dashboard for monitoring success across a range of KPIs.
- 69 Place less weightage on final, summative examinations and ensure increased emphasis on formative, potentially project-based assignments that evaluate critical thinking, analytical skills and other competencies throughout the year.

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70 Introduce mindfulness education across all schools and learning institutions in aid of encouraging students to be self-aware, focused, and empathetic. Globally, we see an increased emphasis on consciousness-based approaches to education that draw on practices such as yoga and meditation. Mindfulness practices are often introduced to students at the preschool level and continue to be built into classroom practices thereafter.

71 Eliminate any and all forms of harassment and violence within the education system:

- a Strictly implement the Prevention of Ragging Act
- b Introduce compulsory student mentorship programs and programs to redress ragging

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING

72 Ensure alignment of course content with industry expectations and that students are equipped with soft skills, critical thinking, analytical and communications skills in addition to technical expertise.

73 Expand and update the current course catalogue to reflect changes in the work environment and to ensure that students are equipped with future-it competencies and technical training.

74 Provide students with opportunities to pursue on-the-job training and gain work experience which would count as course credits.

75 Establish and promote the “One Assessment-One e-Certificate” concept to unify all TVET qualifications. Work with the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) to provide recognition to students pursuing TVET or work placements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HIGHER AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

76 Streamline university application and entrance processes with a view to minimize delays in A/L marking systems and university admission.

- a Develop an alternate, more equitable criteria for selection into university, as opposed to the Z-score.
- b Administer digitally delivered and standardized courses in IT and English in the interim period prior to university, as prerequisite and non-evaluated courses.
- c Synchronize the academic calendars of all universities.

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- 77 Ensure universities offer interdisciplinary studies and learning pathways.
- a Facilitate options for selecting non-core/foundation subjects from a common basket of subjects.
 - b Ensure that these subjects form part of the compulsory credit requirement.
 - c Make industrial placements/internships a compulsory non-GPA course in all degrees.
- 78 Upgrade and (where required) establish HEIs to ensure all students have access to obtaining degree-level qualifications.
- a Expand university intakes by establishing university colleges/campuses affiliated to established universities
 - b Institute reforms to facilitate the expansion of the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). Develop regional and district wide study centers to ensure wider access to courses, while facilitating their autonomy. - Offer interdisciplinary and inter-faculty programs that are employment-oriented and suitable for students with diversified qualifications and experiences.
 - c Establish a virtual university under the UGC, in collaboration with existing universities.
 - d Upgrade nursing schools to degree-awarding institutions.
 - e Establish a HEI dedicated towards sports education.
- 79 Encourage and develop students research capabilities. All degree programs to include modules requiring independent study. Mandatory requirement for students to write and submit research papers as part of their coursework. Create opportunities for students to participate in faculty/university-wide research symposiums. Establish student research grants and awards for independent research. Encourage multi-disciplinary research.
- 80 Increase exposure to global educational practices. Initiate discussions with international agencies, institutes, and course providers such as Khan Academy, Coursera, edX, Udacity, Udemy to offer courses developed by world-class universities to Sri Lankan students, as well as to offer courses developed by Sri Lankan academics to local and global audience. Develop a national Open Educational Resource (OER) policy, to allow academics to alter and adapt materials to the local context and into their curriculum. This repository could also form the foundation for online courses offered by the university for a wider (paying) audience. Develop an Education Hub for foreign universities to set up facilities locally, with the Government providing basic facilities, utilities and infrastructure, as well as land. Develop an International Student Visa System to attract foreign students and establish a work-study system whereby students are bonded by the university to work in local industries and positively contribute to the Sri Lankan economy, in order to pay of loans.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NURSING EDUCATION SECTOR

81 Reform the administration and oversight of Nurses Training. Establish a university for nursing education under the Ministry of Higher Education. Acquire all 16 Nursing Training Schools (NTS) as faculties of the proposed university. The Ministry of Higher Education is required to ensure curriculum development and evaluation, for instance ensuring that training courses are developed as per revised University Act and SLQF. The University Grants Commission will be required to:

- a Ensure an adequate number of undergraduates are enrolled in the nursing degree programs that will be offered by the proposed National University of Nursing.
- b Oversee Quality Assurance of the undergraduate and postgraduate study courses.
- c Coordinate a common component for the final exit examination to enable a common merit list for service employment and placement within the Ministry of Health.

82 Nursing Training Schools to award a qualification equivalent to a bachelor's degree

83 Drive Legislative Reforms to Regulate Nursing Education and Practices. Amend the SLNC act to accommodate the registration of nursing graduates of the proposed National Nursing University. Ensure that all nursing education institutes comply with the standards prescribed by the SLNC in order to register their graduates or diplomates to practice. Re-establish the Sri Lanka Nursing Council as a statutory body with representation of health care and nursing professionals and the public.

84 Upgrading methodology for registered nurses already qualified from NTS Mandate a Top-up Degree program with module system/ distance learning that also accommodates part time students. A new course structure to be established in compliance with requirements for obtaining a SLQF level 6; minimum 120 credits for four years.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

85 In this paper we have depicted the major aspects of higher education policy of Sri Lanka and the way forward of it, addressing the main key policy issues identified to achieve a great success in the way forward of Sri Lankan higher education.

86 Considering the overall higher education systems in both global and local environments, it can be identified that it directly contributes to the development of a country with providing an equitable right to every child to access and benefits from education and making a responsible and resourceful citizen to the society.

87 It is very significant that Sri Lanka has a free education system for primary, secondary and tertiary education with gender equality and also it has been identified that the overall literacy rate of Sri Lanka holds a considerable higher value with respect to the global world. Hence the problems in classroom, administrative, economic and social backgrounds can be mentioned as emerging challenges in this free education system of our country.

88 The current situation of the whole world with covid 19 pandemic has adversely affected to the higher education system of Sri Lanka and it can be identified that it is difficult to break the traditional education system of face-to-face teaching and learning and carry out educational activities in an innovative online environment in a country like Sri Lanka.

89 When considering the private and government sector, higher education has become a competitive enterprise and the transformations taking place in the world is unprecedented in its scope and diversity. With this global environment, the higher education system of Sri Lanka also needs to be adjusted itself to face the challenges that have emerged as a result of national and global factors.

90 Education system of a country plays a crucial role in achieving a sustainable and integral development and it is treated as the backbone of any civilized society. Producing a competent graduate, professional or technical expert and a responsible citizen enriched with social and cultural values which eventually enhances the quality of a country's workforce is the major role of the higher education policy.

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CHAPTER NINE

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