

Chapter 4: Promoting Life Skills and Life Long Learning

4.1 Introduction

EFA Goal 3 defined life skills as “*essential learning tools and basic learning content required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities...to improve the quality of their lives...*” A decade after, the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action revisited the definition, expanding the life skills approach to include the acquisition of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills through the Four Pillars of Learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and with others, and learning to be. Goal 3 envisages the development of **basic skills** such as literacy and numeracy which enables a person to acquire the skill of learning to learn; **Psycho-social skills** that help to develop one’s personality to successfully face problems and challenges confronted in day to day living and **practical & technical skills** which equip a person to earn a living. Based on this definition, life skills are broken down by typology of skills into **basic skills, psycho-social skills and practical/contextual skills** for this assessment purpose. However, it is difficult to measure progress towards this EFA goal because of lack of nationally accepted definitions, concepts, clarity, models and frameworks at the national level.

4.2 Life Skills in Sri Lankan Context

The strategies adopted to reach the objectives of the Goal 3 are the designing of a curriculum appropriate for imparting **basic skills, psycho-social skills and technical and vocational skills (Lifelong skills)** in the schools and ensuring the delivery of that curriculum by competent teachers with the required quality inputs in order to maintain the standard of quality.

The school curriculum is designed by the National Institute of Education to achieve the National Goals identified by the National Education Commission in its report of 1992 and subsequently modified by the report of 2003. The NEC has also formulated a set of basic competencies to be integrated in the national curriculum, which lead to the realisation of the national goals.

Acquisition of skills in the learning process takes place through the total school curricula comprising the academic subjects as well as the co-curricular activities or the hidden curriculum. However, there are a few subjects which have been introduced into the curriculum especially to cater to three areas of skills that have been identified above.

4.2.1 Basic Skills

Basic skills in literacy and numeracy are mainly imparted through language and mathematics. These subjects are compulsory for all children up to the 11 years of school education. At the primary stage of education there is an integrated curriculum implemented through child centred activity based methodologies. Pupils are expected to learn by doing and there are many opportunities to develop their practical skills suited to the age group.

4.2.2 Psychosocial Skills

Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as *the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life*. According to WHO life skills are set of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills. Life skills-based education is integral to ensuring that every child and adolescent is able to reach to his or her full potential, and

contribute positively to the development of self, family, community and society. The following 10 generic skills are considered as core competencies to achieve these objectives:

1. Problem solving
2. Decision making
3. Critical Thinking
4. Creative Thinking
5. Effective Communication
6. Interpersonal relationships
7. Self Awareness
8. Empathy
9. Coping with Emotions
10. Coping with Stresses

Life Skills Based Education generally applied in various aspects of life such as in the context of health and social events like human relationships, learning about social influences on behaviour and learning about rights and responsibilities, as well as being thought in the context of health problems. It can be utilized in many content areas, issues topics and subjects such as in prevention of drug abuse, sexual violence, teenage pregnancy, STD, HIV/ AIDS, suicide etc. This can be extended further in to consumer education, environmental education, livelihood education and income generation. In short, it empowers young people to take positive actions to protect themselves and to promote health and positive relationships.

Usually life skills are exercised in combination, and hence, cannot be measured in isolation. National Education Commission Report (1997) has pointed out that developing a whole person who is physically, mentally and socially well balanced is one of the main objectives of education. But, many educationists are of the opinion that the prevailed education system has failed to provide the competencies needed to produce

such well balanced personalities. With a view to fulfilling this psycho social requirement, the NIE decided to introduce a new subject to the school curriculum. The National Policy Framework on General Education in Sri Lanka in 2003 has given directions for the development of life skills and lifelong learning opportunities but there are no clear policy statements on this.

In Sri Lanka the term life competencies is used instead of life skills because it is already being used to name technical/ vocational skills in the school system. With the introduction of psycho social skills into the school curriculum as life competencies, the teachers, In-Service Advisors (ISAs) as well as education administrators are confused on the term “competency” which is used to explain different educational outcomes.

4.2.3 Technical and vocational skills

The educational policymakers of Sri Lanka have recognised the need to provide a good general education including an orientation to the world of work which could fit the output from the school system to the work opportunities that are available. What is expected from the schools is not vocational training, but a good all-round education.

4.3 Life Skills at School

4.3.1 Primary level

Under the 1998 reforms, it is expected that, in the primary school years, the child will acquire certain basic competencies. These are:

- Competencies in communication
- Competencies relating to the natural, social and artificial environment
- Competencies in ethics and religion

- Competencies relating to the use of leisure, enjoyment and recreation
- Competencies in learning: learning how to learn

Primary Education will consist of three key stages.

Key Stage 1	Grades 1 and 2
Key Stage 2	Grades 3 and 4
Key Stage 3	Grade 5

Three elements; guided play, activity, desk work will go into each of the stages. There will be a stage wise transition in the proportions of the three elements used in the teaching/ learning process.

At Key Stage 1, a greater part of the time will be spent on guided play learning through activities and components of activity and lesser amount of deskwork. At Key Stage 2 the three approaches will be given equal prominence, while at Key Stage 3, deskwork will dominate. Concepts relating to stabilisation of morals, inculcation of values, development of tolerance, appreciation of other social groups and cultures, and living in harmony will run as unifying threads through all three Key Stages.

Class-based assessment frameworks have been developed, and materials and training provided for assessment of competency levels, throughout the learning-teaching process. The main objective of this programme is to provide

basic and essential education for all children irrespective of their learning difficulties.

Provision has been made to train teachers to conduct teacher-made tests and achievement tests.

- Forty learning competencies in key stage one
- Fifty two learning competencies in key stage two; and
- Fifty five learning competencies in key stage three have been identified.

4.3.2 Secondary level

National Education Commission Report (1997) has pointed out that developing a whole person who is physically, mentally and socially well balanced is one of the main objectives of education. Acquisition of skills in the learning process takes place through the total school curricula comprising the academic subjects as well as the co-curricular activities or the hidden curriculum. There are a few subjects which have been introduced into the curriculum especially to cater to three areas of skills that have been identified above.

Life Competencies, and Health & Physical Education at junior secondary level are the two subjects which directly take care of the psycho-social skills. These two subjects are compulsorily taught to pupils in grades six to nine and Health and physical education is continued for two more years in grades 10 and 11 as an optional subject for GCE O/L examination.

Table 4.1: Subjects related to life skills at secondary level

Subject	Basic skills	Psycho-social skills	Technical and Vocational Skills	Junior Secondary level	Senior Secondary level	Comments
Religion		✓		C	C	
First National Language and Literature	✓	✓		C	C	Sinhala or Tamil
Mathematics	✓			C	C	
English	✓			C	C	
Science	✓			C	C	
History	✓			C	C	
Geography	✓			C	G1	
Life Competences and Civic Education	✓	✓	✓	C		
Aesthetic subject		✓		C	G2	One out of 13 choices
Practical and Technical skills		✓	✓	C		
Health and Physical Education		✓		C	G3	Not compulsory for senior secondary level
Second National Language	✓	✓		C	G1	Tamil or Sinhala Not compulsory for senior secondary level
Civic and Governance	✓	✓	✓		G1	Replaces Life Competences and Civic Education of junior level; not compulsory
Entrepreneurship			✓		G1	
Classical or Modern Language		✓			G1	
Business and Accounting			✓		G1	
Information and Communication Technology	✓		✓		G3	
Agro and food Technology	✓		✓		G3	
Fisheries and food Technology	✓		✓		G3	
Design and Technology	✓	✓	✓		G3	
Arts and Crafts		✓	✓		G3	
Home Economics	✓				G3	
Electronic typing and shorthand	✓		✓		G3	
Communication and media education	✓	✓	✓		G3	

Source: Circulars of the MoE

Secondary level Science and a practical subject have been made compulsory for all students. At the Junior Secondary level Practical and Technical skills has been made

compulsory. A broad range of practical skills are imparted under this subject covering five areas, namely:

- agriculture,
- food technology
- basic technology
- graphics
- business

It is expected that a student who successfully study this subjects will have a broad idea of the work opportunities available and the basic skills required to undergo further training in the field that one would wish to pursue in the future.

After the completion of this course the student is given the opportunity to select one technical subject from on array of subjects depending on one's aptitudes and interests. This subject is followed for a period of two years leading to the GCE O/L examination after which 50% of the students leave the school system either looking for work or further training in technical/vocational areas.

4.3.3 Senior Secondary level

Considering the fact that only 15% of this number have places available in the local universities and proceed to pursue higher education and another 10% obtaining places at professional colleges such as teaching and nursing more than 75% have to look for other areas such as technical education. Therefore, the government has introduced technology subjects comprising

- Agro Based Technology
- Bio Technology
- Textile Technology
- Electronic Technology
- Mechanical Technology

The students could select up to three subjects from this list if they wish.

In 2004 the MoE changed the theme for life competency subject and it was integrated with the Civic subject. Availability of trained ISAs and teachers and teaching learning materials

like teacher guides, training modules and student reading materials are amongst other strengths in life skills education in the school system.

Life skills is the term used elsewhere in the world to explain psycho-social competencies but in Sri Lanka the term life competencies is used instead of life skills because it is already being used to name technical/vocational skills in the school system.

There should be clear-cut definitions and clarifications for the terms, basic competencies, psychosocial skills-(life competencies/life skills) and practical/functional/technical /manual skills used in the education system of Sri Lanka to solve this issue.

4.3.4 Challenges at school level:

- No proper teacher training
- Reluctance on teacher's part to change
- Prejudice on, of students and parents, regarding physical work
- Lack of awareness of the principals
- Insufficient funds for quality inputs
- No proper coordination between NIE, Zonal and School level, which are responsible for designing, monitoring and implementation respectively.
- Deficiencies in staff and resources
- Non trained teachers forced to teach the subjects

4.4 Poverty, Education and Unemployment

Poverty in Sri Lanka is an observable reality faced by most students leaving school after secondary education. In 2002, 21% of the rural population was classified as poor, compared with 6% of urban population.

Table 4.2: Incomes, Education, and Unemployment by Province (Year 2002)

Item	Province							
	Western	Southern	Sabaragamuwa	Central	Uva	North Western	North Central	Average
Percentage below poverty line	9.20%	23.60%	28.90%	20.80%	31.80%	22.30%	18.10%	19.20%
Average income (SLR)	4,187	2,598	2,036	2,623	2,528	2,717	2,437	3,056
Unemployment for GCE A/L qualified	11.30%	19.70%	21.00%	19.20%	20.70%	17.00%	24.00%	16.50%
Tertiary education enrolment rate	16.00%	10.00%	9.00%	8.00 %	7.00%	7.00%	6.00%	11.00%

Northern & Eastern provinces not included
 Source: Department of Census and Statistics

The Table 4.2 summarises income, education, and employment indicators in seven provinces. There is a positive correlation between the average income and tertiary education enrolment rate and a negative correlation between the average income and the unemployment rate for the population with A/L qualifications. Since many of the non-poor can obtain postsecondary education at fee-paying private institutions and secure white-collar jobs afterwards, a large percentage of the unemployed population with A/L qualifications and those who cannot pursue further education at the postsecondary level are likely to belong to poorer households. The government programs are expected to enrol students from the poorer households, who would not otherwise be able to pursue postsecondary level education, and to equip them with income-earning skills upon program completion.

4.5 Technical and Vocational Skill Development in the youth

Despite significant social achievements and having an educated and well trainable population, the unemployment rate among those educated to GCE O/L is 13% and to GCE A/L 17%, which are greater than the national

average of 8.5%. Most Sri Lankans (85%) live in rural areas. As of 2002, poverty was more prevalent in rural areas (25%) and in the estates (30%) than in urban areas (8%).

Over 300,000 GCE O/L and GCE A/L students annually are not able to continue their education because of limited places in colleges and universities. Grade-11 and -13 school leavers lack the skills to get jobs or be self-employed. Students who are unable to continue to grade 12 can directly apply for admission into technical education and vocational training (TEVT) programs, such as craft courses, where the entry requirement is GCE O/L pass. Those with GCE A/L passes in the required subjects can apply to programs leading to national diplomas or a degree in technological education. However, those who have GCE A/L, are less likely to acquire technical skills as their goal is to acquire traditional university education qualifications, while those with GCE O/L are more likely to go into trades and technical training.

From negative growth in 2001, Sri Lanka posted an annual average of 5.1% real economic growth rate in 2002 – 2004. The four largest economic sectors, by contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), are trade and hotels, manufacturing, agriculture, and transport

and communications. Over the past 6 years, the share of agriculture has decreased while that of transport and communications has trended up. Trade and services has remained steady at 25.7% and manufacturing at 17.4%, and grew faster than the general economy in 2003–2004. About 1 million Sri Lankans, or 15% of the employed, are abroad, most of who are working as unskilled and semiskilled workers, particularly as housemaids. Sri Lanka receives significant income in the form of remittances from them - 7.5% of GDP in 2004.

As the share of agriculture shrinks, available jobs are declining and pressure is growing to create jobs in other domestic sectors, which require higher skills. However, labour market data and projections point to short supply of technicians and associate professionals.

Projections for 2006–2007 indicate a total shortfall of over 14,000 positions in manufacturing, construction, transport and communications, and other sectors. Sri Lanka is unable to fill job orders for mid-level and highly skilled (and higher-wage) worker categories, whose share of the job orders is increasing. In 2003 alone, of the job orders for 20,980 skilled positions, only 8,987 were filled.

In the short term, the government is exploring the possibility of expanding skilled and semi-skilled foreign employment while, over the medium term, according high priority to manufacturing-based growth with increased foreign investment. This strategy requires highly trained labour, including technicians and technologists, who are in short supply.

4.5.1 Technical Education and Vocational Training System

The postsecondary courses of the technical education and vocational training (TEVT) system encompass various forms and levels of

training, which generally start after completion of the senior secondary level of schooling (grade 11, age 16 years) and go up to the diploma level. The first tier of training programs consists of certificate courses, which are designed to produce semi-skilled to crafts-level workers. These courses range in duration from 6 months to 4 years. The next tier of courses consists of diploma programs, which currently cater to students who passed their GCE advanced level (A/L) examination with relatively good marks in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. The objective of these programs is to prepare the students to become versatile technicians capable of performing a broad spectrum of work between that of an engineer and a skilled worker. These programs vary in duration from 3 to 4 years.

Certificate programs are offered by major public providers under the purview of the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MVTT). These major public providers

- National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA),
- Vocational Training Authority (VTA),
- Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET), and
- Ceylon-German Technical Training Institute.

The National Youth Services Council (NYSC) and other ministries also offer craft-level and certificate courses. DTET is the lead agency for technical education programs. About 320 public TEVT institutions throughout the country are operated by these major public TEVT providers. A number of ministries are involved in TEVT, either as part of their mandated functions or as part of serving their respective sectors. The distribution of other public TEVT providers and operators is as follows: 379 statutory bodies, 209 government

institutions, and 21 special institutions. The National Certificate in Engineering (Craft Courses) is the main technical education program. The full-time program is 2 years long. The curriculum has 60–70% practical content and 30–40% theoretical content, with credits given for each subject every semester.

Diploma programs are offered by at least four recognised public sector institutions:

- Technician Training Institute (TTI) under NAITA,
- Mattakkuliya Advanced Technical Institute with the Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technical Education (SLIATE),
- Institute of Technology -Moratuwa University (ITUM), and
- Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL).

Each of these institutions has its own curriculum. Generally, the curriculum is about 60% practical

content and 40% theoretical. After completing the program, students are awarded a diploma such as a Higher National Diploma in Engineering (HNDE), a National Diploma of Technology (NDT), a National Diploma in Engineering Sciences (NDES), or a Diploma in Technology (DTech).

4.5.2 International Involvement

There are a considerable number of International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs), Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies operating in the country, only 128 of which are registered with TVEC. These organisations mainly support farming, micro-enterprise development, or basic craft skills. On occasion, these organisations ask public providers to recognise their training programs.

Table 4.3: Education and Training System in Sri Lanka

Age	Year of Schooling	General Education Institute	General Edu Levels	Vocational Training and Technical Education Courses							
22	17	University	Degree					NAITA (NDES) 4 yrs	OUSL (DTech/ BTech) 4 yrs	SLIATE (HNDE) 3 1/2 yrs	ITUM (NDT) 3 yrs
21	16										
20	15										
19	14										
18	13	Senior Secondary School	GCE A/L	VTA (6m – 2 yrs)	NAITA Apprentice Training (1-3 yrs)	DTET (1-2 yrs)	CGTTI (1-4yrs)				
17	12		GCE O/L	Craft Level courses							
16	11										
15	10	Junior Secondary School	Secondary Education								
14	9										
13	8										
12	7										
11	6	Primary School	Primary Education								
10	5										
9	4										
8	3										
7	2										
6	1										

Source: TVEC

4.5.3 A National Multi-Sectoral Technical and Vocational Education and Training Policy

The Government is reducing unemployment and responding to the changing labour market by combining short- and medium-term strategies. In the short term, the government is exploring the possibility of expanding local and foreign skilled and semiskilled employment while, over the medium term, according high priority to manufacturing-based growth with increased foreign investment. This strategy requires highly trained labour, including technicians and technologists, who are in short supply.

In this regard Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) has planned to develop a national TVET policy framework incorporating the recent reforms with the focus on following subject areas with the assistance of German Technical Cooperation, GTZ.

Major subject areas of the proposed TVET Policy

1. Existing legislations (acts) governing the public TVET institutions
2. Economic and financial aspects of the TVET sector
3. Partnership opportunities, career guidance and social marketing activities
4. Effectiveness and relevance of the current HR policies and staff development in the TVET sector
5. Training delivery management
6. Existing qualification framework and linkages among different educational (General & Higher) streams (Pathways).

Quality assurance Policy

The policy on quality assurance, with its fifteen processes, is that the TVEC shall ensure a high quality TVET sector in Sri Lanka,

responsive to the requirements of industry, learners and other stakeholders. The national vocational qualification system shall incorporate quality qualifications as accepted by industry.

4.5.4 Programmes implemented in the area of skill development

The Skills Development Project (SDP) (2000-2006) was designed to improve the quality and relevance of skills training by reorienting the vocational training system through the introduction of competency-based training to ensure a closer partnership between vocational training institutions and the private sector. SDP is increasing both the efficiency and the competence in the provision of skills training programs.

SDP has:

- (i) developed a policy framework for the institutionalisation of competency based training (CBT);
- (ii) established a national CBT Learning Resources Development Centre (LRDC) at the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MVTT), Learning Resource Utilisation Centres (LRUC) and Career Guidance and Counselling (CGC) Centres at TCs and other centres;
- (iii) upgraded VTC facilities;
- (iv) developed 20 new courses and converted 25 existing courses into CBT format;
- (v) introduced entrepreneurship and basic management skills courses;
- (vi) developed skills standards up to craftsmen level; and
- (vii) established the NVQ Framework

Competency Based Training (CBT)

Format

A Competency Based Training system ensures that training and skill assessments or recognition is based upon standards required by industry. The standards here are “*National Skill Standards*”.

National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka (NVQSL)

National Vocational Qualifications Framework is the key element in unifying TVET. The national skill standards are prepared in consultation with the industry; National Quality Standards for Teaching and the assessment are using the competency based approach and national certification of learners & workers. The NVQSL is benchmarked with the systems of developed countries.

The main objectives of setting up of NVQ are:

1. To recognise vocational competencies locally and internationally
2. To match and cater vocational training and competencies with labour market demands
3. To recognise the certificates possessed through the NVQ system
4. To create an internationally competitive workforce in Sri Lanka

NVQ System and its components

The NVQ System and its components are as follows:

1. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) Framework;
2. National Competency Standards (NCS);
3. Competency Based Training (CBT) system;
4. Compulsory Accreditation of Tertiary and Vocational Educational Programs;
5. Quality Management System(QMS);
6. National Competency Based Assessment System;
7. Labour Market Information System (LMIS) and Management Information System (MIS); and
8. Student Support Services System.

National Learning Resource Development Centre (LRDC), Distribution of Learning and Resource Utilisation Centres (LRUCs) and Career Guidance and Counselling Centre (CGCC)

- National Learning Resource Development Centre, which was established under NITESL consists of three main divisions:
 - i. research & innovation
 - ii. development, production & dissemination; and
 - iii. training, monitoring & evaluation
- Services expected to be provided by LRUC include the following:

The main objective of LRUCs is to help improve the quality and standard of TVET at the district level through:

- (i) provisions of educational technology facilities and learning resources for trainers and trainees,
- (ii) dissemination of instructional materials produced or supplied by LRDC, and
- (iii) conducting training programs for trainers, trainees and clients on the use of modern training technologies and innovations to improve the quality of learning.

Altogether 50 LRUCs have been established under the project in 23 out of 25 districts covering all provinces (Refer Table in appendix).

- **Career Guidance and Counselling Centres (CGCCs)**

Career Guidance and Counselling Centres have been established to provide a range of services; career guidance, career counselling, job placement, referral system for further TV training, conduct programs, access to facilities, and provision of information materials.

Under the Project, 52 CGCCs have been established in 23 out of 25 districts covering all provinces.

CGCCs are also placing students for vocational and technical training and for jobs in industry on completion of their training programs. CGCCs are expected to send monthly progress reports about them. Almost all the Centres are satisfactorily functioning expect those few in North and Eastern provinces due to prevailing bad security situation.

4.5.5 Management Information System for TVET Sector

Management Information System (MIS) for the TVET Sector of Sri Lanka had been developed and strengthened under the Project to facilitate planning and decision-making process of the institutions. MIS Network covers 90 MIS nodes having the following institutional distribution; MVTT, TVEC, NITESL, 37 TCs of DTET, 27 VTCs of VTA, 13 VTCs of NAITA, and 10 centres of NYSC.

Labour Market Information System (LMIS)

LMIS, which was operating mostly on manual basis at TVEC, was strengthened under the Project with the objective of

- (i) advising on conduct of labour market surveys and analyzing labour market trends and
- (ii) developing a labour market monitoring system that includes human resource demand indicators and skill requirements of industry.

4.5.6 IT for Rural Youth

The main objectives of the establishment of training facilities in IT were to train GCE O/L and A/L qualified rural youth including women, in IT skills to reduce unemployment among educated youth, reduce poverty, and provide access to information systems and services in rural areas.

4.5.7 Technical Education Development Project (2007 – 2011)

TEVT at the technician and technologist levels is underdeveloped and cannot produce enough qualified skilled workers for either the domestic or foreign market. TEVT needs to expand access to training programs throughout the country while increasing the quality and market relevance of its programs; improving the qualifications and numbers of TEVT teaching-training personnel, particularly for technician and technologist programs; allocating financial resources to run the training programs and upgrading TEVT's social image.

The Technical Education Development Project (TEDP) supports the Government's strategy to close the gap between supply of and demand for technicians and technologists by

- (i) strengthening Colleges of Technology (CoTs) to offer technician education;
- (ii) strengthening the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MVTT) and relevant institutions to support a market-responsive technical education and vocational training (TEVT) system; and
- (iii) establishing the University of Vocational Technology (Univotec), which will focus on technical and technological education.

Also the Project will help the Government to establish Univotec, which will address the shortage of technologists and qualified instructors for TEVT, and provide an alternative education and career pathway for students and TEVT sector personnel, leading to a degree.

4.6 Financing Life Skills in Sri Lanka

Although Life skills are recognised as an important part of education, there is no separate allocation from the MoE budget towards it. Therefore it is not possible to fix an amount to the annual spending. Though other ministries are also financing related projects, the lack of coordinated planning may lead to inefficient usage of funds.

4.7 Policy and System Indicators

4.7.1. Health and Nutrition indicators

Health and wellbeing of a child is directly influencing the educational outcome.

Malnutrition is the main health factor still affecting the educational outcome of most of the Sri Lankan children especially in rural sectors. While 21% of children suffer from under nutrition, 14% are suffering from Iron deficiency or Anaemia. 10% of school going children are overweight especially in the urban sector. It is scientifically proven that students suffering from Iron deficiency or anaemia perform weakly in mathematics. There are many communicable, non-communicable health conditions and disabilities which can affect the educational achievements of school children. The health promoting school programme is a multi-faceted programme introduced to address these issues. The MoE is implementing this programme with the collaboration of the MoH at national, provincial, district and divisional levels. The main objectives of the programme are to formulate health promotion policies, to create health promotion knowledge and skills among students, to create favourable environment within the school and to obtain students and community participation at all levels of implementation.

Provision of mid day meal, fresh milk, and many other nutrition programmes implemented with the community participation in selected schools in deprived areas have shown improvement in nutritional status and school attendance.

National Survey among Adolescents (UNICEF 2004)

This survey is a sample survey covering adolescents between 10-19 years, jointly conducted by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health in 2004. This is the only recent study

covering these areas. No comparable study exists covering lower age groups. **The following indicators are mostly based on the findings of this survey.**

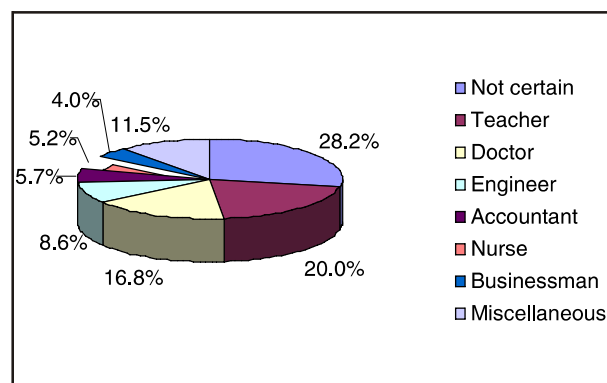
Life Quality Indicators among Adolescents

- Adolescents (10-19 years) account for the 3.7 million (19.7%) of population.
- More than 91.4% complete primary education, 56.2% receive an education beyond secondary level.
- Adolescents depend on parents for a considerably longer period. For many, dependence extends beyond adolescence in to youth making the parent-adolescent relationship an important factor that influences the physical and mental well being of adolescents.
- Today's adolescents have more opportunities to become better informed through a wide variety of communication channels available to them as well as through improved educational opportunities. This leads to high levels of aspirations, different attitudes and value systems. Yet, very few have adequate resources necessary to fulfil these aspirations and to materialise their attitudes and values.
- Death rate from all causes among adolescents and youth (15 – 24 yrs) is 278.8/100000 population (1996).
 - Homicides and injuries purposely inflicted by others (114.4/100000) were the leading causes of death
 - other forms of violence (47.4/100000), suicides and other self inflicted injuries (42.5/100000), and accidents (19.1/100000).
- The high incidence of homicides, other purposely inflicted injuries, and suicides reflects poor levels of psycho social competence among adolescents and youths.

Future Goals of adolescents

- About 28% of school-going adolescents were not certain of their future goals, further 36% were having aims to become traditionally popular professionals such as doctors, engineers, accountants, etc. Boys displayed more variety of choice compared to girls. Only about a quarter of respondents had considered their talents before they set their future goals³. The findings suggest that the stated ambitions are mostly governed by traditional societal norms that prevail in the country rather than decisions arrived through critical analysis by persons displaying self awareness. Lack of strong career guidance component in the school system is still a major gap in the development process⁴

Figure 4.1: Future Goals of adolescents in Schools



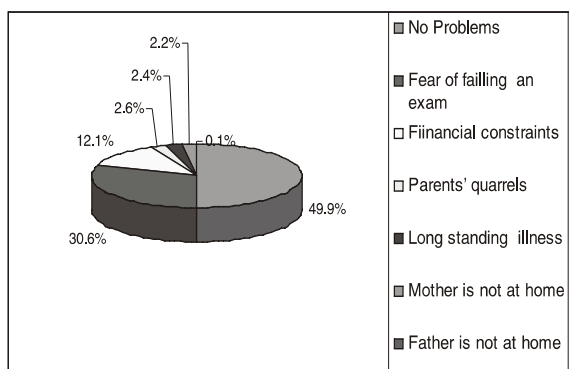
- Less than quarter (24%) chose the more realistic approach of selecting an alternative career path.
- 72% of out-of-school adolescents stated that theirs is to find an employment. 31% felt that they lacked vocational competencies for some kind of a job. 18% were unable to express a specific goal in life. Considering the current employment opportunities and the perceived lack of skills, it is likely that

there are considerable number of adolescents in society experiencing significant frustration and stress.

Wellbeing of adolescents

- About 14% of in-school and 21% of out-of-school adolescents did not like any attribute they possessed. On the other hand about 63% of in-school and 70% of out-of-school adolescents had some attribute that they did not like about themselves. Those who felt pressurised due to parents' and teachers' persistence of improved academic performance rose from 29% among early adolescents to 46% among late adolescents and no gender difference was observed in this regard. About 40% to 60% of adolescents seemed to react positively to the academic pressure exerted on them by their parents and teachers while about one fifth demonstrated negative reactions.
- Almost half of in-school adolescents and 75% of out-of-school adolescents had some key worry that bothered them. Fear of failing exam was the most commonly cited worry among school going adolescents, reflecting the competitive academic environment prevailing in Sri Lanka. Financial constraints, parental disharmony and absence of mother at home were the other worries identified by this group. Among out-of-school adolescents financial problems was the key worry, fear of not been able to find a job, not been able to study well and parental disharmony were the other worries stated. Key worries seemed to increase with age but there were no gender differences. As expected the proportions citing key worries declined with improving socio-economic status. Only 60% of adolescents positively concluded that their life in general was happy.

Figure 4.2: Main worries of In-school Adolescents

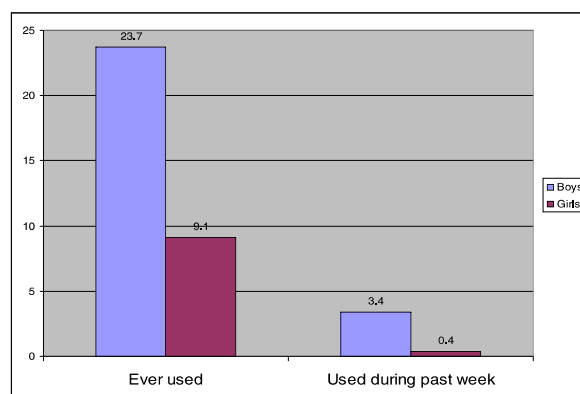


- Despite relatively unfavourable circumstances, many out-of-school adolescents said that they could confidently face problems that may occur in the future while 9% demonstrated poor coping skills.

Use of tobacco, alcohol and other addictive substances

- Prevalence of smoking to be 18% and 6%, respectively, among adolescent boys and girls who attend school. The prevalence increases rapidly from mid adolescence to late adolescence. Among boys, the ever use prevalence increased from 14% to 32% in the 14 – 16 year age group to in the 17 to 19 year age group.
- The ever smoking prevalence of out-of-school adolescents was 42% while the current smoking prevalence among them was 23%.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of adolescent boys and 10% of adolescent girls have ever used alcohol. The respective proportions for current alcohol use were 6% and 1% respectively.

Figure 4.3: Use of alcohol among adolescents in schools



- The most common type of alcohol used was reported as beer. The prevalence of ever taking alcohol among out-of-school adolescents was 34% while the current prevalence of alcohol use was 19%.
- About 2% of in-school adolescents and 4% of out-of-school adolescents admitted trying some form of mood altering drug.

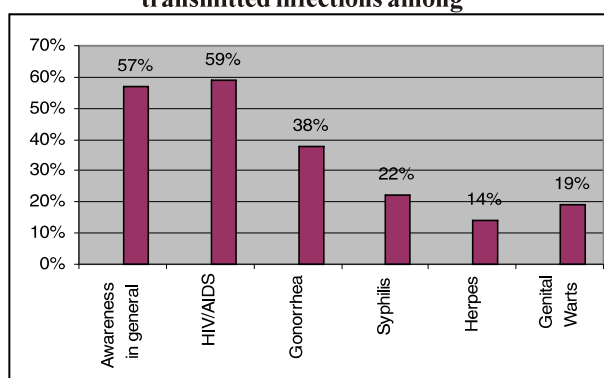
On the average, most adolescents started substance abuse behaviours such as smoking, use of alcohol and other abusive substances around 14 to 15 years of age. The most cited reason for initiation of smoking or use of alcohol was curiosity and the first smoke or drink was most frequently tried in the company of friends. It is seen that the influence of outsiders in initiation to smoking and use of alcohol has increased among the younger cohort (14-16 years) of adolescents, compared to older cohort (17 – 19 years). The attitudes towards smoking and alcohol use appear to be favourable among the majority. According to the Drug Abuse information hand book published by the National Dangerous Drug Control Board 2007 has shown that drug related arrests among 15- 29 age group has increased by 5 times during 2002-2006.

Sexually transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS

According to the UNAIDS global estimates Sri Lanka is still a low prevalent country for HIV. The current prevalence rate is less than 0.01%*. But the national surveillance statistics shows slow but progressive increase in reported cases. The cumulative number of HIV Positives reported from 1983 up to September 2007 is 965. *Majority of cases are reported from the age group between 20-39 and only about 150 HIV positives have been reported from the age group of 10-19. HIV AIDS prevention education was initiated in the education system in 1994 but still the knowledge on STD/HIV/AIDS among Sri Lankan adolescents was found to be poor. Only 57% of adolescents were aware of the existence of sexually transmitted diseases in general. The knowledge on transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS was relatively better compared to knowledge on other STDs. However, proportions of adolescent who had correctly answered the questions on HIV/AIDS never exceeded 50%. About 50% to 60% of adolescents demonstrated positive attitudes towards HIV/AIDS patients and attitudes improved with age.

The knowledge on HIV/AIDS and symptoms and signs of STDs was marginally higher among out-of school adolescents compared to those in schools reflecting a knowledge transfer through community channels. However, overall knowledge could not be considered satisfactory as the overall percentage of those with correct knowledge rarely exceeded 50%*.

Figure 4:4 Knowledge on common sexually transmitted infections among



Sexual Behaviour

A fair proportion of in-school adolescents appear to be sexually active. Among 14–19 years olds in school, 6% reported that they have experienced heterosexual intercourse while 10% reported having homosexual relations. As could be expected, there is a considerable gender variation in sexual experience. The prevalence of heterosexual experience was 14% among adolescent boys and that among girls was 2%. This raises the possibility of males being exposed to high risk sources such as commercial sex workers. Reports of sexual experience among out-of-school adolescents was the reverse of the pattern seen among the in-school population. Heterosexual relationships were commoner among this group (22%) while 9% reported homosexual experience. Of those who reported heterosexual experiences only 39% had used condoms. Although these percentages may appear rather small, they represent a sizable number in the population. Increasing trend in unprotected sexual relationships and poor knowledge on sexual and reproductive health has put young people at risk of having unwanted pregnancies, abortions and STIs and HIV infection.

Sexual Abuse

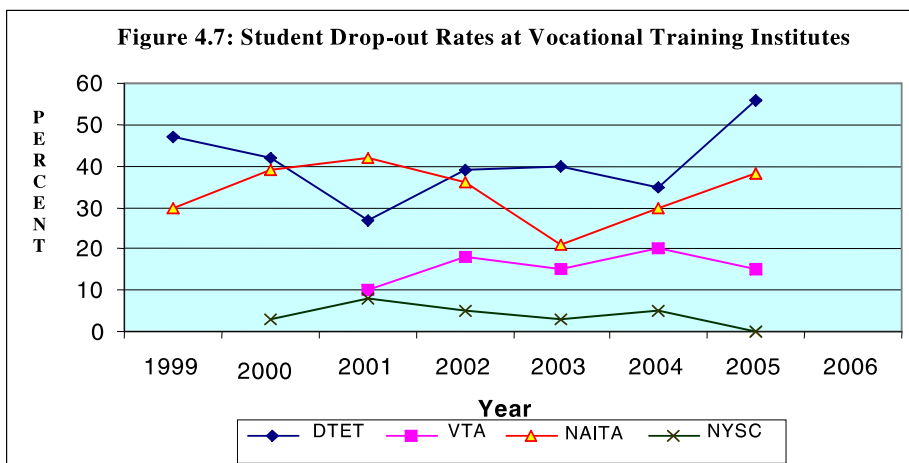
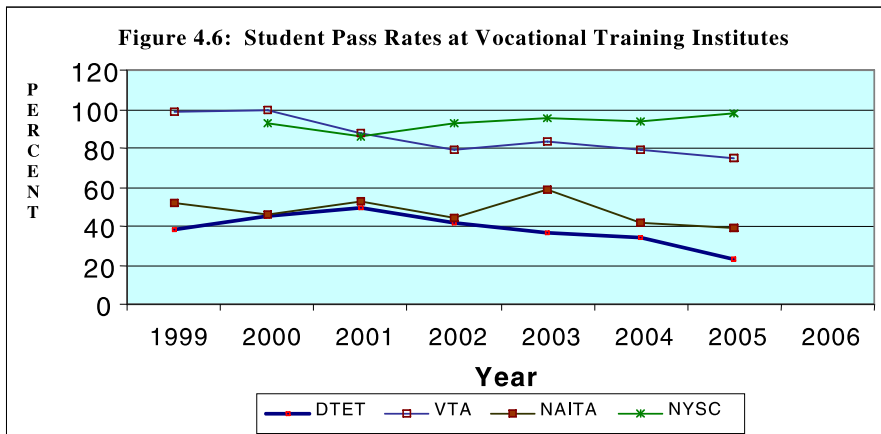
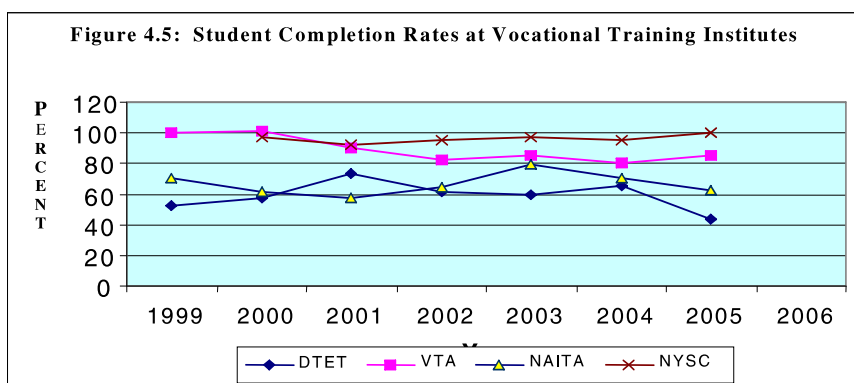
About 10% of early adolescents and 14% of mid and late adolescents in school admitted to have been sexually abused sometime in their lives. More boys (14%) than girls (8%) were abused during early adolescence while there was no gender difference seen in the proportions been abused during mid and late adolescence. Abuse seemed to be lowest in middle socio-economic quintiles. About 10%

of out-of-school adolescents reported being abused. In 92% of cases the perpetrator of abuse is a known person like a family member or a relative. Little more than quarter of early adolescents was aware of sexual abuse and awareness increased with age. The overall findings of the survey has highlighted the need of well planned evidence base psycho-social skills development intervention in the school system as well as for out of school youth.

4.7.2 Technical and Vocational

Education Indicators

Internal efficiency indicators



Source: TVEC

4.8 Gaps, inequalities and Recommendations

4.8.1 Implementation Gaps

- Poor understanding of the subject matter and misinterpretation between technical skills, psychosocial skills and basic educational competencies are the main weaknesses in the school system.
- The time allocated for this subject is not adequate and it has affected the effective teaching by using participatory methods. Most of teachers are still using traditional lecture methods for teaching purposes.
- Outcome or impact of Life Skills education is not tested in routine assessment process due to the lack of proper evaluation method or tools for this subject.
- Lack of proper coordination mechanism within the Ministry of Education or National Institute of Education, and between MoE, NIE, UN agencies and bilateral organisations has caused waste of resources barriers for development of the subject.
- Unavailability of a separate directorate and lack of systematic supervision and monitoring mechanism in place for this subject at all administrative levels are still observed as major gaps in the education system.
- There is no strong psycho-social competencies development program for out-of-school youth. National Youth Services Council and Plantation Human Development Trust are having Life skills development programmes with a limited coverage. Sri Lanka Red Cross Society and few NGOs are conducting Life competency development programmes in the conflict affected areas but the coverage is not adequate to reach all affected children and young people.

4.8.2 TVET System Gaps

- Postsecondary higher technical education is relatively underdeveloped. Only a limited number of mandated public providers and a few enterprising private technical institutions with foreign affiliations are engaged in higher technical skills development. This is one of the major problems in responding to labour market demands.
- In addition, there is a need to provide vertical mobility to the holders of Higher National Diplomas in Science and Technology in order for them to aspire to higher education and enhance their productivity, and to ensure their life-long employability and self-fulfilment. So far, only one institution of higher learning in the country has addressed this need, the Open University of Sri Lanka, which offers distance-learning programs. Developments of Psycho social competencies are not included in most of the vocational training programmes.
- The Government is the main financier and provider of TEVT in Sri Lanka. As the TEVT system has expanded, activities are being duplicated and the system is facing operational and financial constraints. These affect the efficiency, relevance, and quality of TEVT.
- There is a shortage of qualified teachers and conditions of facilities are poor. Most of the TEVT institutions are not motivated to improve or to broaden their financial base because of the lack of a facilitating policy environment. Public-private partnership in TEVT is yet to be fully realised and the private sector could play a greater role.
- There are a growing number of private providers of TEVT courses, but these mostly focus on information technology. They award an assortment of certificates and diplomas with no assurance of quality or national recognition. From consultations,

there appears to be tremendous variation in their training quality, from outstanding to very poor. This may compound the unemployment situation and discourage youth from pursuing TEVT programs. By law, the provision of TEVT by the private sector and by non-government organisations requires registration, accreditation and approval by the government through the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC). About 350 private TEVT institutions are registered with the TVEC. There are wide gaps in the enforcement of the present system, which need to be filled before consistent training quality becomes a reality.

- There are no professional associations such as private accrediting bodies and no peer or professional evaluation of institutions and programs. It is very difficult to determine the supply capacity of the private sector.
- The developments which have been initiated by the Skills Development Project need to be strengthened by establishing relevant committees to report to the ministry. Few committees have been already established in this regard with the participation of related institutes of the ministry, NGOs and private sector.

4.8.3 Recommendations and Conclusion Psycho-social Competencies/skills Recommendations

- Revisit and revise the terminology used for development of different competencies by the education institutions in Sri Lanka in order to develop clear definitions
- Develop policy guidelines, directions and strategies to strengthen and mainstream Life Competency in to other subjects.
- Develop an appropriate system for Life Competency education in the national education system including appointing of a

separate directorate at the MoE and in the provinces and streamline and strengthen the LC ISA network and develop coordination mechanism at all levels.

- Curricular materials should be revised using simple and clear language paying special attention to presentations of objectives, concepts, methodologies and instructions
- Develop and supply training modules and supplementary materials on LC to teachers and students
- Incorporate a suitable assessment scheme capable of monitoring the progress of pupils in developing the expected competencies
- Integrate Life Skills –LC into the basic and in-service teacher training programmes
- Allocate adequate funds for LC in-service training programmes
- Advocacy for teachers school principals and school administrators
- Strengthen the supervision and monitoring mechanisms at all administrative levels
- Integrate Life Competencies in the out of school youth development programmes
- Develop strategies for targeted interventions and to reach most at-risk youth and un-reached

Technical and Vocational Skills Recommendations

Revise general education curriculum to link other competencies and employability competencies in TVET sector. According to the proposed policies, TVET sector has selected following skills to be included in the training standards:

- ICT,
- Health & Safety,
- Problem solving & decision making
- Entrepreneurship,
- Quality management,
- Innovation and invention,
- Environment & sustainable development,
- Leadership,

- Interpersonal skills,
- Financial management etc.
- Include possible basic skill areas within school education system, which could be further strengthened in the TVET sector.
- Introduce career guidance programs jointly with school system in selected areas, which show high dropout rate.
- Introduce Career Interest Test to create awareness on the usefulness of it among school leavers, applicants to VT courses and the public through appropriate means such as print and electronic media.
- Strengthen research and development to accommodate innovations of emerging technologies along with developments in particular technology areas locally and internationally.
- Conduct a comprehensive impact evaluation of the new developments and provide recommendations to the Ministry, different committees functioning on specialised areas and relevant institutes for improvement of effectiveness and strengthening of sustainability of the new developments.

4.9 Conclusion

Competencies relating to the area of life skills and lifelong learning as enshrined in goal three of the Dakar framework are imparted through the formal education system, consisting of the general education in schools and technical and vocational education for youth, and through non-formal education programmes, conducted by various governmental and Non-governmental agencies.

As for basic skills of literacy and numeracy, Sri Lanka has fared creditably due to its enlightened social development policies in providing free education irrespective of any differences. The development of psycho social skills has received its due emphasis only recently. A new subject life competency has been introduced to the curriculum with the last curricular revision. It is also incorporated through the subjects such as civic and health & physical education. There is also emphasis on peace and conflict resolution implemented through the academic curricular as well as the co-curricular activities. However, much has still to be done in this area to make the development of life competencies among the youth. Training of teachers in life competency education should receive greater attention. A concerted effort is needed to create awareness of the importance of developing Life Competencies in students among teachers, principals and education officials. One concern is that very little research has been done to study the impact of these initiatives. The opportunities are available in the TVET sector for the development of vocational/ technical skills are described in detail in this chapter. However, quality improvement yet remains an area of concern. Statistics relating to the programmes conducted by the private sector are not available. The need for coordination of programmes within the state sector as well as the private sector is an imperative. A mechanism to monitor and quality control the TVET training offered by private institutions is also an urgent need.

