

Chapter 7: Enhancing Quality of the Education

7.1 Introduction

Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

“Quality has become a dynamic concept that has to constantly adapt to a world whose societies are undergoing profound social and economic transformation. Encouragement for future-oriented thinking and anticipation is gaining importance. Old notions of quality are no longer enough ... despite the different contexts there are many common elements in the pursuit of a quality education, which should equip all people, women and men, to be fully participating members of their own communities and also citizens of the world” (Ministerial Round Table on Quality Education, UNESCO, 2003, p.1). (EFA Mid-Decade Assessment 2005)

Quality of Education: *The general concept educational quality is the extent to which the products or results of the education provided (i.e. skills and values acquired by the students) meet the standards stipulated in the system’s educational objectives and the extent to which the knowledge and values acquired are relevant human and environment condition and needs.* (Grisay, A and Mahlack, L 1991)

As quality is cross-cutting across all the previous chapters, only important issues pertaining to each of them will be highlighted in this chapter, not the analysis of data and indicators.

7.2 Quality of ECCE

The quality of the ECCE programmes generally depends on the way the system functions on the following factors:

- Policy and Plans
- Type of programmes
- Type of services
- Professional qualifications of the services providers

- Availability of facilities of the relevant institutions

Although MCDWE adopted 11 strategies to implement the national policy, and appointed a twenty five-member national coordination committee, there seems to be no proper mechanism to get the feedback from grass-root level. Therefore it is not possible to assess the success of implementation. Although minimum standards for ECCE centres covering most aspects have been prepared by Ministry, the implementation at grass root level is not satisfactory, as it is left to the discretion of each individual controller. There is also a need for a mechanism for the improvement of quality of the centres where there are problems.

There are a lot of private institutions awarding ECCE qualifications. But there doesn’t seem to be quality control of these ECCE training centres or their programmes. The MCDWE should take steps to rectify the situation. Educationists with a background of Primary Education and Child Development also need to become involved in this process, with close collaborations with the MoE, Child Study Centre of the OUSL, and provincial education authorities.

Internationally, ECCE covers up to the age of 8 years. In Sri Lanka we talk of ECCD, which covers child’s life from conception to age five. Therefore there is no direct link with between ECCD and primary education in Sri Lanka, which adversely affects the quality of both.

7.3 Quality of the Basic and General Education System

Educational quality can be assessed in many ways including through the efficiency, and effectiveness of the education system. Efficiency refers to both external and internal efficiency. Internal efficiency refers to the links between quality of the educational inputs, such as teachers, textbooks, teaching condition, teaching materials, and educational achievements, completion rates, examination

results, etc. External efficiency refers to the links between schooling system and students as a whole (as an input) with the knowledge, understanding, and skills and attitudes appropriate for successful living.

In Sri Lanka, both external and internal efficiencies are low at primary and secondary levels, as seen by the dropouts, repetitions and low achievements of grade four, five and GCE O/L examinations. Though these are not ideal indicators, they are the most commonly used. External efficiency is also low, high proportion of GCE O/L graduates remaining unemployed. This is linked with the political and economic situation of the country but also lack relevance and quality of the education.

It is very clear that the existing network of government schools is unable to provide equal access to quality primary and secondary schooling for the children in all parts of the country. Adequacy has also a dimension of quality, for it implies access to a schooling service of quality, not just any school within required distance. The variations in the quality of education, from school to school, district-to-district, urban to rural etc., needs to be recognised. As discussed under (UBE)

3.3.1.5 Input indicators, all government schools were classified into five categories according to the physical and human recourses. When we analyse the student performance according to that classification, we can see the correlation between quality inputs and quality of the outputs. There are wide disparities among the districts, and even schools within the same district. So, improvements, or changes to the school network at specific identified locations according to individual needs would improve the quality of primary and secondary education.

7.4 Quality of the life skills and lifelong learning education

Improvement of the relevant skills for life through the education is the way to sustainable human development. Although Sri Lanka has free access and high participation at the

primary and secondary levels, these are not enough to achieve this goal. The country should either provide skill and knowledge, enabling students to move towards tertiary education, or ensure a smooth transition to the world of work for those whose basic, secondary schooling will be terminal.

Education reforms in Sri Lanka during the last three decades have mainly been concerned with the improvement in the quality and relevance of education, especially making the curriculum more relevant to the needs of the country. Although these concepts were included to the curriculum it was not adopted to the system as following reasons:

- Shortage of qualified teachers for teaching these subjects
- Lack of resources and infrastructure facilities at schools and other institutions
- Lack of mechanisms for assessing the impact of these subjects
- Lack of awareness of the parents students
- No link between general education and technical and vocational education
- Poor understanding by administrators and teachers
- Time allocation not adequate
- Adequate attention not paid to 10 core life skills in curriculum development
- The subject content not clearly presented
- Examples to illustrate methodology lacking
- Conflicting views expressed by Principals, ISAs and teachers
- Traditional methods used in delivery
- Lack of an assessment mechanism

Therefore, attempts failed in channelling students to academic, technical and vocational streams at secondary level. The proposals were not acceptable to a public who had seen in the past that academic success leads to social mobility. Now efforts are being made to provide a practical element to general education through the development of competencies.

The economic structure of the country is also needs to change with the adoption of liberalised economic policies.

7.5 Quality of Youth and Adult Literacy

Literacy is to essential human beings as it contributes to economic prosperity, good health, cultural identity, civic participation and tolerance as well as to realise the potential of an individual. Illiteracy is a phenomenon rooted in poverty and deprivation.

The Human Development index (HDI) of the UN measures the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions.

- i. Life expectancy
- ii. Adult literacy and
- iii. GDP per capita

This shows the importance of adult literacy in measuring the quality of life.

Although literacy was not a critical issue in Sri Lanka, after a decade of open market policies that was followed from 1977 onwards enlightened opinion suggested mild reversal trends and evidence of pockets in both urban and rural areas with rates of literacy far below the accepted national figures.

In spite of several measures adopted by the government of Sri Lanka over last five decades to provide free education to every child of school going age, a large number of children for various reasons do not attend school. Studies have revealed that while few are permanently kept out of schools a proportion of those who enrol dropout very early, long before the school succeeds in making any lasting changes in them, lapsing into illiteracy.

There is a need to improve the literacy levels of the above mentioned groups. They need to be provided with functional literacy and numerical skills essential for effective living.

These programmes should be focused on

1. Development of basic literacy among youth and adults
2. Development of functional literacy skills,

Therefore it is necessary to develop a mechanism for monitoring and assessment of

actual literacy among youth and adults identify the gaps for prepare a plans to overcome the challenges.

7.6 Recommendations and Conclusion

Recomendations:

Prepare a general definition for education quality based on rights-based approach to all educational endeavors. Education is a human right, and therefore quality education supports all of the human rights;

Develop policy guidelines based on the four pillars of Education for All – learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together with others, and learning to be (Delors, et al., 1996);

- It views the learner as an individual, a family member, community member, and a global citizen, and educates to create individual competency in all four roles;

Develop an appropriate system for providing quality education that builds knowledge, life skills, perspectives, attitudes and values, to cover the following :

- review curriculum
- upgrade teaching methodology
- develop quality teaching standards
- establish norms and standerds for physical facilites at schools
- upgrade facilites acording to standards
- maintain class size below 30 or less, especially in the primary grades

Conclusion

To provide a good basic education, in keeping with the broad objective of quality education, being the total development of personality of the child, the curriculum should be expanded to cover a broad area inclining early childhood care and education. Greater attention would be paid to the imparting of life competencies, Scientific, Mathematical and Technological knowledge, development of communication languages skills in the national languages as well as international languages.

