Educational and curriculum changes in Sri Lanka: In Light of Literature

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Abstract:
The purpose of this article is to explore the current educational practices of Sri Lanka and to review the curriculum changes over the years in the country. To achieve this purpose, a review of literature was conducted in order to reveal the current educational practices and curriculum changes in Sri Lanka. Main findings of the paper were that there were number of significant changes in the educational system from time to time, the intended goals of the changes had been failure due to lack of readiness of the stakeholders especially the teachers in the system. The aspects discussed in this paper would benefit the prospective researchers to get to know the educational practices of Sri Lanka and could compare the aspects with their own country.

Key words: Educational practices, Curriculum, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka is an island and known as *Pearl* in the Indian Ocean. The total population of the country is 20.3 Million in 2012 (Department of Census and Statistics 2012). While the country has multi ethnic and religious groups, the Constitution of Republic of Sri Lanka has given foremost place to the religion of Buddhism. The paragraphs (1) and (3) of Article 15 (Government, Constitution of Republic Sri Lanka 1978; 2000) ensures the freedom and adequate protection for other religions. Sri Lanka census of 2012 shows composition of people in terms of ethnicity and religions. According to the census of 2012, Buddhist represents 70.1%, Hindu 12.6%, Islam 9.7%, Roman Catholic 6.2%, and other Christian 1.4% out of the total population. Likewise, Sinhalese represented 74.9, Sri Lanka Moor 9.3%, Indian Tamil 4.1%, Sri Lanka Tamil 11.2%, Malay 0.2%, Burger 0.2% and others 0. 1%. The official languages of the country are Sinhala and Tamil and the English is the link language (Article No 18 of Constitution 1978; 2000). National languages are Sinhala and Tamil (Article No 19 of Constitution 1978; 2000).

Policy of Education

Sri Lanka has high education achievements and learning in South Asia region (De Mel 2007). Sri Lanka is highly acknowledged internationally for her achievements in literacy, educational enrolment and equal opportunity and access to education (Little 2010). This significant achievement in education was reached through endeavours and provisions for education especially free education for more than 60 years by the Governments after the independence of the country. Contemporary education policy of Sri Lanka is formulated by National Education Commission (NEC).

Free Education

Every citizen of the country is entitled to free education up to the university level. The free education has been provided for the past 60 years. C.W.W. Kannangara (1884-1969) was the first Minster of Education in the State Council of Ceylon. He introduced the Free Education Act in 1949 which enables access to free education for every child in the country. The policy of providing free education has been implemented from primary education to the university level. The policy of providing free education is practiced by the successive governments in the country till now (Arunatilake 2006; Little 1997; Jayaweera 1989). After independence, governments provide free text books and the meals for students. The successive governments of Sri Lanka continuously allocate money for free text books for the primary and secondary students and school uniforms to every student. According to the MOE (2008), the following welfare services also are provided by the government:

I. Free text books to all children up to Grade11.
II. A set of school uniforms given free annually.
III. Scholarship schemes which provide financial assistance to deserving children.

IV. Transport subsidies for travelling to school.
V. Free medical inspections in schools, provision of dental care and free spectacles to needy children.
VI. Supplementary feeding in identified schools where there are undernourished children in primary schools.
VII.

Compulsory Education

In addition to the free education, the compulsory education policy also contributed to the high achievements in education. Every citizen of the country has rights to access education and it is ensured by the constitution which is the supreme law of the country. Rights for education are ensured through the constitution of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The Article No 27 (h) of the Constitution (1978; 2000) says "… the complete eradications of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels" is the fundamental duties of the Government of Sri Lanka. The general education of the country is governed by 72 years old education ordinance which has been amended from time to time. According to the NEC report (2009), the governing ordinance for education is as follows:

> "The provisions of the Education Ordinance No.31 of 1939 as amended by Ordinance Nos. 61 of 1939, 21 of 1945, 3 of 1946, 26 of 1947, Act No 5 of 1951, 43 of 1943, 37 of 1958 and law of No 35 of 1973 govern general education today" (NEC Report 2009)

In addition, there are some other related ordinances and amendments related to the general education that has been brought from time to time. The compulsory education for age group 5-14 has been enforced by the constitution (1978; 2000) and the Education Ordinance No 31 of 1938 for 5-14 age groups. Article No 22 (6) of the Constitution (1978; 2000) declared that:

"Every child between the ages of five and fourteen years shall have access to free education provided by the State"

In 1947, there was an amendment to increase the age limit for the compulsory education up to 16 years. NEC Reports (2003; 2009) stated that there were no proper mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of compulsory education until 1997. A monitoring strategy is introduced for ensuring compulsory education and school attendance of the school going age group by the Gazette notification No 1003/5 of 25 November 1997. Two committees: School Attendance Committee (SAC) for each *GramaNiladhari* Division and School Attendance Monitoring Committee (SAMC) for each Divisional Secretariat Division were constituted by the Ministry of Education. However Arunatilake (2006), Perera (2003) and Reports of NEC (2003) and (2009) revealed that activities of the committees were not satisfactory and dysfunctional by 2000. The enforcement of the compulsory education in the country has contributed to high levels of participation in school and the result is the high literacy rates in the country. However, it is proposed to extent maximum age of compulsory education till 18 years of old.

Medium of instruction

Providing education in local languages is another significant policy of education in Sri Lanka. The rights to get the education in their languages is legalised in the constitution of the country as stated in the Article No 46 (A) of the constitution (Government of Sri Lanka 1978; 2000): "A person shall be entitled to be educated through the medium of either Sinhala or Tamil and if facilities are available, through the medium of English". Little (1997) also noted the historical developments of medium of instruction in education as follows:

> Immediately after independence the medium of instruction in all government and government-aided schools began to switch from English to either Sinhala or Tamil. The process began in the first year of the primary cycle in 1948; in the first year of the secondary cycle in 1953; and in the first year of university arts courses in 1959. English-medium school examinations began to fade away in the 1960s, reinforcing the notion that all children, and not just among the elite, could reach the pinnacle of educational success (Little 1997:5)

Providing education in local languages helped the major ethnic groups Sinhala, Tamil and Moors to get the education at their own interests. Sinhala is the language of majority of the people and Tamil is the language of Sri Lanka Tamils and Indian Tamils as well as majority of the Moors (Muslims). The MOE (2008) states:

"Sinhala and Tamil are used as media of instruction in government schools. Normally, Sinhala children study in Sinhala medium and Tamil children study in Tamil medium. Muslim children study in either medium according to their choice. However, there are 437 schools teaching two or more subjects at least in one grade in the English medium. According to 2006 School Census 72.8% of the total student population study in the Sinhala

medium while 26.1% and 1.1% study in Tamil and English media respectively. The number of schools is distributed evenly among the three media." (MOE 2008:8)

The Contemporary Structure of the Education System

The contemporary structure of education system is divided into six parts viz.: Pre School Education/ECCD, Primary Education, Junior Secondary Education, Senior Secondary Education, Collegiate Level and Tertiary Level. Report of National Education Commission (2003) categorized the structure of school based on the grade such as Primary grades 1-5 (Age 5-9), Junior Secondary Grades 6-9 (Age 10-13), and Senior Secondary Grades 10-13 (Age 14-16). Students sit for two national level exams namely GCE O/L (General Certificate Education Ordinary Level) and GCE A/L (General Certificate Education Advance Level) at the end of the senior secondary and collegiate level schooling respectively.

School System

According to the School Census (2017) contemporary school systems of the country consist of 10,194 government schools, 80 private schools, 26 special schools, 753 *Privenas* (Buddhist centres) and more than 265 international schools. The governments' schools are categorized based on the grades and streams. Senior Secondary School which has classes from grade 1 to 13 and all three streams called as 1AB schools. Similarly, Senior Secondary School has classes from grade 1 to 13 and having only Arts and commerce streams named as 1C Schools. Junior School which has classes from grade 1 to grade 11 is called as Type II schools. Primary School which has classes from Grade 1 to 5 is called as Type III schools. In addition, there are National Schools which is directly governed by Ministry of Education whilst other schools are under Provincial councils of the country (MOE 2011 and NEC 2010:44). Though the schools are categorized for an easy administration purposes, existence of various types of schools also create complex and problematic situation in administration of the schools in the country (Ginige 2002).

Administration of Education System

The current education system in the country has a top down approach. The Ministry of Education of the central government is responsible for the entire management of the education system, however to a certain extent, functions of the central government have been devolved to the provincial councils with the 13th amendment to the constitution in 1987 (MOE, 2004). The devolution was made to ensure the provincial council's help to implement the policies of education at the grassroots levels. Provincial Ministries of Education, Provincial Departments of Education (PDEs) and Zonal education Offices (ZEOs) at district levels are other administrative bodies under the Ministry of Education for the management of the educational system (NEC 2009). It shows the centralized administrative hierarchical order in the education system in the country. Even though there are nine provincial education ministries, they are not powered to take policy decisions related to curriculum development and implementation. They help to implement the policies which are taken at the Ministry of Education. There are other institutions which are functioning under the Ministry of Education (MOE) in three categories namely; Departments, Statutory Boards and public enterprise (Oulai and de Costa 2009). National Education Commission (NEC), National Institute of Education (NIE), National Library and Documentation Service Board (NLDSB) and National Book Development Council of Sri Lanka (NBDC) are the Statutory Boards under MOE.

NEC and NIE are major statuary bodies which are closely working with MOE. While NEC serve as a policy advising agency, NIE on the other hand is solely responsible for the developmentand implementation of curriculum and conducting training for personnels (Subject Directors, In-service Advisors and Resource Persons) from both the Provincial Department of Education Offices (PDE) as well as those from the Zonal Educational Offices (ZEO). PDE and ZEO assist the NIE in the implementation of the curriculum at the school levels. PDE office and ZEO office organizes training programmes for teachers. The procedures in terms of curriculum implementation obviously indicate that the educational system of the country has top down approach. In addition, Department of Examinations (DOE) and Department of Educational Publications (DEP) are functioning as departments under the Ministry of Education. Department of examinations is responsible for all public examinations for schools. It also conducts examinations for recruitments and promotions for other government agencies as well. Publishing all text books from Grade 1 to 11 and publishing other necessary supplementary books are handled by the Department of Educational Publications. National Education Commission takes care of the policy, planning and research. The National Institute of Education is responsible for developing school curriculum and conducting training programme for provincial and Zonal Directors and the resource persons.

Curriculum Development Process in Sri Lanka

The present education system has been influenced by the historical factors and the pressures from the global and local environment (NEC 2003). It is very useful to look back at the historical contributions for understanding the contemporary curriculum process. Contemporary education system and the curriculum development have been influenced by the factors of traditional, political, social, religious and economic development (Fernando et al. 2010). Civilizations and the cultures from the Indian subcontinent have been influenced in all aspects of the country throughout its history (Srisena 1969). It can be deduced that significant developments in the educational system of the country (Sri Lanka) is categorized into the following periods:

I. Pre-colonial Period
II. Colonial Period
III. After the independence

Curriculum in Pre-Colonial Period

Pre-colonial period covered the periods from the pre- Buddhist period in the country. It is believed there was no institutionalised curriculum in the country. There was a *"Guru Gedera"* education system in the ancient period. *Guru Gedera* system was where the students board with the teacher in his home and learn from him (Fernando et al. 2007). According to Fernando et al. (2007) the curriculum was in this period included necessary skill for war, for instance swordsmanship, art of war, horsemanship, stories about the heroes etc. with the introduction of Buddhism in the country, the curriculum was influenced by the Buddhist thoughts and practices. The *Guru Gedera* system was declined and Buddhist temples (*Vihara)* started to influence the education even though the education was not for all.Punch (2001) stated that the students from nobleman families and Buddhist priest were able to receive the education. The curriculum was Sinhala language, and fundamentals of Buddhist literatures (Punch 2001), Bali, Sanskrit and some other Indian languages (Fernando et al. 2007). At the same time, Tamils from the high caste families were able to receive education from the *Brahmins* in their temples (Punch 2001) and the curriculum was influenced by the Indian traditions.

Curriculum in Colonial Periods

There was colonial rule for more than 300 years in the country. Western education though started to flow into the country when the Portuguese captured the country in 1505 followed by the Dutch (1656) and British (1796) till 1948. Spreading the Christian religion through the educational system was the prime objective in the period of colonial rules. The missionaries such as Franciscan councils, Dominican council and Jesus council (Srisena 1969) established schools and taught religion based curriculum. The curriculum of this period included reading, religion, writing, songs, Latin and ethics (Srisena 1969, Fernando et al. 2007). Higher education was provided for only those who wanted to be priests. Jesus councillors introduced the education in three levels: primary, secondary and higher education (Srisena 1969).

The Dutch period in the country was from 1656 to 1796. Protestantism based curriculum was taught during the period. They included the subjects Sinhala, Tamil in the basic education. Christianity, Dutch language, grammar, and composition, Greek, Hebrew and Theology were also taught (Fernando et al. 2007). They did not follow more vigorous policy on education like the Portuguese (MOE 2009) but had a firm policy on education (Srisena 1969). They established *Scholarchal* commission to monitor the schools (MOE 2009).They promoted reading abilities among the students because they believed that developing reading skills may contribute to disseminate the knowledge and religious thoughts (Srisena 1969).

Once the entire country was brought under British rule in 1815, a stable education system was established (MOE 2008, Punch 2001) and they made a greater influence in education (NEC 2009). The strategy of converting into Christianity through education was followed by the rulers in the early stage of British rule. It was changed in the later part of the periods. They introduced the same curriculum which was in their mother country. They had given more attention to English as medium of education but later they moved to the local language education (Punch 2001). Curriculum included the subjects such as History of England, Coal industry in England, Woollen industry and European classical literature There were significant changes brought in that period of 1931-1947 (MOE 2008).

The first Minister of Education in the State council (Little 2010) introduced mass reforms in the educational system. The curriculum was designed under the theme 3H's; "Head, Heart and Hand" (MOE 2008). An educational reform namely *Hendessa Educational System* (Fernando et al. 2007) was examined in the period of 1932. Curriculum was introduced with the objective of developing human resources. The time allocated was three hours in the practical session in the morning and two hours for theoretical understandings. The subjects such as

health, local resources, local agriculture and industry, literature and music were included. This curriculum was aimed to train the students for real life situations than preparing for the general examination and was taught in rural schools. However, the curriculum reforms became inactive by 1945. At the same time, there was a comprehensive and activity-based curriculum implemented in the central colleges which offered higher education for students. However, this was also a failure (Fernando et al. 2007).

Curriculum in the Post-Independence Period

Curriculum development was carried under the Ministry of Education in the early years of post-independence period. Curriculum reforms were introduced in accordance with various White papers, Circulars and Reports of the commissions (Fernando et al. 2007). The curriculum development process was institutionalized after establishment of the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) in 1960's. The significant achievement of CDC was the introduction of mega curriculum reforms in 1972 named as *Nawa Mega Reforms* (New mega reforms).

Curriculum Reforms in 1972- Nawa Mega Reforms

Sri Lanka for the first time in her history initiated educational reforms in 1972. The reform brought changes in both structure and content of the education (Fernando et al. 2007). The education structure was 5 +4+2+1 i.e. 5 years for primary education, 4 years for junior secondary education and 2 years for Senior Secondary and 1 Year for pre university education. At the end of 9 years of schooling, students sat for National Certificate of General Education Examination (NCGE). Based on their success in the examination, students continued 2 years of senior secondary education leading to the Higher National Certificate of Education Examination (HNCE). This was followed by year of schooling for selected students for the national universities. The content of primary education was Religion, First Language, Second Language, Mathematics, Physical and Aesthetic activities. The teaching methodology in primary was student centred (Fernando et al.2007). Junior secondary curriculum included 10 subjects: religion, first language, second language, new integrated mathematics, science, aesthetic, health and physical education, pre-vocational education-I, pre vocational education-II and third language.The education reform was continued for not more than five years (Little 2010). A number of factors contributed to failure of the educational reform of 1972. Some of the factors contributed to failure of education reforms were:

I. Highly developed scholastic curriculum that could not be afforded to the country
II. Teachers were not efficient in carrying out the subjects
III. Lack of physical and human resources
IV. Unpopular examination system
V. Create social class issues on selecting vocational subjects

(Little 2010; Fernando et al. 2007)

Furthermore, a number of studies were carried out based on this educational reform of 1972. One of the important and early scientific literatures was the Science education in Malaysia and Sri Lanka of Lewin (1975). This study was carried out under the major research programme, "qualification and selection in educational systems" and it had been examined science curricula of both countries: Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Lewin (1975) argued that science courses in the developing countries rarely meet the criteria of relevance to the future lives of majority of students. He said the objectives of many new programmes that aim to promote the understanding and application of scientific principles are often undermined in the examination oriented atmosphere of the classroom which tends to favour the rote memorization of factual information. The study of the Lewin explored the inter-relations between policies to reform science curricula, and examination orientation and other factors which affect the successful introduction of innovatory courses. Further, it had been explored

i. nature and methods of curriculum development for future occupation and life styles, framework of classrooms and physical constraints of implemented curriculum in 1970's

John Oxenham (1975), noted about this paper that "… a feature of this study will be a detailed look at a particular innovatory course to examine the extent to which it has been successful in encouraging pupils to understand and apply scientific knowledge and, where it has not to establish factors which seem to be associated with this lack of success. Studies of Ranaweera (1976), Ariyadasa (1976) and Peiris (1976) were significant to understand the early stage of curriculum development process in the Sri Lanka. These were considered as some of the pioneer works in field of curriculum development and implementation in Sri Lanka. These papers described the different aspects of education and how they affected the educational reform. In some aspects of totally new programmes, designed and developed, ground-up, were introduced; in others, the current programmes were reoriented with new emphases and focal points in the periods of 1972 in Sri Lanka.

Ranaweera's work on integrated science in the junior secondary school science in Sri Lanka one of the pioneer literatures in the field of curriculum development of Sri Lanka. This paper discussed firstly how science curriculum was in the periods of 1957-1972. He further discussed in his paper on topics such as why integrated science, objectives of the integrated science course, outline of four year course. His paper gave some useful reforms on 1972 curriculum reform and how science subjects in junior secondary school curriculum of 1972 were organised in the manner of integrated. Another series of paper which published same period (1976) was done by Ariyadasa (1976). His paper was on management of educational reform in Sri Lanka. In this paper, he discussed the overview of the educational reform of 1972, and some of the issues related managing curriculum reform of 1972. In the study of Peris (1976) on integrated approach to curriculum development in Primary Education in Sri Lanka, were some aspects discussed under the topics of important changes expected from new reform in primary education, how classrooms should be arranged and some of the qualitative development of 1972. This study was one of the evidences to show that child centred educational approach was tried for introduction into school curriculum in the 1970's period of time in Sri Lanka.

White paper 1981

One of the unfortunate scenes in education of the country is no stable policy on education. It has been changed from time to time with change of governments. The newly elected government in this period had brought a change in education through a White Paper. The curriculum reforms had taken place as per the report on Towards Reliance in Education 1979. The report was drafted by Education Reforms committee in this period. Government of the country in this period brought a white paper on education reforms entitled as education proposal for reforms. The white paper of 1981 had brought significant changes to education and the school curriculum. The reform was known as White paper on education (Little 2010). The structure of education changed as 5+3+3+2 i.e. 5 years for primary, 3 years for junior secondary and 3 years for senior secondary and 2 years for pre university education. The life skills at junior secondary level and technical subjects at senior secondary level were replaced for the pre-vocational education I & II. The history and literature subjects were also introduced (Fernando et al.2007). The significant feature of the reform was the introduction of *Inter Alia* (cluster system of schools) – the system for sharing the resources within the cluster schools (Little 2010). According to Little (2010), the continuous assessment which was introduced in this reform was criticized by the teachers and parents and as well as some political parties. It survived only for one year. A very few studies were found for example Wanasinghe (Date unknown) and Wanasinghe (1981) who concerned about the curriculum reforms prior to 1980's. In these studies also more attention was given to 1972 curriculum reform.

Curriculum Reforms After 1990'S

One of the salient features of the curriculum development in Sri Lanka is that, it is developed in three folds. Report of NEC (2009) states this feature as follows:

> …three different types of curricula that are closely linked to one or more levels of the education system. These are the **integrated curriculum** at the primary level (grades 1 to 5), the **common and the balanced curriculum** at the Junior Secondary Level (grades 6 to 9) and the GCE/OL (grades 10 to 11), and the **specialization curriculum** at the GCE /AL (grades 12 to 13).

There were major curriculum reforms initiated in 1997 with the recommendations of National Education Commission. There were many factors that influenced education reform in 1990's. Youth unrest in two fronts in both communities was the major factor to consider change for the education system in the country (Little 2010). Government appointed Presidential Commission on Youth to explore the underlying reasons for the unrest among youth in the country. After several studies they found that one of the major reasons for that education system was appropriate for preparing youth for the world (Little 2010). In addition NEC (2003:16) states that the report of the Youth Commission drew attention forcefully to this lack of continuity in the education policy.

In 1991, National Education Commission was established to recommend new policy on education and the commission released its first report in May 1992. The report included the recommendations on how the education and the curriculum should be framed. There were other documents such as Towards a National Education Policy, National Education Commission, (1993), An Action-Oriented Strategy towards a National Education Policy (1995), National Education Policy: a framework for action on general education, (1996), Reforms in Education (1997), General Education Reforms, 1997 the Presidential Task Force on General Education (1998) published which all insisted for urgent review on education reforms.

However, the opportunity had arisen in 1997 for educational reform with the newly elected government. The new government appointed a Presidential Task Force on General Education in 1996 (NEC 2003) with the twelve Technical Committee to implement the proposed policy. The president declared 1997 as the Year of Education Reform (Report on General Education Reforms 1997, NEC 2003).The reforms firstly implemented in Gampaha district at primary level in 1998 and later were introduced throughout the island in 1999 (NEC 2003). The reforms were introduced with two main objectives: Promoting access and equity in education and improving the quality of education. The NEC identified nine national goals for educational policy and set out basic competencies that should be achieved by each student through the general education.

- Curriculum of Primary education Child centred approach
- Integrated curriculum across four subject areas - language, maths, religions and environment-related activities
- Oral English introduced in Grades 1 and 2 for communication and formal English from Grade 3
- Organisation of curriculum in three key stages (KS): KS1 (Grades1-2); KS2 (Grades3-4); KS3 (Grade5)
- 3 teaching and learning processes, guided play, activity and desk work, with more play in KS1 and more desk work in KS3
- Identifying entry competencies to help teacher plan according to individual needs
- Identifying essential learning competencies for each KS, to be assessed at the end of each KS
- Class based assessment, school based management and continuous monitoring and supervision

Junior secondary education

- Curriculum changes in science and social studies
- Life competencies replaces life skills
- Activity rooms to be introduced and practical and technical skills emphasised
- Introduction of second national language

Strengthening of English programme

Senior secondary education

- G 10-11 identified as GCE O level grades instead of G 9-11
- Retention of 8 compulsory subjects with addition of technology to science and inclusion of literature as an option under aesthetic studies
- Addition of 7 optional subjects from which 2 is to be selected
- G12-13. Reduction from 4 to 3 subjects to be offered at GCE A Level
- Common general paper to be passed for admission to university
- Biology replaced botany and zoology; Combination of maths and higher maths replaced by pure and applied maths
- Practical components introduced to agriculture, and sciences and projects/assignments in other subjects with school based assessments
- General English made a compulsory subject in both G12 and G13
- Technology stream to be introduced geared to agriculture, industry and information sciences
- 80% compulsory attendance proposed
  Little (2010)

Several studies were carried out based on curriculum reforms of 1998. The study of Wijetunge and Rupasinge (2005) on The Senior Secondary School Curriculum (Grades 10-13) was aimed to assess the extent to which these changes have been effected in the senior secondary school curriculum in well-equipped as well as disadvantaged schools, to examine the impact of the reforms on (a) the quality of education and (b) access to alternate forms of higher education and to make suggestions for improvement in the provision and content of Senior Secondary Education. Methodology of this study was adapted in conducting the Situation Analysis. Some of the recommendations of the study were:

I. Reducing number of subjects from 4 to 3 at the Advance Level.
II. Introducing general subjects for all students such as GIT (General Information Technology) and General English at the Advance Level.
III. Introducing new technology stream at advance level parallel with Arts, Commerce and Science streams.

The study on Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Implementation of Educational Reforms at Secondary Level (Grades 6-11) by Gunawardena et al. (2004) had nine objectives. The aim of the study was to assess the progress of implementation and achievements of objectives of the reforms. This study assessed several aspects of the curriculum reforms such as curricular materials, infrastructural facilities, instructional process, the qualifications and availability of teachers, implementation of school based assessment and supervision and monitoring of reforms implementation. The major findings of the study related to curricular materials were:

National goals no 2 and 9 have been given less attention in the curriculum.

National goals did not appear in some subjects (eg: Religion subjects).

Close connection between National goals and curriculum aims and objectives, between curriculum aims and objectives were not discerned in some subjects (eg: Life Competencies, Sinhala Language, Tamil Language and English, Mathematics, Islam and Buddhism).

I. There was less horizontal integration among the subjects.
II. Vertical integration between the subjects was maintained.
III. Some subjects such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Life Competencies were found inappropriate to age level of students.

Gunawardena and Lekamge's (2004) study aimed to evaluate the implementation of the junior secondary curriculum in Kalutara and Ratnapura districts. It was based on the 1998 curriculum reforms and it presented some important recommendations.

I. Suggestion to improve newly introduced subject Life Competencies
II. Introducing science instead of environmental studies at grade 6.
III. Recommendations for teaching History and Geography separately rather than teaching under social studies as integrated subject
IV. Recommendations to strengthen second language subject in the curriculum

Little's (2010), study on the politics, policies and progress of basic education in Sri Lanka can be considered as one of the international literacy on the education of the country. In this exploration, she analysed how political factors influenced the changes of education in the country. Though she discussed in her monograph, about the historical changes especially after independence, she focused much on the 1997 curriculum reforms. The monograph explores the connections between the political and technical drivers and inhibitors of reform in practice and argues that low-level, as well as high-level political will, had played an active part in determining whether formulated policies are translated into action on the ground. Bi-partisan support for education policy is essential if implementation is to endure (Little, 2010).

Modernised Competency Based Curriculum Reforms 2007

NEC presented some recommendations in 2003 based on the above researches and other investigations carried by the institution. NEC (2003) revised the national goals which are mentioned in the earlier section of this paper. In addition, with the purpose of eight year cycle of curriculum and students readiness to face the 21st century challenges National Institute of Education brought another curriculum reforms in 2007 namely Modernized Competency based Curriculum. Gunawardena et al. (2010) states the new curriculum reforms in 2007 are based on some of the recommendations of the NEC the secondary education with the following objectives:

I. Encouraging activity based learning
II. Facilitating students in 'Constructive Knowledge'
III. Fostering the development of higher order academic abilities and skills and
IV. Providing for non-cognitive aspects of student development.

` The new curriculum reforms in 2007 mainly focused on secondary school curriculum and it can be considered as a continuity of previous curriculum reforms of 1998. The educational structure is retained as proposed as 5+4+2+2 in 1998. The curriculum reform 2007 have brought some salient changes in the school curriculum in terms of teaching competencies, changing roles of teachers, 5E as new instructional approach and new subjects and subjects classifications.

Though the curriculum reforms of 1998 contained the competencies, there were no proper methods adopted to teach the competencies. New curriculum reforms in 2007 have introduced methods to carry these

competencies into the classrooms activities. Based on the basic competencies which were introduced by NEC, each subject prepared with overall competencies for the subject for the whole secondary school education and based on the competency levels planned in each subject at the grade levels. The competency levels have been organized horizontally through the subjects. The competency levels for each subject are organized as subject dependent competencies and general competencies. Teachers are expected to carry the subject based competencies through their classroom activities. Ginige (2007) who headed this curriculum reforms, stated thus: "The competency-based curricula now developed on a series of subject dependent competencies that are subdivided into two or more competency levels, provides the main vehicle to realize the new curriculum vision, the content, at the heart of each competency level, confined to a few relevant topics and sub topics will certainly contribute to a reduction in the curriculum load."

In addition, new curriculum reforms also proposed 5E instructional method for teaching and learning activities. NIE prepared Teacher Instructional Manual for each subject and it included model lessons with the applications of 5E instructional approach. Teachers are required to develop their own activity plans for developing competency levels through the lessons and applications of 5E instructional approach in the classrooms. Teachers should be given more attention to develop student competencies through "exploration" by students (NIE 2009).

To realize the intended goal of the modernized competency based curriculum reforms, it further emphasized on roles of teachers in the classrooms. The reform suggested that teachers should change their role as transformational in the classroom learning and teaching activities. In the new dimension of the role of teachers, they are expected to become resource persons and facilitators. (NIE 2009).

Further, Number of new subjects is introduced in the curriculum reforms. The subjects:
First language (Sinhala/Tamil), Second Language (Sinhala/Tamil), Religion (Buddhism/Hindu/Islam/Christianity…etc.), English, Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Life Competencies and Civic Education and Health & Physical Education as compulsory are taught at the junior secondary (Grades 6-9) students. Students at this level can choose two additional subjects from the subjects such as Art, Dancing, Drama & Theatre Arts, Oriental Music and Practical & Technical Skills are optional subjects for Grades 6-9. In addition, the new way of subject order (basket system) has been introduced at the senior secondary level (Grade 10 and 11). Students are taught with 10 subjects at this level. Six subjects such as First language (Sinhala/Tamil), Religion (Buddhism/Hindu/ Islam/Christianity…etc.), English, Mathematics, Science and History are introduced as core subjects. And students are required to choose other four subjects based on their interest, from the three subject baskets which are included with various subjects of Art and Commerce, Aesthetic and Technical fields. Nevertheless, the new subject selection at Grades 10 and 11 was questioned by many and criticized. It was criticized that the new subject organization is irrational and do not help to the balanced personality of students (NEC 2009).

In addition, a few studies related to the 2007 curriculum reforms were available (Gunawardena et al. 2010 a, Gunawardena et al. 2010 b, Perera 2008 & 2008). Gunawardena et al. (2010 a) examined the degree of horizontal integration of the modernized curriculum introduced at secondary level (Grade 6-11) since 2007 while Gunawerdena et al. (2010 b) worked on a study to examine the degree of horizontal integration of the modernized curriculum introduced at secondary level (grade 6-11) since 2007 and examined the degree of vertical integration of the modernized curriculum introduced at secondary level (grade 6-11) since 2007.

Perera (2008; 2009) carried out on evaluation of the process of development and implementation of new curriculum in 2008 and 2009. Both studies were formative evaluation of the curriculum reforms of 2007 and evaluated just immediately of implementing reforms. The aims of the two studies were same but focused on different grades. Major objective of the studies was to assess the nature of curriculum development and implementation process in relation to Grades 6 & 10 and 7 & 11. Under this major objective, of the studies attempted to evaluate the curriculum development and reform at four bases such as curriculum development beginning, planning process of curriculum development, examine stage of curriculum development and how far the curriculum implementation process has been successful. The scope of the studies was broader and attempted to examine many variables in the systems. Perera's (2009) study on an evaluation of the process of development and implementation of the new curriculum in grades 7 and 11, aimed to assess the nature of curriculum development and implementation process in relation to Grades 7 and 11. The findings of this study were illustrated in this study as follows:

I. The 5E model is less accepted by stakeholders. In designing learning events, a more suitable format has to be used.
II. The awareness programmes have not been efficient enough. Use of an accepted model to evaluate the programmes is necessary
III. There is mismatch between curriculum objectives and centrally controlled examination system. An authentic assessment programme has to be implemented.

IV. Before implementation at national level, the curriculum has not been pre-tested and a formative evaluation process at all stages is essential.

Perera's another study (2008) was an evaluation of the curriculum introduced to Grades 6 and 10 in 2007. It concluded that

I. The new curriculum was not founded on a clear theoretical base and had not been guided by findings of empirical studies. It was seen as a further step in the educational reform process initiated in 1997.
II. Existing curriculum had not been able to fulfil the student or social expectations due to heavy academic bias, excessive examination domination and lack of relevance to the needs of changing world.
III. Even though the existing curriculum had raised concerns among various stakeholders due to inability to achieve national general objectives and develop general competencies, no formal collection of information or studies had been done on the need to re-design the curriculum.
IV. No attempt had been made to gain insights from other countries to address shortcomings in the curriculum. There was a lack of consensus regarding the appropriateness of the 5 method.
V. Identified shortcomings in the existing curriculum had not been prioritized nor had what needs to be prioritized in the new educational reforms been identified.
VI. The development of a competency based curriculum had been initiated.
VII. Curriculum developers had separated some of the integrated subjects according to the current needs. An attempt has been made to plan the curriculum relevant for student by including information relevant for students' day to day life.
VIII. An attempt has been made to sustain the vertical integration in the curriculum. Yet learning activities to ensure horizontal integration of different subjects taught in the same grade has not been identified.
IX. The formative assessment process is being sufficiently carried out.
X. An effort has been made to plan learning activities to suit students as identified n psychological foundations.
XI. No pre-testing of educational learning materials has been done.
XII. No formal procedures had been in place to identify shortcomings in formative evaluation.
XIII. No plan to modify learning materials as necessary was visible.

In addition, studies of Sharifah Nor & Nawastheen (2013; 2014), Nawastheen et al. (2014), and Nawastheen and Sharifah Nor (2016) also revealed that the teachers concern themselves towards new innovations and usage of new innovation of the modernized curriculum reforms in Sri Lanka. In these studies, it was found that though the teachers' concerns towards new innovation of the curriculum changes were high but the actual usage of the innovation at the classroom level is very low. This clearly shows that the teachers were reluctant to change towards innovations of the curriculum.

Conclusion

Even though Sri Lanka is a developing country, it has the highest achievements in education. This paper talked about the geography of Sri Lanka briefly followed by discussion on policy of education as well as present educational system of the country. Historical developments in the education and curriculum of the country were discussed briefly. Discussions on curriculum reforms particularly in the periods of 1972, 1998 and 2007 were also presented in this paper. In addition a number of studies related to the curriculum reforms of the country were examined in this paper.

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