

Improve education system in sri lanka education essay



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Introduction

Sri Lanka is a lower middle income country with 19 million people in South Asian region. Sri Lanka receives Official Development Assistance (ODA) from many multilateral organizations such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank, United Nations and bilateral donor countries like Japan, Germany, Norway, USA, Netherlands, Sweden, Australia and Canada[1]. Sri Lanka is one of “ top ten” recipient countries of Japanese ODA program. Since 1954, Japanese government assisted to develop economic infrastructure building and human resource development. Among the developing countries in South Asian region, Sri Lankans enjoy relatively high quality life due to the continuous donor assistance.

Even though quality of life improved during past 50 years, unfortunately Sri Lankan economy is still depended on foreign loans and grants and 3. 8 million people do not have basic needs to meet daily requirements[2]. One major problem in Sri Lanka is, its economy has failed to utilize labor force effectively. The high youth unemployment levels shows that present state run education system is not producing current labor force requirements and majority of young school leavers ended up their long school life with out a hope.

The main objective of this paper is to analysis Official Development Assistance from Japanese government to develop education sector in Sri Lanka and discover the weak points in present education system.

Literature Review

Views of Present Education System in Sri Lanka.

Poverty reduction is today's world main theme. Walter W. McMahon mentioned that " Knowledge is the central theme for many economic developments"[3]. Among the developing countries in South Asian region, Sri Lanka has higher literacy rate around 90 percent due to the state run education system[4]. However, at present mismatch is growing between education output and labor market requirements. Many scholars pointed out present education system has to reform according to the labor force requirement.

Saman Kelegama showed that effective education system is one factor which could reduce poverty and he described that Sri Lanka needs quick changes in education system[5]. Recently, World Bank reported that junior secondary education curriculum of Sri Lanka, has to be organized more on activity based learning and practical projects and senior secondary education curriculum has to be focused on subject depth, broad general knowledge, problem solving skills, strong reasoning abilities and accurate comprehension[6].

J. Charitha Ratwatte mentioned that education must be demand led. Demand is in the employment market. He showed that linkage between employment market and the process of education must be developed in Sri Lanka. He accepted that the product of education process is virtually unemployable and said substantial retraining is necessary to introduce students into the employment market. Ratwatte showed that lack of opportunity to learn

English is a major weakness in the education system[7]. My opinion is not only English other foreign languages also introduced in to the future generation. In this global village communication is an important tool to interact with other communities. AGW Nanayakkara pointed out current trends in labor market and causes of unemployment. He recommended some policy changes in education, favorable to fulfill gaps between education and labor market[8]. Access to education and training is a major determinant of young people's future capacity to participate and flourish in the society.

At present there is a high demand exists for vocational training in Sri Lanka. Department of National Planning of Sri Lanka has studied the quality of existing vocational training institutes and found that skills provided by the public sector vocational training institutes did not match with the labor market demands[9].

2. 2 Japanese ODA

The Development Assistance Committee peer review 2004, pointed out still around more than half of Japanese ODA focused on Asian region middle income recipient countries. According to the OECD[10]statistics, in 2002 Japan's top ten aid recipients were from Asian region and further it has mentioned that for 20 Asian countries, Japan was the largest donor.

According to the information published in Ministry of Finance and Planning in Sri Lanka[11], and JICA Sri Lanka office, majority of ongoing Japanese ODA projects are focusing on social and economic infrastructure building.

In early 1980s Japan was the largest donor country in the world and that time, its tied loans with high interest rates and shorter maturity periods was criticized by the rest of the world. Most of the heavy infrastructure development projects assisted by Japan were not fully benefited to the recipient governments due to high maintenance cost[12]. I agreed with this argument, before giving the assistance basic background has to be designed. Otherwise it's a huge wastage of money as well as people in the donor countries may disappointed by not achieving the goals. However Japan's assistance through JICA to improve quality of human power is significant. Every year JICA has number of training programs to pass advance technology, knowledge and skills to its recipient countries while sending Japanese experts and young volunteers in different fields JICA maintain continuous relationship with recipient countries[13].

3. 0 Education System of Sri Lanka

Education in Sri Lanka is considered as a basic human right and since independence education from grade one to basic degree, is free and compulsory for age group 5- 14 years. Sri Lankan government encourages parents to send their children to schools by providing school text books and materials for uniforms. Even though facilities are not equally distributed over the country, every 6 km² of the country has at least one school now[14]. The following information gives general idea about current education system.

Table 3. 0 Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Student/Teacher Ratio¹.**Year****No. Schools****No. students****No. of teachers****Student/Teacher Ratio**

2005

9727

3. 9 million

187, 339

21%

1 Only government schools

Source: Education Statistics, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

In year 2005 new entrants to grade one was 318, 093 and primary net enrollment ratio was 98 percent[15]. In schools both males and females have equal facilities. Average government expenditure on education in Sri Lanka is approximately 2. 7 percent of countries gross national product[16]. This map of Sri Lanka shows the distribution of schools and the mid year population in 2005.

3. 1 Current School and University Education System

Sri Lankan school education system has three main sections.

Primary education f from Grade 1 to 5

Secondary education f from Grade 6 to 11f Government Exam (GCE OL)[17]

Pre University education f from Grade 12 to 13f Government Exam (GCE AL)

18

The following diagram explains the current education system from grade one to basic degree with the completion rates at each sections and qualifying rates at each national level qualifying examinations.

New Entrants Grade 1**100%****Primary Education****(Completion rate 98%)****Labor market****Secondary Education****(G. C. E. OL) (Completion rate 80%)****Passing rate 36%****Pre University Education (G. C. E. AL)****Passing rate 50%****University Vacancies available only for 16%****97.5%****2.5%**

Source: Education Statistics, 2000, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

Student dropout in early ages can be seen in poor families in rural areas, due to many poverty related reasons. This number is unavoidable until eradicate poverty from Sri Lanka. At present around 80 percent of students complete their secondary school education but only 30-40 percent students can qualify for the pre university education.

The table 3. 1. 1 supports the primary net enrolment ratio and primary and secondary completion rate from 2000 to 2004.

Table 3. 1. 1 Primary Net Enrolment Ratio and Primary and Secondary Completion Rate 2000-2004**Year****Primary Net Enrolment Ratio (% of relative age group)****Completion Rate****Primary****Secondary**

2000

97. 7

96. 5

80. 0

2001

96. 8

98. 2

82. 6

2002

97. 2

96. 2

82. 8

2003

96.8

96.5

82.1

2004

98.0

97.7

83.8

Source: Education Statistics, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka,

Table 3. 1. 2 and table 3. 1. 3 shows the student performances at two main examinations in school system[18].

Table 3. 1. 2 GCE (OL) Performances of School Candidates 1997-2000

Year

1997

1998

1999

2000

Number Sat for GCE (OL)

323, 267

353, 372

346, 796

349, 464

% Qualified for GCE (AL)

32. 78

37. 43

37. 7

36. 98

Source: Education Statistics, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

According to the above data it is clear that annually around two third of students could not proceed further in this system. If there is an opportunity available in current education system, to develop skills, these young people could find a job when they entered in to the labor market. Unfortunately, present school education gives only paper based knowledge. Therefore at the beginning these young new entrants have no place in the labor market.

Table 3. 1. 3 gives GCE AL performances of school candidates. Even though education is free up to basic degree, opportunities available in universities are very limited. Therefore only 15-16 percent of qualifying students will get opportunity to enter to the university. In the year 2005, number of

universities increased up to 15 and graduate output (basic degree) was reported as 10, 525.

Table 3. 1. 3 GCE (AL) Performances of School Candidates 1997- 2000

Year

1997

1998

1999

2000

Number Sat for GCE (AL)

111, 105

114, 628

142, 294

157, 364

% Qualified for University

54. 24

52. 17

44. 75

51. 1

% Entered to University

15. 49

15. 67

16. 17

16. 08

Source: Education Statistics, Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

3. 2 Vocational Training Education

Vocational education concept is still developing in Sri Lanka. There are 902 vocational education institutes registered under the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) in Sri Lanka to train school leavers[19].

Under Public Sector 553

Private Sector 241

Non government Originations 108

The following table shows the student intakes for main vocational training institutes.

Table 3. 2. 1 Student Intakes for Main Vocational Training Institutes- 2005

Institute

No. of Centers

Intake

1. Department of Technical Education and Training.(DTET)

36

12, 395

2. Vocational Training Authority.(VTA)

212

21, 611

3. National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority.(NAITA)

55

14, 140

4. National Institute for Business Management.(NIBM)

3

2372

5. National Institute for Technical Education.(NITESL)

1

488

6. Ceylon German Technical Training Institute.(CG TTI)

2

2246

Source: Ministry of Vocational & Technical Training, Sri Lanka

At present number of vocational education institutes are not sufficient to meet the vocational education demand. And the quality of vocational training is doubtful. Majority of vocational education institutes are clustered around main cities and poor people living in remote areas could not reach to them. And there is no proper communication between school leavers and vocational training institutions. The table 3. 2. 2 gives evidences for present situation of vocational training institutes in Sri Lanka.

Table 3. 2. 2 Number of Males and Females Departure for Foreign Employments

2001-2004.

Type of work

2001

2002

2003

2004

Male

Female

Male

Female

Male

Female

Male

Female

Skilled

25, 262

11, 501

30, 567

14, 911

31, 638

16, 106

33, 649

11, 969

Unskilled

25, 584

7, 801

29, 130

7, 355

30, 837

13, 427

33, 538

9356

Source: Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment

Foreign employment is one of the major income sources of Sri Lankan government and skilled labor demand is higher than unskilled labor in foreign labor market. Still half of the people depart as unskilled labor because vocational training capacity is not enough. Similar trend can be

seen in export processing zones. The following graph shows that more than 10, 000 of employees attached to the export processing zones were unskilled labor.

Source: Board of Investment of Sri Lanka

3. 3 Youth Unemployment Rate

Mismatch of present education system and limitation in job opportunities create colossal frustration among young school leavers. In other words after enjoying 10 to 13 years of school education majority of energetic, young population has to spend another few years to search a job because their capabilities are not valued at the labor market. The following graph shows that the unemployment rates among age group 20-29 from 1990 to 2002. According to the graph more than half of 20-29 age group population is unemployed.

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

Even though education is free, parents have to support their children to have a better education. In most of the rural parents could not afford these expenses. These education cost leads poverty in most of the rural families. Educated unemployment is not only huge wastage of human power and government investment[20]it is a burden to poor families.

It is clear that present school education system and vocational education system has drawbacks. Many scholars pointed out improving school education system aiming to create productive labor force, Sri Lanka could reduce youth unemployment.

3. 4 Japan as a Donor

Since 1950s Japanese ODA is mainly focused on Asian region as a policy. The following graph shows the Japanese ODA in Asian region in 2004.

Source: DAC OECD statistics, 2004

The main objectives of Japanese ODA are to contribute peace and development of international community and thereby assure Japan's own security and prosperity. Japan's ODA positively consider the recipient country's own development strategies and support them to develop their infrastructure fairly utilizing Japanese own experience and advanced technology. Japanese ODA protects human security and great consideration has been taken on gender issues, gap between poor and rich and environment issues.

3. 4. 1. Analysis of Japanese ODA in Sri Lanka

Japan, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank (WB) are the premier donors in Sri Lanka. Japan mainly supported to the economic and social infrastructure building during the last 50 years. At present Japan's Country Assistance Program for Sri Lanka is mainly diverted on humanitarian and reconstruction support, assistance for institutional reforms, to build up economic infrastructure, enhancement of foreign currency earning capacity, and reduce poverty[21].

3. 4. 1. 1. Grant Aids on Education System

Since 1983, Japan ODA has contributed immensely on develop current formal education system in Sri Lanka . Japanese grant aid on education was focused on following aspects.

Build education infrastructure

Supply materials and equipments

Teacher training programs and Improve quality of education

The following table shows grant aid extended for physical infrastructure building in education development from 1983 to 1998.

Table 3. 4. 1. 1 Japanese ODA Allocation on Education Sector from 1983 to 1998.

Institute

Year

Description of Aid

Amount Y billions

1. University of Peradeniya, to improve facilities of the faculty of Engineering

1983

Experimental and Educational Equipment

0. 8

2. Ruhunu University of Sri Lanka, to improve facilities of Medical and

Science faculties

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1984

Equipment for Medical and Science Department

0. 6

3. Ministry of Education for the construction of Teacher's Training College at Matara

1984

New Building (8. 189M2)

1. 3

1985

A. V. System, Printers, Experimental Equipment, Agricultural Equipment

2. 0 (3. 3)

4. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for National Youth Services Centre at Maharagama

1985

New Building (15. 444M2) and Equipment

1

1986

-do-

1. 8 (2. 8)

5. Moratuwa University, to improve research facilities

1987

Measuring Apparatus, Computer, Spinning & Weaving Machine Etc.

0. 9

7. Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to establish the Auto Mobile

1987

Construction of Training Centre and Equipment

1. 4

8. Ministry of Education for the improvement of facilities for National Institute of Education, Maharagama

1989

New Building (9. 980M2) and training equipment

1. 1

1990

-do-

0. 9 (2. 0)

9. Open University of Sri Lanka for the establishment of Audio Visual Education Centre at Nawala Campus

1991

Construction of AV Educational Centre including Production Studio Editing Room, Maintenance Workshop etc. (1. 871M2)

0. 6

10. University of Colombo Faculty of Science

1991

Analytical Equipment, Experimental equipment etc.

0. 4

1992

NMR, GC-MS, SEM Spectrophotometer etc.

0. 4 (0. 8)

11. Ministry of Education & Higher Education

1995

Improvement of the Faculty of Dental Science

. 114

12. Ministry of Education & Higher Education

1996

Improvement of the faculty of Dental Science

. 988

13. Ministry of Education & Higher Education

1996

Improvement of the Education Equipment for the Faculty of Agriculture
University Peradeniya

. 721

14. Ministry of Higher Education and Education Sri Jayawardenapura
University

1996

Improvement of the Educational Equipment for the faculty of Medical Science

. 721

15. Ministry of Education & Higher Education Junior School Development

1998

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Construction & Equipment Supply

1. 329

16. Ministry of Education & Higher Education

1998

Supply of Equipment to Faculty of Engineering

. 481

Source: JICA[22]

3. 4. 2 Effectiveness of ODA

Current progress in Dental School attached to the University of Peradeniya is a proper example to evaluate the effectiveness of Japanese ODA in Sri Lanka[23]. Certainly, education leads to reduce poverty and improve quality of life. At the moment as a developing country, Sri Lanka is on the track to achieve Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

3. 5 A New Model to improve Education System

Today Sri Lanka needs more skilled based school education system to supply effective and skilled labor force. Using Japanese experience in education development and financial assistance more efficient education system can be introduced in future.

Main weaknesses of Present System

High competitiveness for limited opportunities. Students have no knowledge about different opportunities around them.

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No communication between school education system and vocational education system.

Lack of information about training programs.

Capacity of vocational training education is not enough and present vocational training centers are not distributed evenly.

Female participation in vocational training is limited.

Limited number of training programs and low quality of training programs.

Not enough trained teachers/ lectures/ resources.

No new technologies and no updates in programs.

After studying the weakness in the present system, I will recommend following model to improve the existing system.

Recommendations

Introduce vocational education concept in to school net work.

- My opinion is vocational education should be a part of secondary school education.

Level 1 - Give a clear idea about their future, future employment opportunities, how they can achieve different skills and from where they can get them, ect.

Level 2- Improve different basic skills according to their preferences and expand thinking capacity in practical world. Give opportunity to apply their

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theoretical knowledge into real life. Encourage students to discover the world.

Level 3- Introduce more skills and provide information about around the world. According to the labor force requirements allocate students in to different vocational training institutes.

In this process teachers can identify different skills of different students in their early stages of life and easy to direct them in to different directions.

Improve the coordination between Vocational education and School education.

- After facing General Certificate Examination at grade 11, students, who do not wish to continue up to basic degree, should introduce in to different vocational education institutes considering their skills and abilities. This process has to coordinate by school. Then nobody will leave outside. Capacity of existing vocational institutes has to increase to accommodate future demand.

Introduce demand based vocational education

Vocational education has to be planned according to the labor market requirement and coordination between universities and vocational institutes has to be improved.

Make a link between university systems and vocational training institutes.

-School teachers and vocational training teachers can train by existing resource persons like University professors and university students as well as different experts in different fields/government officers

Media can do an effective job in promoting vocational education. Then both students and parents will get information about training programs and at the moment trust building is important.

Maintain contacts with labor market (domestic and foreign) and vocational education institutes in other countries.

Update curriculums time to time according to the requirements.

Skilled based Primary and Secondary Education System

Level 1

Level 2 and Level 3A New Model

Grade 11 GCEOL

Vocational Training Institutes

Pre University Education

University

Industries/Services

Self Employment

Foreign Employments

Japanese ODA and Experience

Other

In the above model big arrows represents the places and directions need more attention and financial assistance. Japanese ODA can extend to introduce vocational education in to school network and to improve the quality and capacity of existing vocational education institutes. Sri Lankan government's responsibility is to create links between resource persons in to vocational training institutes and to introduce vocational training output in to labor market properly. And by giving low interest loans to initiate self employments, the trained people can motivate to have their own industries.

4. 0 Conclusion

Education development is a long term effective investment on poverty reduction. During the last fifty years Sri Lankan education system improved

using official development assistance. School network expanded and quality of education improved. Vocational training institutes were introduced. And government of Sri Lanka maintained the system properly and able to improve it in to some extent. Last 50 years thousands of professionals like doctors, engineers, teachers created and employed them in the society and able to achieve the maximum benefits from them.

But world is changing. Present education system needs improvements to match with the challenging and changing world. Therefore capacity and quality of present education system has to increase. New concepts, methods and technologies has to introduce.

However this kind of massive project needs significant amount of financial assistance and proper guidance. At the moment Sri Lankan government receives significant amount of official development assistance from Japanese government. Therefore, Sri Lankan government's responsibility is to utilize them with the technical guidance of Japanese government and improve the present education system for a better future.