Chapter Four

DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATION QUALITY: STATUS, CHALLENGES AND POLICY RESPONSES

4.0 Introduction

4.1. The quality of education, broadly defined to cover cognitive achievement as well as other dimensions of learning, such as good team work, a disciplined and industrious work ethic, effective communication, visionary leadership, and good civic attitudes and practices, is at the core of the Sri Lankan education policy agenda [see NEC (2003)]. This chapter analyzes several important dimensions of education quality. First, an analysis of the level and determinants of cognitive achievement is undertaken. This is followed by a discussion of the government strategy to improve education quality and link education to the world of work. Next, a set of four case studies undertaken specially for this report, are presented. The first case study examines education management practices in schools, an issue that is at the heart of the school effectiveness and school performance literature. The second case study covers an area of increasing policy interest and concern in Sri Lanka, early childhood development. The third case study focuses on the reconstruction of the education system in the least developed area of the country, the conflict affected region. The final case study examines an important element of the relationship between education and social cohesion, the civic attitudes and understanding of students.

4.1 Dimensions of Education Quality: Levels and Determinants of Cognitive Achievement

Cognitive achievement levels of students in the primary education cycle

4.2. Education policy makers express concern at the unsatisfactory state of learning levels in the country [see NEC (1997), (2003)]. Cognitive achievement tests among primary school children show substantial shortfalls in mastery of fundamental language and numeracy skills towards the end of the primary cycle [see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2]. In first language (Sinhalese and Tamil), average mastery is only 37%. This implies that two out of every three children have not achieved the targeted level of first language mastery through grades 1-4. Writing (28%) and syntax (30%) are the weakest mother tongue skills. Comprehension (45%), too, is
poor. Vocabulary skills (70%) are better, but even here one in three children has an inadequate command of the language. English language skills are extremely low. Only 10% of primary children achieve the targeted level of mastery. English language writing skills are virtually non-existent, with just 1% of children exhibiting the required skill level. English language comprehension (16%) and syntax (20%) are also very poor. English language vocabulary skills are higher (35%), but show that two out of three children lack even this basic skill.

4.3. In mathematics achievement, too, overall mastery is only 38%. Mastery of mathematical concepts is 45%, procedures 51% and problem solving only 34%. The low level of cognitive achievement among primary students is especially worrying, from a policy perspective, as primary education forms the foundation upon which secondary and tertiary education and various types of skills training are built. Hence, the quality and performance of the entire education system is constrained by the low achievement levels in the primary grades.

4.4. In addition to these low overall achievement levels, there are also significant disparities in achievement between urban and rural areas. First language (Sinhalese or Tamil) mastery in urban areas is 51%, but falls to 34% in rural areas. In English language skills, 23% of urban children achieve mastery, but in rural areas only 7% of children reach mastery. In mathematics, 52% of urban children attain mastery, while just 35% of rural children achieve the required level of competence. These urban-rural differences can be attributed to a combination of factors, such as the lower quality of education services in rural areas, poorer parental capability and support, and weaker opportunities for child activities that promote learning.

**Table 4.1. Proportion of Children Achieving Mastery of Language Skills at Grade 4, 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>First Language (Sinhala or Tamil)</th>
<th></th>
<th>English Language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Lanka Urban Sector %</td>
<td>Rural Sector %</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Urban Sector %</td>
<td>Rural Sector %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Assessment of Grade 4 Learning Achievement: National Education Research and Evaluation Center, University of Colombo.

Note: Numbers have been rounded to the nearest integer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Sri Lanka %</th>
<th>Urban Sector %</th>
<th>Rural Sector %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Assessment of Grade 4 Learning Achievement: National Education Research and Evaluation Center, University of Colombo.

Note: Numbers have been rounded to the nearest integer.
Analysis of factors associated with grade 4 cognitive achievement

4.5. The results of an econometric analysis of the factors associated with grade 4 cognitive achievement are presented, in terms of school, household and child specific variables, in Table 4.3. Among education variables, teacher performance plays an important role in determining the learning outcomes of students. Students perform better in classes where teachers use child centered learning methods, prepare lessons daily, employ desk work as part of classroom practice, use oral English in their teaching, and evaluate student exercises. These are plausible findings, as teachers set the tone and content of the classroom experience of students. In addition, within schools, teachers determine the level and extent of student exposure to first language and English language skills such as vocabulary, comprehension, syntax and writing, and mathematical skills such as conceptual understanding, knowledge of procedures and application to problem solving. From a policy perspective, these findings emphasize the importance of teacher performance. Hence, initiatives to improve the capabilities, motivation and classroom practice of teachers needs to be a core element of education development strategy.

4.6. The adoption of a child centered learning approach contributes positively to learning outcomes in all three subject areas, first language, English and mathematics. This finding provides important econometric support to findings from qualitative studies that parents and teachers perceive child centered learning as improving student performance. The use of oral English in teaching contributes favorably not only to English language scores, but also to first language learning and mathematics achievement. This can be attributed to the ability of teachers conversant in English to access ideas and general information better than teachers lacking English language competency. Improving the English language capabilities of teachers, hence, could yield broad benefits to students.

4.7. The timely possession of textbooks has a positive and significant impact on learning achievement. This finding illustrates the importance of textbooks as a key teaching and learning resource to improve cognitive achievement. Government policy is to provide schools with a choice of free textbooks for children in grades 1-11, purchasing the selected titles from private textbook publishers. This policy, referred to as the multiple textbook option (MBO), is intended to promote learning by ensuring that all students have textbooks, while relying on private sector publication of competing textbooks to increase quality and reduce cost.

4.8. Students attending schools with electricity perform better than students in schools without electricity. Schools with electricity are likely to be better endowed, in terms of facilities and services, so that this is a plausible finding. Children in schools in municipal areas perform better than children in urban council or rural areas. However, the difference between children in urban council and rural areas is insignificant. This may be due to the intense attention given by government to improve the quality of rural schools.

4.9. The analysis also throws up a number of anomalous findings. For instance, observations on the enthusiasm of teachers, the pleasantness of learning activities and the ability of teachers to cope with learning disabilities, are all negatively associated with cognitive scores. These findings may partly reflect the difficulty of measuring such variables, which are based on third party observations, accurately. Children in schools with classroom cupboards perform worse than other children, which is again an anomalous result. It may indicate the difficulty of directly relating such inputs as classroom cupboards to final learning outcomes in a production function framework.
Table 4.3. Regression Analysis of Student, Household and School Characteristics Affecting Learning Achievement in Grade 4 in 2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variables</th>
<th>Mathematics learning levels</th>
<th>English language learning levels</th>
<th>First language (Sinhalese or Tamil) learning levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male child</td>
<td>-0.185*** (0.039)</td>
<td>-0.254*** (0.037)</td>
<td>-0.298*** (0.038)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of child</td>
<td>-0.018 (0.048)</td>
<td>-0.075 (0.046)</td>
<td>-0.065 (0.051)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother's education</td>
<td>0.016** (0.007)</td>
<td>0.019*** (0.007)</td>
<td>0.019*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's education</td>
<td>0.041*** (0.007)</td>
<td>0.056*** (0.007)</td>
<td>0.045*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log of household spending per capita</td>
<td>0.166*** (0.037)</td>
<td>0.231*** (0.039)</td>
<td>0.169*** (0.037)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental aspirations for child's education</td>
<td>0.049*** (0.010)</td>
<td>0.049*** (0.009)</td>
<td>0.047*** (0.010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools located in a municipal council</td>
<td>0.174** (0.088)</td>
<td>0.396*** (0.085)</td>
<td>0.332*** (0.082)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools located in an urban council</td>
<td>-0.079 (0.080)</td>
<td>0.116 (0.078)</td>
<td>0.057 (0.075)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's height</td>
<td>0.103*** (0.020)</td>
<td>0.120*** (0.020)</td>
<td>0.119*** (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child missed school frequently due to illness</td>
<td>-0.144** (0.057)</td>
<td>-0.166*** (0.051)</td>
<td>-0.143*** (0.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child has hearing difficulty</td>
<td>-0.723*** (0.187)</td>
<td>-0.365** (0.148)</td>
<td>-0.433*** (0.180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child suffers from worm infections</td>
<td>-0.052 (0.072)</td>
<td>-0.033 (0.068)</td>
<td>-0.072 (0.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with grades up to GCE A/L (Arts, Commerce &amp; Science)</td>
<td>-0.124 (0.095)</td>
<td>-0.181** (0.090)</td>
<td>-0.259*** (0.091)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with grades up to GCE A/L (Arts &amp; Commerce only)</td>
<td>0.031 (0.089)</td>
<td>-0.289*** (0.085)</td>
<td>-0.073 (0.087)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with grades up to GCE O/L</td>
<td>0.077 (0.088)</td>
<td>-0.090 (0.085)</td>
<td>-0.086 (0.086)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private schools</td>
<td>-1.141*** (0.208)</td>
<td>-1.454*** (0.213)</td>
<td>-1.378*** (0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has a walled compound</td>
<td>0.138* (0.082)</td>
<td>0.122 (0.082)</td>
<td>0.117 (0.080)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity available in school</td>
<td>0.261*** (0.072)</td>
<td>0.249*** (0.065)</td>
<td>0.221*** (0.070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School principal male</td>
<td>-0.149** (0.060)</td>
<td>-0.081 (0.062)</td>
<td>-0.076 (0.060)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of textbooks by the beginning of the second term</td>
<td>0.603*** (0.089)</td>
<td>0.432*** (0.092)</td>
<td>0.620*** (0.088)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher prepares daily lesson plans</td>
<td>0.149*** (0.057)</td>
<td>0.151*** (0.051)</td>
<td>0.113*** (0.053)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Household variables and learning outcomes

4.10. Household variables play an extremely important role in determining cognitive achievement levels. The education attainment of fathers and mothers exert a positive effect on learning levels in all three dependent variables, mathematics, English language and first language achievement. Parental educational aspirations for children are also favorably associated with learning outcomes in all three subjects. These are plausible findings, as educated parents with high educational goals for their children are more likely and able to provide an encouraging and

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanatory Variables</th>
<th>Mathematics learning levels</th>
<th>English language learning levels</th>
<th>First language (Sinhalese or Tamil) learning levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher prepares visual aids</td>
<td>-0.035 (0.058)</td>
<td>-0.039 (0.055)</td>
<td>-0.063 (0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses student centered teaching methods</td>
<td>0.288*** (0.059)</td>
<td>0.179*** (0.055)</td>
<td>0.272*** (0.056)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses deskwork</td>
<td>0.100** (0.041)</td>
<td>0.102** (0.041)</td>
<td>0.064 (0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has book cupboards</td>
<td>-0.120*** (0.043)</td>
<td>-0.172*** (0.042)</td>
<td>-0.167*** (0.041)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School has playgrounds</td>
<td>-0.011 (0.054)</td>
<td>0.050 (0.052)</td>
<td>-0.068 (0.050)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses textbooks</td>
<td>0.018 (0.049)</td>
<td>0.101** (0.047)</td>
<td>0.054 (0.047)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher evaluates students' exercises</td>
<td>0.099 (0.065)</td>
<td>0.113* (0.059)</td>
<td>0.152** (0.066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasantness of learning activities</td>
<td>-0.141*** (0.060)</td>
<td>-0.146** (0.057)</td>
<td>-0.228*** (0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's ability to cope with children having learning disabilities</td>
<td>-0.282*** (0.056)</td>
<td>-0.240*** (0.050)</td>
<td>-0.235*** (0.055)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher uses oral English</td>
<td>0.075*** (0.037)</td>
<td>0.099*** (0.036)</td>
<td>0.138*** (0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm of the teacher</td>
<td>-0.218*** (0.068)</td>
<td>-0.156** (0.070)</td>
<td>-0.134** (0.067)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-2.262*** (0.579)</td>
<td>-2.207*** (0.562)</td>
<td>-1.813*** (0.608)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>2,177</td>
<td>2,220</td>
<td>2,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. All regressions were estimated using ordinary least squares (OLS) methods. Some regressions also added community fixed effects, which in effect add a dummy variable for each community. These fixed effects regressions control for all observed and unobserved community characteristics and thus are useful for reducing bias in the estimated impacts of household and school characteristics. For example, it is possible in a regression without such fixed effects that an observed school characteristic is correlated with some unobserved community characteristic that raises educational achievement, such as the prevalence of tutoring services in the local community (wealthy communities may have better schools and also more tutoring services). This correlation would lead to overestimation of the causal impact of school characteristics on test scores, but adding community fixed effects removes this potential source of bias.
supportive learning environment at home. The econometric analysis also shows that children from affluent households have higher learning outcomes. Again, this is an intuitively reasonable finding, as wealthy families are better able to invest in the education of their children.

*Child specific variables and cognitive achievement*

4.11. The health and nutrition status of children are significantly related to student achievement. Height is positively related to learning levels, suggesting that stunted children perform worse than normal children. This is intuitively plausible, as stunting is an indication of low nutrition, and under-nutrition impairs learning ability and attention in classrooms. Children with hearing impediments and sickly students perform poorly on all three dimensions of learning, mathematics, English and first language. These findings suggest that attention needs to be given to factors outside the education system too, such as child health conditions and nutrition levels, when seeking to improve education quality.

4.12. The unsatisfactory state of education quality has led to intense public debate and interest in developing education policies to improve learning outcomes. Government policy to improve education quality contains seven interacting components, drawn from the education performance of countries with more advanced education systems and the literature on school effectiveness and performance.

4.13. *Curriculum modernization.* The primary education curriculum has been reformed to implement the policy framework proposed by the NEC (1997). Three key components of these policies are:

(i) integration of the primary curriculum around the subject areas of first language, mathematics, religion and environmental studies; (ii) introduction of oral English from grade 1 onwards and formal English from grade 3 onwards; and (iii) organization of the primary education cycle along the key stage model used in England, with three key stages, grades 1-2, grades 3-4 and grade 5. Essential learning competencies have been set for each key stage, so that mastery of these competencies can be assessed.

4.14. The junior secondary education curriculum has been organized to emphasize activity based learning, practical projects and subject content knowledge, with greater emphasis on practical work at the earlier levels of secondary schooling. The senior secondary education curriculum awards importance to subject content depth, broad general knowledge and awareness, problem solving skills, strong reasoning ability and accurate comprehension.

4.15. Two sets of key policy changes were introduced into the university system at the undergraduate level during the 1990s: (i) new universities were established, such as Rajarata, Sabaragamuwa and Wayamba, to offer non-standard degree courses; and (ii) the course unit system was introduced, to offer greater flexibility in course design, enable wider student choice and a broader undergraduate education than the older, highly specialized academic system. The new system sacrifices subject content depth at the undergraduate level, however, which is a problem for hierarchically ordered subjects. Further, the absence of a well-developed postgraduate education program constrains
the ability of the tertiary education system to compensate for this loss of subject content depth at the undergraduate level.

4.16. Introducing modern, student-friendly teaching approaches and learning methods. The primary and secondary education system seeks to adopt a student-centered approach to learning. This includes, over the key stages of the primary curriculum, guided play, activity and desk work. In the secondary education curriculum, the emphasis is on projects, self-learning, hands-on experiences and learning by doing. The recent implementation experience of these curriculum approaches and teaching-learning models have been intensively assessed at the primary and secondary education levels. Several evaluations of the primary education system [see SLAAED (2000) and NEREC (2002)] found that the approach was highly popular among stakeholders and beneficiaries, such as children, parents, teachers, principals and education administrators. Evaluations of key recent policy measures in the senior secondary education system, too, found favorable responses from stakeholders and beneficiaries [see Wijetunge and Rupasinghe (2003), Perera, Gunewardena and Wijetunge (2003) and Karunaratne (2003)]. The design and implementation of the reforms at both the primary and senior secondary education stages were generally considered sound and well prepared, and were strongly supported by the central and provincial education systems. Inevitably, in a wide-ranging reform process, there were also teething problems, especially given the tight fiscal constraints and limited administrative capacity of the system. However, these were not serious problems, and the NEC proposes continuing these policies, with some fine tuning at the senior secondary level [see NEC (2003)].

4.17. Policy measures and implementation at the junior secondary education level have been less successful [see Mettananda (2002), Gunewardena and Lekamge (2003), Perera, Gunewardena and Wijetunge (2003)]. The main reasons for the weaker performance of education policy measures at this level appear to be: (i) policy inconsistency, especially on the grade span and curriculum organization; (ii) the failure to establish a high level technical committee to oversee and support implementation, as at the primary level; and (iii) inadequate resources to support the ambitious reforms proposed [see NEC (2003)].

4.18. Developing effective leadership and management capabilities among heads of education institutions, especially principals and section heads. The cardinal importance of good leadership in developing and maintaining high performing education institutions has been stressed by policy makers in recent years. A formal Principals’ Service was established in 1997. In addition, a Principals’ Training Center is being developed at Meepe by the National Institute of Education (NIE), and offers a wide range of education management programs, from short thematic courses to postgraduate Diplomas and Masters degrees. As with new initiatives, considerable further development is needed. Currently, school principals are appointed from both the Principals' Service and the older (1971) Sri Lanka Education Administrators' Service, with little synchronization between the two. Further, principals and school section heads (head masters and head mistresses) lack incentives to engage in professional development and training activities. Also, suitable performance appraisal systems have not yet been established. The NEC (2003) recommends developing a national policy for school principals, outlining qualifications, appointment and promotion criteria, relationship to other education services, professional and career development incentives and opportunities, and performance appraisal and rewards. Such a national policy can be extremely useful. Further, government
needs to consider extending the policy to cover school section heads, such as headmasters and headmistresses, as well.

4.19. Increasing the quality of the teaching force. Sri Lankan education policy makers emphasize the crucial role of teachers in delivering education services [see NEC (1997), (2003)]. Over the past seven years the country has established 17 National Colleges of Education (NCOEs) to ensure that all individuals joining the teachers' service successfully complete a three year pre-service teacher education program and receive due certification, or are university graduates. The number of untrained teachers in the system has been reduced from about 45,000 in 1997 to around 2,000 in 2003. In addition, 94 Teacher Centers (TCs) have been established, one in each zone, to facilitate continuing professional development opportunities for teachers, especially to widen and upgrade subject content knowledge, and refresh pedagogical skills through continuing teacher education. A national Teacher Educators' Service has also been established to provide an academic cadre for the NCOEs and TCs. Key proposals to develop teacher quality in the future include: (i) developing an all graduate teacher cadre; (ii) establishing a Teacher Education Board for planning, coordinating and quality assurance of the teacher education system; and (iii) ensuring teachers acquire competency in English, computer literacy, counseling and guidance, and the teaching of Sinhalese or Tamil as third languages, in addition to pedagogy and subject expertise. The findings from the econometric analysis of the relationship between learning outcomes and teacher variables in the preceding section highlight the importance of these policy measures to improve the motivation and performance of teachers.

4.20. Providing on-site academic support to schools and education institutions. Schools are supported through a system of in-service advisors who are expected to visit schools and provide advice, guidance and technical support to principals and teachers. This system functioned well in earlier generations, but recently the system appears to have weakened, especially at the level of Divisional Education Offices. Current policy thinking is to absorb the Divisional Education Offices into the Zonal Education Offices, and strengthen the capabilities and performance of this important administrative tier. This is an area where further policy development and capacity building would be extremely useful.

4.21. Reforming examinations and assessment systems. Continuous assessment methods have been introduced in universities and are in the process of being introduced within the school system. The objective of continuous assessment methods are to strengthen the project and activity based approach to pedagogy and learning, improve the work ethics and discipline of students by compelling them to prepare throughout the year, and provide students with a better opportunity to perform at their normal level than can be observed through single year-end examinations. In the school system, school based continuous assessment has been introduced as part of the GCE O/L and GCE A/L examination cycles. Policy makers plan to review the implementation experience of school based assessment over a three year cycle and develop further refinements to the model [see NEC (2003)]. In the university system, continuous assessment was introduced in the late 1990s to complement the course unit model. The university assessment methods include examinations at the end of semesters, and classroom tests and take home assignments during the semester. In addition, some degree programs also offer mid-semester tests.

4.22. Strengthening education research, monitoring and evaluation. This is an important policy measure, introduced to obtain regular and systematic feedback on the performance of various aspects of the education
system and design policies based on objective and rigorous evidence. A key initiative to develop education research and evaluation capacity has been the establishment of a National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC). This center has commenced conducting statistically rigorous tests of learning achievement in the country.

4.3 Pursuing Excellence in Education Quality

4.23 The development measures above provide a promising foundation upon which Sri Lanka can build a high quality education system. The education development literature, the education reform experience of other countries, and the education experience of Sri Lanka itself, suggest several further development initiatives that are urgently needed to improve the quality of education and establish high performing schools in the country.

Improving understanding, at school level, of targeted competencies in the primary education curriculum

4.24. Currently, the competencies, skills and expected learning outcomes of the primary school curriculum are clearly specified. However, understanding of these achievement levels among principals and teachers is limited and inadequate. Further, the capabilities of principals and teachers to translate these primary school achievement levels into effective teaching strategies in schools and classrooms are weak. The government could consider two key initiatives to combat this problem:

a. ensure widespread dissemination and understanding of the competencies, skills and expected learning outcomes of the primary school curriculum among principals and teachers, including making printed versions of these achievement levels available to schools; and

b. strengthen the capacity of teachers to equip students up to the achievement levels specified in the curriculum.

Clarifying and detailing the secondary school curriculum

4.25. Unlike in the primary school curriculum, the competencies, skills and expected learning outcomes of the secondary school curriculum are not clearly specified. In consequence, the secondary curriculum is disorganized, with poor sequencing across grade levels and cycles. In addition, schools are unable to set goals and targets for achievement levels in each grade, or organize their teaching methods and learning strategies around a clearly articulated curriculum. Hence, two core development initiatives that can be considered by government to strengthen secondary education in the future are to:

a. clarify and organize the secondary school curriculum, specifying the competencies, skills and expected learning outcomes in each grade and subject; and

b. ensure widespread dissemination and understanding of these achievement levels among principals and teachers, including making relevant printed material available to schools.

Strengthening professional competencies and skills of teachers

4.26. The quality of the teaching force is of cardinal importance in any education system. Sri Lanka invested heavily, over the past five years or so, to construct, staff and equip a complete network of national colleges of education (NCOEs) to provide pre-service teacher education and teacher centers (TCs) to deliver continuing teacher education. Virtually all school teachers are now trained, and enjoy opportunities for professional development during their career. The government can build on this institutional foundation to develop the professional capabilities and skills of teachers. Key actions that would help achieve this objective are:
a. introducing continuing teacher training programs aimed at transforming and developing entire schools through on-site training, to complement the off-site training activities currently offered through teacher centers to enable individual teachers to upgrade their skills;

b. modernizing the curricula and instructional practices of pre-service and continuing teacher training programs to equip teachers to utilize equipment and technology in teaching activities, such as course planning and organization, classroom practice, student assignments and homework, and assessment of student knowledge and skills;

c. developing the curricula and instructional practices of pre-service and continuing teacher education programs to equip teachers with the pedagogical skills needed to promote child-centered and activity based teaching-learning approaches in the primary and secondary grade cycles;

d. endowing teachers with the skills to forge partnerships with local communities to improve school quality;

e. equipping teachers to assume responsibility, under the leadership of principals, to set and achieve high school performance standards; and

f. strengthening the professional knowledge and understanding of subject areas and the pedagogical skills of teachers on a regular, continuing cycle over their teaching careers.

Strengthening the leadership and management capabilities of principals, headmasters and headmistresses

4.27. The central importance of high quality school leadership is appreciated by Sri Lankan education policy makers. A principals' training center is being developed to provide leadership and management training to principals and school section heads such as headmasters and headmistresses. Further, policy measures are being introduced to empower principals and devolve considerable managerial power to schools. Strengthening the leadership skills and managerial competencies of school principals, headmasters and headmistresses is a key area for development. Important leadership and management skills required in the future include the abilities to:

a. clearly articulate the vision and educational goals of schools;

b. organize schools to implement the curriculum effectively;

c. match the pedagogical competencies of teachers to the classroom and co-curricular needs of schools;

d. appraise staff, especially teachers, and progressively improve their competencies and skills;

e. motivate staff and students towards high performance;

f. deploy and utilize physical resources to promote school goals;

g. develop close ties with community organizations, including parent-teacher associations and past pupils associations; and

h. maintain high visibility and accessibility to pupils, teachers, parents and other community members.

Developing academic and administrative support systems for schools

4.28. Support networks that provide academic and administrative assistance and guidance to schools are at a rudimentary stage in Sri Lanka. The existing system of in-service advisors to provide support to schools is poorly developed. Strengthening this system is of strategic importance for future education development. Priority areas for
future development include:

a. clearly articulating the roles and responsibilities of in-service advisors;

b. selecting and appointing in-service advisors on the basis of proven professional competence and performance;

c. equipping in-service advisors to provide services, including information and training regarding good instructional practices, to schools to raise performance;

d. utilizing in-service advisors effectively to evaluate and provide constructive feedback on the academic performance and efforts of school principals and teachers; and

e. incorporating on-site support to schools into the regular development activities of provincial education authorities and zonal education offices.

Expanding the education capital stock and increasing the use of equipment and technology in teaching and learning

4.29 As Sri Lanka stands poised on the threshold of the second stage of education development, the school system needs to advance from a low-technology environment heavily dependent on “chalk and talk” to a modern, equipment and technology intensive education system. The education capital stock of IT centers and equipment, science laboratories, libraries, activity rooms, instruments and tools, needs to be increased in stages. Concurrently, equipment and technology have to be awarded a prominent role in teaching methods, learning approaches and examinations. For instance, instructional time in science can be weighted more in favor of laboratory work, and lab-based assignments used as part of the assessment mechanism. Similarly, teaching methods in subjects such as mathematics and physics can include the use of educational software to enable, *inter alia*, self-paced learning among children. Audio equipment can be utilized in language instruction, especially English, to develop vocabulary, pronunciation and oral fluency. And increasing use of libraries and reading material provide an extremely effective method of enhancing learning outcomes.

Improving the quality of textbooks

4.30. Textbooks constitute the main learning resource in the education system. Further, for a developing country such as Sri Lanka, it is likely to remain the chief quality input for many years into the future. As such, ensuring high quality textbooks is vitally important. In recent years, the government has implemented an important policy initiative to increase the quality of textbooks and widen the choice of textbooks available to schools by dismantling a state monopoly and opening textbook publication to competitive private firms. Future development of private sector textbook publication could include the following key steps:

a. enhancing the technical capacity of textbook writers, illustrators and editors in the country;

b. strengthening quality control of manuscripts and drafts, including checking factual accuracy and eliminating material that hurts different religious and ethnic groups;

c. speeding up contracting and delivery to ensure timely distribution to schools prior to the commencement of the academic year; and

d. developing technical capacity among writers to produce supplementary reading material, workbooks and textbook guides.

Reconstructing damaged education institutions in conflict affected areas

4.31. Enrolment and learning levels are lowest in the conflict affected areas, which experience special challenges caused by the destruction of education infrastructure. Government education institutions in the conflict affected areas, especially schools, suffered
damage during the conflict period. An assessment of the reconstruction, rehabilitation and developmental needs of the region [see UNICEF-World Bank (2003)] estimated that about USD140 million is required to restore the education capital stock in the region. Technical capacity, however, is a major challenge in implementing education reconstruction and rehabilitation work in the conflict affected regions. In particular, there are shortages of material and skilled labor. Also, as funds have poured into the region for reconstruction work, prices of goods and wages have risen. Long-term support to restore the education system in the conflict affected areas requires considerable capacity building activity.

**Promoting social cohesion through education**

4.32. Enhancing civic knowledge and understanding among students is an important measure to promote respect for diversity, democratic governance and civil liberties in the backdrop of the 20 year long secessionist conflict in the country. Additional measures to promote social cohesion through education include producing textbooks that are sensitive to the cultures of different social groups, using the curriculum and co-curricular activities to promote respect for diversity, introducing schools where children from different ethnic groups can study together and promoting the use of English as a link language. These are useful measures, although their impact clearly depends on the cooperation of different social groups. In particular, the cooperation of dominant groups in the conflict affected areas is needed to promote these activities effectively.

**Improving the quality of university education**

4.33. The university system has not experienced the same intensive process of consultative policy development as the school system. However, the UGC and individual universities have developed several initiatives to enhance quality. These include reforming curricula and examination systems, especially organizing degree programs around course unit systems and introducing continuous assessment systems, developing corporate plans for universities, introducing performance appraisal systems for staff, setting up an accreditation process under an independent board, and introducing an element of performance based funding. These initiatives have yet to be tested, and good evaluations, especially of the older initiatives such as the introduction of course unit systems and continuous assessment mechanisms, could be helpful to policy makers and academics.

4.4 **Orienting the Education System to the World of Work**

4.34. The Sri Lankan education policy framework stresses the importance of orienting the education system to the world of work [see NEC (2003)]. Policy makers are aware that the best foundation for the world of work is a high quality school system which can supply the labor market with trainable individuals and provide a strong spring board for technical, professional and university education. The school system plays a pivotal role in producing knowledge and generic skills, such as team work, decision making, initiative, problem solving, responsibility, leadership and communication, which are important in the world of work. The school system also constitutes the basic curriculum framework for the acquisition of knowledge and specific capabilities in demand in the labor market. Plans to improve the orientation of the Sri Lankan education system to the world of work needs priority development initiatives in curricula, use of IT and technology in education, language skills and fluency, and career guidance and counseling.

**Developing and implementing an activity based curriculum**

4.35. The activity based curriculum approach advocated by Sri Lankan policy makers for secondary education is explicitly
designed to develop a sound work ethic among school children [see NEC (2003)]. As such, it can play a key role in orienting the education system to the world of work. The future development and implementation of the activity based curriculum approach depends on key initiatives to:

a. train teachers in activity based pedagogy;
b. train principals to organize schools for an activity based curriculum;
c. provide sufficient classroom space and activity rooms to implement activity based learning; and
d. make adequate equipment, technology and reading material available in schools to support activity based teaching and learning.

Improving English language skills

4.37. English language skills and fluency enjoy strong demand in the national labor market. In addition, English language competency opens job prospects in the global economy. In consequence, developing English language skills constitutes a central element of the education policy framework to improve the labor market orientation of the school system. Important development initiatives for the future include:

a. allowing private schools to provide students a choice of English as a medium of instruction, along with Sinhalese and Tamil, from grade 1 upwards;
b. introducing English as a medium of instruction in government schools in stages, as and when adequate teachers become available;
c. training teachers, including re-training “excess teachers” in the system, to teach English as a subject;
d. training teachers, including re-training “excess teachers” in the system, to teach in English as a medium of instruction; and
e. utilizing audio-visual educational resources and IT based education material widely for English language teaching and learning.

Strengthening skills development and training

4.38. Skills development constitutes the chief active labor market strategy of the government to promote the job prospects and labor productivity of school leavers. Several promising development initiatives and policy measures have been proposed by policy makers, including:

a. strengthening the Technical and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) as the apex body for TEVT;
b. developing the role of government to function as a facilitator, standard
setter and regulator of training;
c. fostering private sector participation in training;
d. promoting government-industry partnerships in skills development;
e. accrediting and monitoring the quality of public and private training institutions;
f. rationalizing the public sector TEVT system;
g. improving the linkages of the TEVT system with the school and university systems; including establishing career guidance and counseling in schools and universities;
h. promoting vocational training for the informal sector; and
i. providing financial incentives for training targeting the corporate sector.

These are rational and potentially productive ideas, reflecting international thinking and practice. The actual stage of development of these various policy initiatives is modest, with many ideas still at the level of blueprints. Translating these policy ideas into development strategies and implementing them constitute the next major challenges faced by the TEVT sector.

**Developing career guidance and counseling**

4.39. An important government recommendation to link education to the world of work is the development of effective career guidance and counseling. Universities have commenced career guidance and counseling activities. However, in the school system, career guidance and counseling is virtually non-existent. Developing career guidance and counseling in schools is an important initiative for future implementation. Key actions to promote this initiative could include:

a. training a core cadre of school staff in career guidance and counseling;
b. prioritizing schools in poor regions in the development of guidance and counseling, as students in such areas have less access to labor market information; and
c. developing information networks between vocational training and technical education institutions and guidance counselors in schools.

4.5 Case Studies of Selected Dimensions of Education Quality

4.40. The preceding analysis examined important dimensions of learning outcomes and government education strategy at the broad level of national policy. The current section presents four case studies, specially commissioned for this report, which analyze key elements of education quality: (i) education management practices and the interaction of inputs and processes at school level; (ii) Early Childhood Development; (iii) reconstruction of the education system in conflict affected areas; and (iv) the promotion of social cohesion through the school system.
4.1.1. Analyzing the qualitative dynamics of the interaction among the conditions within schools in Sri Lanka is important for education policy making, as general recommendations about program design based on quantitative assessments need to be supplemented by qualitative information. For example, there is strong research evidence that the presence of textbooks affects school achievement positively. However, the dynamics and efficacy of book use in schools is not well understood. For educational reform and program design to be successful, these quantitative analyses need to be enriched by systematic qualitative information on the dynamics within schools.

4.1.2. As part of a process to take a fresh look at the guiding parameters which should be in place for learning environments in Sri Lankan schools, a qualitative study was undertaken by the National Education Research and Evaluation Center (NEREC) for this report. The study focused on 100 schools (92 public and 8 private) across all provinces in Sri Lanka and represents all school types. More in-depth case studies are also underway in eight schools, including two private schools.

4.1.3. The study particularly focused on key interacting school-related factors and their relationships with the larger education system and local communities. These factors were based on those identified from international experience which improve student learning environments [see ANTRIEP (2000), Heneveld and Craig (1996), Lockheed and Verspoor (1991)]. These include:

- Strong parent and community support
- Effective support from the larger education system, including clearly defined student outcomes; transparent and merit-based career opportunities for staff, and frequent and appropriate teacher development activities
- Adequate material support; i.e., sufficient instructional materials, adequate facilities
- Effective leadership
- A capable teaching force
- Flexibility and autonomy to organize school priorities and activities
- Sufficient days spent in school during the school year
- Clear goals and high expectations of students and staff
- Positive teacher attitudes, collaborative planning and collegial relationships
- Order and discipline
- Sequenced curriculum articulation and organization
- School-wide recognition of academic success and incentives
- Maximized learning time in the classroom
- Variety in teaching strategies
- Well supervised homework appropriate to the age level of students
- Frequent constructive student assessment and feedback

4.1.4. Based on the information currently available from this qualitative analysis, seven key areas that appear to warrant strong consideration in Sri Lanka, especially as school-based management is developed, are: (i) clearly defining student outcomes and high expectations that are then effectively translated into classroom learning practice; (ii) modernizing the curriculum to better match the expected student learning outcomes and to develop more child-friendly classroom practice; (iii) strengthening the instructional and managerial leadership within schools, most typically as provided by the school principal, headmasters and headmistresses; (iv) developing more capable and motivated teachers with positive teacher
attitudes; (v) maximizing the support and participation from the local community; (vi) developing alternative methods to corporal punishment to motivate children to undertake the needed learning tasks, and to be excited about their own ongoing learning; and (vii) specifying more clearly the power, authority and responsibilities at each level of the education system.

b. Clearly defined student outcomes and high expectations. In the qualitative analysis, it is striking that of the 100 schools studied, the majority of them had difficulty in translating the expected learning competencies of students (i.e. cognitive, affective and psycho-motor) into school objectives and classroom practice. It is imperative that teachers know what students need to learn. Based on international research, effective schools tend to be places of commitment to learning. This is clearly communicated by the principal and the teachers. Student performance is monitored regularly. Also student assignments are sufficiently frequent and difficult so as to convey this high expectation and teachers’ confidence in students’ abilities and confidence in students is reinforced by giving them many opportunities to take responsibility for school activities. These expectations tend to translate into more positive self-concepts and great self-reliance among students.

c. Curriculum relevant school activities. Based on the expected student competencies, schools need to develop a comprehensive written scheme of work that identifies learning objectives and realistically available materials, and all teachers can explain what they teach in terms of this scheme. Materials, both provided and locally-prepared, identified in this scheme of work should be available and used by teachers. In the primary school, all teachers should be able to identify basic skills in each subject and demonstrate how they ensure mastery of these skills by students. Subject content across grade levels needs to be relevant for current and future learning needs, respectful of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, and be presented in an integrated sequence across grade levels. There should also be some flexibility for teachers to adapt the curriculum to their specific students’ needs.

Strong school leadership. School principals play a key role in the school to: (i) see that the resources are available to provide, adequate support to teachers, sufficient learning materials, and an adequate and well-maintained learning facility; (ii) pursue high instructional standards through written policies, high expectations and management of the learning process; (iii) communicate regularly and effectively with teachers, with parents and others in the community; and (iv) maintain high visibility and accessibility to pupils, teachers, parents and others in the community. Teachers also have a responsibility to work with and share accountability with the principal for the ongoing improvement of their instructional practice and school quality.

d. Capable and motivated teachers: Characteristics of teachers in effective schools tend to fall into two categories. There are conditions that it appears makes teachers in a school more capable of being effective, and there are the attitudes and behaviors they exhibit in their work. Among the conditions that
define the capability of a school's teaching force are: (i) the teachers' mastery of the material they are supposed to teach; (ii) the amount of teaching experience they have; (iii) the length of time they have been in the school; and (iv) the extent to which the teachers are full-time in the school. Regarding behavior, teachers tend to be more effective when they have confidence in their ability to teach, care about teaching and about their students, and cooperate with each other. This is reflected in teachers' comfort in using learning materials and in trying new ideas, by low teacher absenteeism and tardiness, and in a high level of group involvement in planning, teaching and in resolving whole-school issues. The lack of direct pedagogical support to teachers in their classrooms is problematic in Sri Lankan schools. Teacher support networks that bring this support into classrooms, either from headmasters, headmistresses, school principals, other experienced teachers, learning advisors or other resource persons, would provide an invaluable service to teachers to both motivate and increase skills.

Parent and community participation: From the broader research literature, five categories of parent and community support that are relevant to the Sri Lankan context are: (i) children come to school prepared to learn (e.g., are healthy, and where possible have been involved with reading, conversations and directed play at home); (ii) the community provides financial and material support to schools (monetary, or in-kind contributions, assistance to build schools); (iii) communication between the school and community is frequent (e.g., school-public events and parent-teacher conferences are frequent and meaningful); communications to parents by school staff are frequent and meaningful, positive parent-initiated contacts with school staff are frequent and meaningful); (iv) the community has a meaningful role in school governance (e.g., the role, functions and authority of the school board are clear and agreed-upon; the school board meet frequently and make meaningful decisions); and (v) community members and parents assist with instruction (e.g., parents support the idea of homework and monitor it, parents/community serve as information sources and/or an audience for student work).

Order and discipline: Disciplinary matters can be minimized in classrooms often by the way the classroom is organized as well as the interest level generated by engaging, child-friendly practices. For example, seating arrangements should be uncongested; external noise levels and lighting conducive to learning; school rules and regulations clearly articulated, agreed upon by teachers and students, and equitably maintained; learning centers of individual activities available for students who may finish work early or need either remedial or further engaging activities, and good work rewarded publicly.

Effective support from the larger education system: Support to individual schools by the education system's management structure is important to enhance school quality. In terms of demonstrating its support, the system needs to: (i) delegate authority and responsibility for improvement to the schools themselves; (ii)
communicate expectations and exert pressure where necessary for successful academic results; (iii) provide services to the schools to help them succeed, including information and training regarding instructional practices and protection from political turbulence; and (iv) monitor and evaluate schools’ academic performance and the efforts of school principals, particularly as instructional managers. The system of a clearly-defined policy for authority delegation and of expected student competencies are necessary to promote high academic standards. This will also mean that, in Sri Lanka, there is a need to more clearly specify the power, authority and responsibilities at each level of the education system, especially as the system moves more towards school-based management. Areas of the system where there are currently overlapping responsibilities will also need clarification so that school principals will know clearly to whom they are accountable. At present, as noted by NEC (2003), some schools are subject to multiple control by different layers.

4.1.5. The move to develop more school-based management in Sri Lanka has the potential to better address these differing needs and processes at each school, bringing more authority and responsibility closer to the teaching-learning interaction within schools. As the unit of focus of greatest learning impact, schools are essential players in the processes of regulation, monitoring and self-renewal.

Teacher Support Networks

4.1.6. The quality of a student’s education depends largely on the quality of teachers. This is especially important in the primary school level, when children’s learning is very formative and not so independent. It is even more true of developing countries, where, especially in rural areas, other factors involved with the learning process, such as access to appropriate textbooks is more problematic [see Carron and Ngoc Chau (1996)]. If teachers are absent, discouraged, do not have the needed pedagogical expertise to maximize learning time, do not believe in the capability of students to learn, and/or do not work in supportive teaching environments, student learning suffers. Teachers are also key agents for socialization in schools. So the role of teachers is critical and warrants special attention.

4.1.7. Teacher support networks are needed if sound pedagogical practice and motivation are to be developed. These networks and their associated activities can be varied in structure and organization. As a general rule though, those that focus on continuous development to guide, monitor, and support necessary skills, knowledge and new ideas, tend to be more successful in bringing about change at the classroom level than those which seek quick fixes to fill up deficiencies, or programs that simply provide a qualification. Impact is even further enhanced when the support (skill development and resources) is brought directly into teachers’ classrooms, in contrast to support that is offered at a distance and requires time to travel. The school setting should be the prime focus of activity.

4.1.8. A central principle of support networks is that the professional development of teachers is a process, not an event. It involves change over time and is achieved in stages during a teacher’s career as more experience is gained. The stages are impacted by: (i) the degree and accessibility of services and support that can be provided within the education system; and (ii) the willingness of teachers to want to learn and apply new ideas.

4.1.9. The following provides information on some different types of teacher networks that might be considered. A combination of these is desirable:
4.1.10. **School-Based Networks**: The one model noted for its effectiveness in changing classroom practice is school-based support. This typically involves the direct participation and joint control by teachers and school principals, along with other officials, usually inspectors/supervisors. The support and participation of the school principal or other "director-organizer" is essential. Self-explanatory teacher guides and shared teacher idea booklets further strengthen this approach.

4.1.11. **In-school activities**, held regularly, typically include: (i) individual consultations between the teacher and the principal, supervisor or other experts, especially with emphasis on classroom supervision and use of instructional materials; (ii) observation of excellent teachers, discussion, peer coaching, and mentoring; (iii) visits to other classrooms and schools; and (iv) regular group teacher meetings, either by grade level or subject to discuss issues and share resource ideas. Peer coaching, in which two teachers observe each other's classes with the objective of helping each other improve their instructional abilities, has become increasingly popular along with mentoring programs. Activities tend to focus on concrete and specific training for instructional and management practice, and are appropriate to the current needs of the teacher. This assistance can also provide a valuable link with more formal in-service training that might have been provided but which needs classroom practice to ensure implementation of the acquired learning. Similar support should also be organized for school principals so that they also might develop better leadership and pedagogical skills.

4.1.12. The school-based model is very effective for long-term guided learning, depending on the caliber of staff available in the school or other staff who can regularly visit the school. The role of the principal as instructional leader, and not just administrative manager tends to be a feature. If a school does not have competent staff to provide appropriate advice and assistance, then the services of a visiting resource teacher, or other appropriate personnel who might be found in a school-cluster network, or within other teaching institutions/services from the larger education system becomes a necessity for success (see Egyptian example, Box 4.1). In reality, the activities undertaken at the cluster level, tend to be more formal and related to decentralized in-service training programs [see Colombian example, Box 4.2]. However, there is the potential to also have activities more akin to the school-based networks. Clusters offer the added advantage of having greater access to share staffing, material resources, and a range of ideas.

4.1.13. **School-Cluster Networks, Teacher Centers and Resource Centers**: School-cluster networks (such as those employed in Colombia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Lesotho, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Zambia) are very helpful to share scarce material and human resources. Core schools tend to host educational resource centers developed and operated jointly within the cluster. The Learning Action Cells in the Philippines exist at the school, district and regional levels and are used for school evaluation and staff development for both teachers and principals. Similar organizational patterns operate in many other countries. In reality, the activities undertaken at the cluster level, tend to be more formal and related to decentralized in-service training programs [see Colombian example, Box 4.2]. However, there is the potential to also have activities more akin to the school-based networks. Clusters offer the added advantage of having greater access to share staffing, material resources, and a range of ideas.

4.1.14. **Resource Centers** tend to be prominent within school clusters. However, their establishment is always controversial. The concept is simple, but clarity of purpose and the implementation of the support structure which is needed for classroom practice impact, tend to be problematic.

4.1.15. Based on international experience [see many studies referred to in Bray (1987), Craig et. al. (1997), Knamiller and Fairhurst (1998)], instructional support to teachers via networks, i.e., regular meetings of teachers between and within schools to share resources and ideas, team teaching with an experienced teacher, regular
visits and advice by learning coordinators/resource teachers, sharing useful classroom materials etc., tend to be more effective than the establishment of fixed site centers. However, if the establishment of a fixed site center is being considered, the following key issues which need to be addressed in the affirmative for successful operation of resource centers in school clusters, should be thoroughly addressed. Because many of the following elements are difficult to achieve, the better advice is often to place effort and financial resources

### Box 4.1: School-Based Training/Support (SBT) in Egypt: Programs for English Teachers

School-based training and support has been operating since 1994 in several areas of Egypt as pilot programs for English teachers at the preparatory level. The main goal is to provide in-service training and support to increase the effectiveness of teachers through training and mentoring at the school site.

Targets of the programs include:
- Teachers effectively using the instructional texts in the classroom.
- Unifying the teachers in a school and actively encouraging them to work as a team.
- Improving communication among Ministry of Education inspectors, senior teachers, school principals, school directors and parents.
- Recognizing, acknowledging and rewarding individual creativity to create greater job satisfaction, enhanced self-worth, and professional pride in teaching.
- Providing a model for the sharing of effective strategies for solving problems.
- Identifying and actively encouraging those individuals who are models of excellence and potential leaders in their schools.
- Providing a forum for participatory input that affects the sense of investment and consequent ownership that all participants develop toward their school.
- Encouraging inspectors, teachers, and administrators to develop strategies for resolving conflict.
- Encouraging more active and communicative pupil participation in the learning process.
- Institutionalizing the model of using the school as a unit for ongoing professional development.

Strengths of the program:
- Preparatory school teachers receive materials on basic classroom teaching techniques. These materials are based on the instructional texts and can be used immediately by the teacher to make classroom teaching more interesting and effective.
- Because the training and support takes place at the school site:
  - Teachers receive training without having to take time off work or travel long distances;
  - Teachers can practice new techniques and discuss the new material with colleagues and senior teachers on a daily basis;
  - The senior teacher (or any interested and motivated teacher) can give classroom demonstrations using SBT activities, or attend demonstrations given by other teachers in the school.
- SBT activities increase communication and sharing of ideas among the English teaching staff.
- Transferring the SBT activities and ideas to other English classes in a school gives the senior teacher increased responsibility for professional development, and increases the status of the senior teacher.
- Teachers in participating schools develop a better rapport through working together to integrate SBT activities into their classes.
- All teachers in the school receive new material and observe demonstrations (rather than one or two teachers being nominated to attend a local training session).
- SBT provides a positive focus for inspectors’ school visits, classroom observation, and meetings with teachers.
- Senior teachers monitor teachers using SBT activities on a day-to-day basis and can thus better assist inspectors on their observation visits.
- Among the most motivated teachers, SBT encourages creative thinking and problem solving.
- SBT involves inspectors as demonstrators, trainers, observers and evaluators; and it strengthens the relationship between the supervising inspector, and the senior teacher in a participating school by focusing on professional development.
- SBT can serve as a link between a centralized type of in-service training program and specific teacher needs. It includes schools identified by the inspector general and the inspectors for improvement.
- Participating teachers and inspectors are encouraged to make suggestions and revisions, which are then incorporated into the SBT materials.
To ensure the success of the program:

- The inspector-general or senior inspector must strongly support the introduction of the SBT into local schools, want to assist in its implementation, and keep pressure on inspectors and senior teachers to do the work.
- The inspector-general or senior inspector must identify key schools with strong senior teachers (especially in the first year of implementation), and make sure that the supervising inspector actively participates in SBT.
- The inspector-general or senior inspector and participating inspectors must be willing to implement procedures for quality control of SBT (e.g. attendance at demonstrations, following visits for instructional support, observations and constructive feedback to participating teachers, and encouragement and advice to senior teachers).
- The inspector-general or senior inspector and participating inspectors must be willing to meet regularly to discuss SBT, or to include SBT implementation as a discussion item during regularly scheduled weekly meetings.
- The format and advantages of using the school as a unit of ongoing professional development must be well understood by all participants.
- This school-level support must be linked to the larger education in-service training system.
- SBT must be viewed as a means of promoting community and organizational development, in addition to providing a forum for professional development, and improving teachers’ use of the books and other classroom skills.

Source: LeBlanc 1997

According to Schiefelbein (1992:69-71), the teachers:

- learn by doing in three programmed one-week workshops organized by the decentralized regional unit in charge of training with intervening practice periods, and limited supervision. In the first workshop, each teacher visits a demonstration school, learns about the cooperation of the student council and the layout and organization of the learning activities areas, and participates in group discussion. The second workshop is held when the school has been adopted as the Nueva Escuela model: a student council is elected and the community informed usually two or three months after the first workshop. In that week, teachers learn to use the self-instructional textbooks correctly, practice the multi-grade approach, flexible promotion, and are encouraged to introduce innovations. In the third workshop, teachers learn to organize and use the class library, maps, posters, and reinforce their ability to work with several grades at the same time. This is also occasion for review, follow-up evaluation and problem solving. At the end of the third workshop, teachers receive a 100-book library. After each workshop, teachers are invited to meet once a month in a nearby school in what is known as a Micro-center. These micro-centers operate within demonstration schools to analyze problems and to discuss solutions. No hierarchical staff relationships are generated by microcenters, but supervisors do attend the meetings when feasible.

Box 4.2: The Micro-centers (Teacher Centers) in the Escuela Nueva in Colombia
4.1.6. Sri Lanka currently has 84 Teacher Centers. Their prime function is to hold non-residential courses running from one to three days. While the idea of having an outreach program directly to classrooms is supported in principle by many of the Directors of these centers, lack of appropriate staff and resources, logistical constraints, as well as lack of clear policy and authorization to undertake more direct classroom support is preventing this development. This will be an important area of focus for the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Teacher Education (CCTE).

Box 4.3: Teacher Support Networks: The District Resource Teacher (DRT) Program in Lesotho

Highlights:
- One of the attributing factors for the success of the teacher education program is that it began as an idea from the Ministry of Education rather than by the project, thereby encouraging ownership and motivation.
- The program particularly targets small schools in scattered and distant locations where teachers are often isolated. The schools tend to be multi-grade, and have fewer than five teachers. About 700 of the 1,200 schools in the country are covered, accounting for 2,000 of the country's 6,000 teachers.
- Classroom environments are very conducive to learning, e.g., visual aids are used and displayed on walls, and learning centers are organized in classrooms.
- The DRT's supportive role is coordinated with that of the Inspectorate, whose current role involves checking on whether the schools are doing their work properly.

Observations:
- Activities include individual consultations, group workshops for school clusters, and dissemination of new curricula produced by the National Curriculum Development Center.
- DRTs sit down with teachers, discuss their perceived difficulties, and offer suggestions to deal with them.
- Typical difficulties involve classroom organization and management of multi-grade schools, group work, learning centers, peer learning, and mobilizing community members to help with classroom activities such as reading to mothers.
- DRTs team teach with local teachers and help develop teaching materials.
- DRTs usually visit schools four times a year, which allows two to three visits a year for all the teachers in the schools under the DRT's care (typically between ten and fifteen schools). Workshops are often held on weekends.

Selection of DRTs:
- The first efforts were rather random - experienced teachers proposed by the district education officers were appointed. But this did not necessarily work very well.
- The second group recruited at the end of the program needed to be qualified, experienced teachers, with head teacher or deputy-head teacher experience, willing to travel frequently and ride horseback where necessary. Efforts were made to try to have a gender balance as well as distributions by district and religion.
- Potential participants needed to write about why they wanted to be DRTs, interviews were conducted, and were followed by training.

Sustainability:
- When donor support ended, DRTs were given a teacher's salary on a special scale of a resource teacher or a senior resource teacher that was paid by the Ministry of Education. Over seventy DRTs were operating and some were promoted into the Inspectorate. The DRTs are within the teaching service and paid from the regular government budget. The extra expenditures of the DRT program, mainly travel costs and per diems of DRTs while they are in the schools, are paid through the Ministry of Education.

Source: O'Grady 1996

- Is there sufficient release time for staff to attend the center during school hours?
- Are there incentives in place to attract staff to use the center and collaborate?
- Is additional staffing needed for the center? Is additional staffing feasible and affordable?
- What are the requirements for financing: the center, release time for teachers, outreach program from the center to the other schools, staffing?
- Are the costs and benefits of resources shared - financial and non-financial?
4.1.17. School, Institutional, Teachers' Union, Business Networks: Other collaborative efforts for professional support include: (i) institutional twinning, where teacher educators in a teacher training institution (or even secondary school) develop a partnership with another well established institution in either the same country, another developing nation or a more resource rich nation to provide staff exchanges, shared training, ideas, curriculum and other ongoing support; (ii) partnerships between local schools and the teacher training institutions to provide testing grounds for new research practices intended to maximize student learning (university staff meet regularly in the schools to discuss practical concerns and problems of the classroom, and the schools provide places for student teaching and opportunities for research); (iii) partnerships between teachers' unions and school clusters/districts/central levels to contribute as part of the professional network to collaboratively provide workshops, discussion forums, and training; (iv) individual collaboration of teachers or school districts with institutions of higher education to pursue mutually-beneficial projects such as science and technology exchanges and in-service training for teachers related to higher education institution programs; and (v) collaboration between schools and businesses/industries. This can be particularly advantageous at the secondary school level where businesses and industries, as well as tertiary institutions, have an interest in students developing appropriate skills for the workforce and for higher learning, and therefore take a more active role in supporting schools and the teaching process.

4.1.18. Unstructured and resource-based networks: There is a strong argument that, as experienced or qualified teachers will have demonstrated a capacity to learn, there is no need to create a formal system of training for their continuing professional development. Rather, provided educational resources are available to them, they should be able to choose what meets their needs and learn without a formal structure.

4.1.19. Both industrialized and developing countries have used resource-based approaches in order to strengthen the teaching force, using discussion forums, general information and networking opportunities, and a variety of different media. Increasingly, and especially within the industrialized world, use is being made of the internet as a means to network and access resources. A British program, TeacherNewsUK, for example, aims to support professional development by selecting appropriate web projects, facilitating links to national and international networks of teachers and developing on-line discussions. The Canadian School Net provides discussion groups, teacher-designed networking projects, a virtual environment for situation-based learning, interactive curriculum resources, on-line career materials and access to special processes for hardware and software companies. Nine thousand schools and 900 libraries were connected by 1997 to this network. Examples can be found in other countries as well.

4.1.20. But resource-based approaches are not limited to the advanced technologies. For example, Bhutan relies on radio, and India's “Hints to Teachers” a weekly 45 minute broadcast uses television. There is also an increasing network of broadcasted programs that are designed to reach teachers internationally, e.g., BBC World Service. These learning support opportunities for teachers are less well documented than those that are structured, and little evaluation of them is available. But it seems likely that, just as many adult learners benefit more from unstructured than structured programs, so teachers are likely to be influenced by programs of this kind [see Craig and Perraton (2003)], the exception being that new teachers who have had limited
teacher preparation tend to benefit more from structured learning support, at least to begin with.

4.1.21. In conclusion, teacher support networks must be aimed primarily at helping each teacher facilitate change in the classroom. The success of improved teaching practice is the key to help children learn, and the success of each school to ensure this, is the key to overall quality improvement in the education system. Support to teachers is not just about more training. It is about a continuum of opportunities for teachers to become better at their classroom practice. Teacher support should also include a more thorough consideration of schools as social organizations, since this context influences teaching and learning [see Rosenholtz (1991)].

Case Study II

Early Childhood Development in Sri Lanka

Early childhood development: Importance and significance

4.2.1. The First Six Years of Life: The first six or so years of a child's life, known as the early childhood stage, is globally acknowledged to be the most critical years for lifelong development, as the pace of growth in these years is extremely rapid. Recent research in the field of neuroscience has provided convincing evidence of the existence of critical periods within the early years for the formation of synaptic connections and the full development of the potential of the brain. Research has also indicated that if these early years are not supported by, or embedded in, a stimulating and enriching physical and psychosocial environment, the chances of the child's brain developing to its full potential is considerably, and often irreversibly, reduced. This early childhood stage in life is also important as a foundation for social and personal habits and values which last a lifetime. Hence, investing in these early years in children is extremely important for the quality of life in a country. Formal early childhood development (ECD) programs, which have become common in developing countries, derive their importance from this rationale.

4.2.2. Planning early childhood programs needs to take into account three important principles of child development. First, the child development process is continuous and cumulative. In consequence, it is important to address the entire childhood continuum, from prenatal to the end of the primary stage, as opposed to intervening in any one sub-stage only. For example, primary and secondary education learning levels are significantly influenced by favorable early childhood outcomes. Second, health, nutrition and education-psychosocial development are all synergistically related, so that addressing these needs in a combined, holistic framework maximizes impact. Third, child development is optimized when the programs address not only the child, but also the child's overall growth context.

Early childhood education in Sri Lanka

4.2.3. There are about 11,000-12,500 pre-schools, such as nurseries, Montessoris and kindergartens in the country. Enrolment in these institutions is estimated to cover about 60% of children aged 3-5, [see Abhayadeva (2003), Wijetunge and Wickremaratne (2003)]. These pre-school institutions are largely, over 80%, within the
private sector. As a result of the increasing recognition of the importance of early childhood development by policy makers, Sri Lanka drafted a National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in 2003. This draft policy adopts a comprehensive definition of ECCD to address the needs of children from pre-natal to 5 years. As defined in the draft policy document, “……..programs for ECCD should …..take into consideration the holistic nature of the process of development and adopt an integrated approach giving attention to the child’s health, nutrition, cognitive and psychosocial needs” [see Ministry of Social Welfare (2003)]. The same draft policy states, as its mission, the “….holistic growth and development of all children by providing a safe, caring and conducive environment in the homes and other settings, well supported by a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood care and development services.” The plan of action to realize this mission identifies four areas of intervention: (i) building knowledge and skills of care givers to promote optimal child survival, growth and development; (ii) improving and expanding training opportunities for service providers; (iii) transforming scholastically focused pre-schools into community managed, child-friendly development centers; and (d) providing equal opportunities to all children, including those with special needs, for their survival, growth and development. To implement this plan, the policy suggests a coordination system with representation from across departments at the national and different sub-national levels, and highlights the role of key stakeholders, particularly parents, communities and the private sector.

**Key issues in early childhood care and development**

4.2.4 The central ECCD issue in Sri Lanka is the absence of clarity regarding the responsibility for ECCD. The Ministry of Social Welfare has technical responsibility, without any link to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs, and the Ministry of School Education. This disregards the fact that the age range of 0-5/6 years covered by ECCD contains a range of sub-stage specific developmental priorities which require holistic nurture and development. This age range is conventionally subdivided into two sub-stages of 0-3 years and 3-6 years. Health, nutrition and psychosocial stimulation constitute the chief priorities for the younger age range. Pre-school education assumes priority importance in the age range of 3-6 years, although health and nutrition naturally continue to be important. While the interventions and outcomes of the 0-3 age group also have a bearing on learning potential and achievements in later life, the stage of pre-school education directly precedes primary education and has a clear link with learning at the primary stage. Hence, it is important to have continuity in the curriculum between pre-school and primary education. The Sri Lankan ECCD and education system have not yet evolved to the point of establishing this connection. Given the crucial importance of ECCD in determining learning ability and cognitive potential at the primary education level, this gap needs to be urgently filled.

**Shortfalls in access to early childhood care and development**

4.2.5. Ensuring access to pre-school education programs for all children is an immediate challenge to fulfill the policy mission and to realize EFA goals. The Sri Lankan Draft Plan of Action for EFA sets a target of 80% coverage against a baseline of 62% for the period 2004 to 2008. It mentions home based provisions for the residual 20%. To achieve this targeted expansion of enrolment, increasing pre-school facilities constitutes an urgent need. A formal study of the network of pre-schools and potential policy initiatives to stimulate
investment in this sub-sector, especially from private providers, is a priority. One potential source of supply of pre-school facilities could be the excess classroom buildings found in some areas of the country, as population outflows from rural to urban regions has reduced enrolment in rural schools. These buildings could be sold or leased to civil society organizations interested in offering pre-school services.

**Quality of early childhood care and development**

4.2.6. Policy makers and researchers argue that the quality of ECCD services is unsatisfactory [see UNICEF (2003), NEC (2003)]. The UNICEF (2003) study indicates that the majority of ECCD centers included in a sample survey lacked adequate physical facilities. Most centers did not have an appropriate building since they were run in homes or cramped spaces, there was a shortage of appropriate furniture and play material. Arrangements for children with disabilities were also lacking. In terms of academic qualifications and teacher training, only about 29% of teachers had school leaving qualifications, while just 17% of teachers had received any systematic training in ECCD. Teachers' salaries ranged between Rs. 500-6,000 per month. In terms of classroom processes and curriculum, there was a tendency to teach the primary curriculum in preschools, rather than a curriculum appropriate for pre-primary aged children. The rapid expansion of pre-schools, the absence of sufficient trained pre-school teachers and the scarcity of suitable play material contributed to this tendency to teach the primary curriculum. This downward extension of the primary curriculum, which implies introducing formal instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic to children below 5/6 years, results in mis-education at this stage and can be detrimental to children's education and development. Centers which follow the playway method advocated by ECCD experts and developmentally appropriate curricula are small in number, although the few that do exist appear considerably more effective than institutions following academic type primary curricula [see UNICEF (2003)].

**Professional development of pre-school teachers**

4.2.7. The need for training teachers in pre-schools has been highlighted by the Children's Secretariat through its Divisional Centers and with the help of NGOs. With a large number of untrained teachers in the system there is a need to: (i) provide different types and levels of training in ECCD; and (ii) institute a system of continuous training, since one point training does not have sufficient sustained impact, especially in the absence of any follow up support. Setting up decentralized training systems for pre-school teachers could be a promising option to improve the quality of professional staff.

4.2.8. The Open University offers a one year pre-school teacher training diploma in ECCD. The Open University is considering preparation of a multi-disciplinary degree program to prepare pre-school teachers with multiple skills and an adequate knowledge base to work primarily in the NGO sector. This could be a useful course to equip workers to address the multiple linkages within the area of child development. However, it would be necessary to supplement this with specific training for pre-school teachers in knowledge, skills and attitudes for Early Childhood Education. The Ministry of Human Resource Development, Education and Cultural Affairs has set up eight provincial centers under its Non-Formal Education Branch, five of which conduct training in ECE. Clearly, it is important to ensure that these centers themselves have a trained core faculty to provide relevant and needs-based training to pre-school teachers.

4.2.9. With the rapid expansion of pre-schools in the country, largely in civil society, issues of regulation, minimum specifications, quality standards
and training, assume great significance. The Children's Secretariat has drawn up some minimum requirements for registration for pre-schools, but these have not yet been implemented. The main constraints appear to be insufficient public awareness and the absence of an appropriate advocated system in the provincial councils to implement the regulations. The Children's Secretariat has also prepared a standard curriculum for pre-schools to standardize quality. This is currently only reference material, in the absence of provision for supportive training or authority for supervision. However, it could form the basis for a formal curriculum if the necessary support structures could be established. The Ministry of Social Welfare policy document also suggests coordination committees at various levels.

But for quality assurance functionaries are required in the field who have the training, experience, authority and accountability to ensure quality and promote it through pro-active and positive support programs and supervision. Clear lines of authority and implementation, from national to the provincial and sub-provincial levels, are required to establish this as a formal system.

### Case Study III

**Rehabilitating and Reconstructing Education in the Conflict Affected Areas**

*Introduction and Background*

4.3.1. The 20 year secessionist conflict in parts of North-Eastern Sri Lanka has resulted in considerable damage to education in that region. A comprehensive assessment of education sector needs in the conflict affected areas, conducted in 2003, covered: (i) the physical capital stock, such as school buildings and facilities, furniture and equipment; (ii) teachers, principals and section heads; (iii) children with special needs; (iv) non-formal education; (v) peace education; (vi) school feeding programs; and (vii) pre-school education. The full education sector reconstruction, rehabilitation and development needs were estimated at about US$164 million ($136 million for the North-Eastern Province and $28 million for four adjacent districts). Out of this total, the education capital stock, such as school infrastructure reconstruction, furniture and equipment, constituted the largest segment (77%) [see Figure 4.1]. In addition the tertiary education sector needs were estimated at $26 million. The tertiary education needs covered reconstruction of

**Figure 4.1: Needs of the Education Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Development Program**

- Capital Stock 77%
- Other 4%
- PreSch 5%
- SchFed 4%
- CpcBuld 4%
- SpNeeds 4%
- NFE 2%
- Other 4%

(See Diagram for percentage distribution.)
damaged infrastructure and cost of staff training.

The financing gap

4.3.2. The current donor programs consist mainly of the World Bank's GEP2 project and ADB's NECORD project for school infrastructure in the conflict affected areas. The total donor programs are estimated at approximately US$15 million. These cover about 12% of the capital stock needs in these areas. In addition to donor support, the government provides development grants to provincial schools through its Province Specific Development Grant (PSDG) program. This program is quite small compared to the level of need. The PSDG for the NEP was only one million dollars in 2003 and about $1.2 million in 2004. The small government contribution to capital expenditure is mainly due to the tight fiscal condition of public finances and its impact on the education budget. Public education sector expenditure declined in real terms during 2000-2002. If the Government continues its PSDG programs at the same level, its contribution in the coming five years will be about US$5 million, which will leave a financing gap of over $107 million for school reconstruction, rehabilitation and development in the conflict affected areas [see Figure 4.2]. The government is expected to rely heavily on donor support to finance this gap.

Government support for recurrent education expenditure

4.3.3. The government currently covers the operational costs of the education system in the conflict affected areas, including paying salaries, textbooks, teaching materials, transport subsidies and student uniforms. These operating expenses consume a substantial volume of resources. For instance, the government allocated over US$13 million for salaries in the NEP districts in 2003. As is to be expected, districts with large student populations receive the largest share of expenditure. The four largest districts Jaffna, Amparai, Batticaloa and Trincomalee receive over 80% of total salaries. These large districts also have quite high expenditures per student and fairly low student teacher ratios [see Figure 4.3]. These districts often voice concerns over shortages of teachers. The existence of teacher shortages in some subjects, such as English, science and mathematics, is to be expected, given the difficulty of finding such teachers at the national level. However, this region also has potential to meet teacher demand through greater use of multi-grade and multi-subject teaching, teacher redeployment and school rationalization.

Capacity constraints

Staff shortages and surpluses

4.3.4. Detailed information on the shortages and surpluses according to the approved cadre and existing staff in the provincial and zonal departments shows that the situation is complicated, without a clear pattern of shortages and surpluses across the departments. Overall, zonal and provincial departments show a small net shortage while
divisional offices show a net surplus of staff. As for occupations, directors, specialist staff and accountants are generally in short supply, while clerks and unskilled workers are in excess supply.

4.3.5. Extra care has to be taken when examining the shortages and surpluses according to the cadre as in so many instances, the cadre does not reflect the actual needs. For example, according to the cadre there are enough engineers (5) and technical officers (48) in NEP districts. But there are no engineers in the districts of Kilinochchi, Mannar and Mulativu, where the needs are high and demand is escalating with increased school reconstruction activities. The cadre also shows large surpluses of in-service advisors.

4.3.6. There is mounting pressure to revise the cadre to reflect the needs, especially in the hard hit areas of the conflict zone. Extra care has to be taken during such estimates. The surge in demand could be temporary and loading the public sector with more staff will strain the budget and could be cost ineffective, as government officials tend to stay in service until retirement. The needs should be assessed carefully in terms of their magnitude and expected duration. Also, alternative ways to recruit should be identified and applied, such as recruiting specialists on contracts. Furthermore, investing in means to improve workers’ productivity should be explored such as offering specialized training, providing IT and other essential office equipment with associated training, and transport funds, especially for remote areas, where supervision and monitoring is logistically difficult and time-consuming.

Planning school facilities

4.3.7. Currently the planning process combines subjective judgment and needs based on criteria such as the need per student and number of classrooms per school. Usually there is a lack of professional judgment with regard to provision of new buildings or furniture and the identification of buildings that can be rehabilitated or repaired. The school works departments as a whole lack skilled human resources and transport facilities to perform adequate supervision visits to schools.

Capacity for reconstruction and supervision

4.3.8. The capacity for reconstruction in the districts that are badly affected by the conflict, like Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mulativu, Mannar and Vavuniya, are limited due to shortages of qualified contractors and skilled workers. In addition, there are scarcities of construction materials, such as river sand and concrete aggregates. So far these shortages have not became major obstacles and contractors report the availability of labor and materials. They also report substantial increases in the wages for skilled and unskilled workers and high mobility of workers with the end of the conflict and the removal of road blocks and other barriers. Furthermore, the existing short-term skill development training
for youth has helped in meeting the demand for some skills. However, the situation could change if demand for labor and materials continues to escalate as a result of the expected increase in construction activities of other sectors.

4.3.9. The school works departments in the provincial offices of the conflict affected areas have enough staff structure to supervise the construction of school facilities. However, staff capacity needs to be strengthened by filling the vacant positions of technical staff and training. Qualified staff hired by donor projects play a major role in meeting the demand for operational staff. The shortage of transport facilities, office equipment such as computers and telecommunication equipment, has negatively affected the capacity of the existing staff. The provision of such facilities to school works departments could improve service delivery capability.

**Case Study IV**

**Promoting Peace building, Civic Values and Social Cohesion through Education**

*Government policies and strategies*

4.4.1. The goals of peace building, good citizenship and social cohesion run as consistent threads through the recent education policy and planning documents [see NEC (2003)]. Current and proposed policies include the following measures: (i) the proposed re-introduction of 'civics / citizenship' in the school curriculum; (ii) strengthening the curriculum to promote civic values across subjects and grade levels; (iii) investing in the teaching of the second national language and the 'link language' English; (iv) creating opportunities to break down the language and ethnic-based segregation of schools through the re-introduction of English-medium instruction; (v) providing schools a choice of free textbooks, written by a variety of authors and systematically screened for bias; (vi) training teachers to handle sensitive issues of culture and ethnicity in the classroom, and supporting multi-ethnic teacher training institutions, where feasible; and (vii) supporting school-based strategies to promote peacebuilding and civic competencies through inclusive school management practices, co-curricular activities, and school-community links. The implementation of these measures has been mixed in its coverage and its impact.

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Table 4.4. ‘Civic Education Study’ Student Questionnaire, Civic Knowledge
Civic competencies among Sri Lankan 14 year-olds - findings of a national research study

4.4.2 Three areas of a recent study [see NEREC (2004)] on the civic competencies of children are briefly reported on here: (i) 'Civic Knowledge' test scores; (ii) opportunities to learn the second national language; and (iii) findings from the special survey section on 'Social Cohesion, Diversity and Peace'. The study was based on a nationally representative sample of 2660 students, taken from 133 schools in all 25 districts.

4.4.3. 'Civic Knowledge' test scores for Sri Lankan Tamil students, and for the North-Eastern Province are lower than for the other ethnic groups and provinces, probably due to the effects of the conflict. The relatively low test scores for North-Eastern Province mirror low levels of achievement in the national assessment of learning outcomes at primary level, when compared to other provinces [see NEREC (2004)].

4.4.4. 18% of all respondents had 'never' or 'rarely' had the opportunity to study the second national language as a second national language - a compulsory subject from Grades 3-9. Tamil-medium students were particularly isolated, with 34% of respondents 'never' or 'rarely' learning Sinhala. In the Northern part of North-Eastern Province, this figure rises to 61%. When asked whether they should have opportunities for second national language learning, 89% of all respondents agreed. The low levels of second national language learning can been attributed to demand-side factors (the second national language is not a compulsory subject in Grade 5 scholarship.
and O/L examinations, thereby reducing the incentives to study it; there is also a higher demand for English, for socio-economic reasons), and supply-side factors (e.g. a shortage of teachers).

4.4.5. 51% of all respondents have 'sometimes' or 'often' had the opportunity to learn together with children of other ethnic groups. The figure is lowest in the Northern part of the North-Eastern Province, and in the Southern Province. When asked whether they should have the opportunity to learn together with children of other ethnic groups, 82% of all respondents agreed. 49% of all students also reported that they had no close friends from other ethnic groups. Answering a separate test item, 61% of all respondents agreed. There is a clear disparity, in all Provinces, between actual and desired opportunities across these categories: children want more opportunities to learn the second national language, to learn together, and to exchange ideas with other ethnic groups. Focus group discussions were also held with students in seven zones in the north and east. Students displayed: (i) enthusiasm for cross-cultural activities; (ii) a strong appetite for peace; (iii) disillusionment with 'politics'; (iv) a notion of 'citizenship' that is multi-cultural and not mono-cultural in nature; and (v) modest knowledge of current political processes [see NEREC (2004)]. In a separate test item, 90% of students felt that schools should contribute to activities to bring about peace.

The school curriculum and broader instructional processes

4.4.6. A literature review reveals that studies 15 which address the instructional challenges of promoting peace building in Sri Lankan schools show broad consensus in two areas: (i) the education system needs to orient

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Figure 4.6. Integration of Peacebuilding & Civics in Schools (UNESCO, 2001, adapted)

School-level pilots in civics & citizenship - an example from Northern Ireland

The two-year 'Social, Civic and Political Education Project' was a partnership between the Council for Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment, and a university. The project included the development and trialing of curriculum resources, teacher training modules, and models of cooperation between schools, curriculum developers, NGOs and community organizations. Through a process of piloting different approaches, the project arrived at a model of teaching and learning where 'citizenship' concepts were designed to be investigated, rather than taught didactically: “In the attempt to move beyond 'polite exchange' and to avoid a compliance model of citizenship we have arrived at an investigatory curriculum driven by questions rather than answers”.

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itself further to address adequately the challenges of peace building, pluralism and civic education; and (ii) educational strategies to address these issues should adopt a ‘systemic’ or ‘integrative’ approach, which will involve a range of institutions and interventions at different levels, with particular emphasis on the school. Figure 4.6 provides a useful conceptual framework.

Curriculum and assessment

4.4.7. The school curriculum is structured around 5 broad competencies: communication, the environment, ethics and religion, play and leisure, learning to learn. Within this framework, specific ‘Essential Learning Competencies’ are defined for the different Key Stages at primary level. They are currently being developed for the secondary level. Consideration might be given to defining broad competencies relating to civic values, and establishing a clear and manageable link established between these competencies, curriculum and syllabus specification, teacher guides and textbooks, teacher training and assessment (both school-based assessment and examinations).

4.4.8. Many countries are investing in ‘citizenship’, even at the primary level. In the UK, while citizenship education is not a statutory requirement for primary schools, there exist a wide range of resources including teachers’ guides, schemes of work, guides for managers, and ‘whole-school planning’ frameworks. A ‘peace curriculum’ has been piloted in Sierra Leone, with curriculum units, cross-curricular units and ‘whole-school and community activities’ from Grade 1. The NEC recommendations propose a continuation of the primary reforms, with renewed attention in areas including “the development of values and attitudes”, and “the teaching of languages”, [see NEC (2003), pp. 156-158, emphasis added].

Three approaches might be adopted: (i) develop resources and programs of work to support primary teachers in the promotion of peace building and civics; (ii) strengthen the teaching of languages; and (iii) reinforce measures to promote multi-culturalism and social inclusion within the core NIE functions of curriculum and materials development, and teacher training.

4.4.9. At the secondary level, there is a particular opportunity arising with the reintroduction of civics / citizenship into the secondary curriculum, starting from 2005. The recent NEC analysis also concludes that competencies relating to social harmony and citizenship are “crosscutting issues that each curriculum developer has to integrate appropriately into syllabi” [see NEC (2003)]. These strategies can be pursued together, combined with approaches piloted at the school level.

4.4.10. Selecting from a choice of items listed, teachers listed the following items as their greatest needs in terms of improving civic education: (i) additional training in subject matter knowledge; (ii) additional training in teaching methods; (iii) better materials and text books; (iv) more opportunities for special projects; and (v) more resources for extra-curricular activities [see NEREC (2004)]. 70% of teachers agreed that they should negotiate with students what is to be studied in civic education, while 88% of students replying to the Student Questionnaire felt that their active participation should be obtained for civic education activities. These responses seem to allow for a high degree of interaction in the teaching / learning of civics, supporting the NEC’s recommendations for an issue based and activity based approach [see NEC (2003)]. In Focus Group discussions in the North-Eastern Province, emphasis was placed on the contested and political nature of ‘citizenship’ and ‘civics’. It was suggested that an approach to citizenship based on co-existence would be preferable to an assimilationist approach, 16. See e.g. (http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/ks1-2citizenship)
4.4.11. Perera et. al. (2003) highlight similar concerns for history: “...reaching consensus on some of the fundamental and most sensitive issues such as 'whose history, selected by whom, and for what purpose', seem well nigh impossible”. They conclude that “Creative solutions may need to be sought, allowing for the flexibility already existing in the system for regional variations, the multiple book option, etc.” [see Perera et. al., 2003, emphasis added]. Both areas seem to indicate potential to advance a model of history teaching that can encourage critical thinking based on evidence, and accommodate alternative perspectives. First, the scope for accommodating regional variations in the history curriculum - as the Uva Province has commenced - should be explored. Second, the Multiple Textbook Option offers the possibility of providing different perspectives, within a national curriculum framework.

4.4.12. The potential of languages to promote intercultural understanding lies perhaps in three areas: (i) improving the language competencies of children will increase the opportunities for children to communicate across language divides; (ii) expanding English-medium instruction will create opportunities to break down the language-based segregation of schools; and (iii) the teaching of languages can be used as a vehicle to promote multi-culturalism. There is also strong potential to promote peace building / civics in subjects such as Religion, Aesthetics, and IT.

4.4.13. The subject Life Competencies was introduced in Grades 7-9 in the current cycle of reforms, to address a range of areas including civics and intercultural understanding. Small-scale surveys and focus group discussions with teachers indicate the following needs to strengthen this program: (i) increase clarity over objectives and curriculum content; (ii) greater teacher and staff development; and (iii) increased resources and system-wide support [see Perera et. al., 2003].

Textbooks

4.4.14. Textbook writing and production processes have at times resulted in textbook content which is error-ridden and insensitive to various social groups. In recent years, however, the government has embarked upon a series of reforms, including: (i) introducing the 'Multiple Textbook Option', moving from a state monopoly single textbook policy to private sector production of three titles per subject per grade; (ii) a focus on inclusion and equity in material production processes at the NIE, particularly at the primary level; (iii) developing 'sensitivity' guidelines for Subject Specialist Teams in textbook selection procedures; and (iv) constituting a specialist 'Diversity Review Panel' - representing different ethnic groups and religions, and diverse academic disciplines - to review materials for bias. It will be necessary to strengthen these measures and monitor their outcomes.

Teacher education

4.4.15. Initiatives to promote multiculturalism in teacher education have been limited in their coverage, and require stronger links to the curriculum.

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17. In Northern Ireland, neither the British nor Irish national identity provides the basis for a 'patriotic' model of 'citizenship' that can be accepted in all schools. Smith (2003) concludes that citizenship education should be based on concepts of rights and responsibilities, rather than national unity.
Perera notes: “Educating teachers for a pluralist society, to manage curriculum related teaching, learning and adopting a multi-cultural perspective would require more concerted and systematic orientation of teachers” [see Perera et al., 2003, emphasis added]. The challenge, it seems, is mainly in two areas: (i) strengthen the NCOE pre-service curriculum to enable teachers to handle peace building and civics at primary and secondary level; and (ii) invest in continuing teacher development programs. Such programs should be in step with curriculum reforms, and should build upon work supported by UNICEF and GTZ. Tennekoon (2001) shows through action research conducted at the Pasdunrata NCOE that structured opportunities for inter-cultural collaboration can help reduce ethnocentric attitudes in student teachers, and also help them to handle effectively the concept of social cohesion in the classroom - evidence of the value of breaking down institutional segregation in teacher training. Consideration may also be given to a more formal qualification relating to civics / citizenship. South Africa, for example, has introduced an 'Advanced Certificate in Citizenship Education'.

School management, co-curricular activities & school-community links

4.4.16. The school ‘culture’ or ‘hidden curriculum’ is key to the development of values, attitudes and behaviours in students.

4.4.17. Research currently being conducted by the NIE, with UNICEF support, will document examples of good practice to promote social cohesion in schools. This research could be used to inform Principals training, and to support school-based strategies for peace building and civics, appropriate for each school’s particular instructional and social context. This is particularly relevant given proposals to develop School-Based Management through School Development Boards. Different approaches might be investigated through a pilot phase.

4.4.18. The following measures therefore emerge as promising areas for strengthening, consistent with current and proposed policy:

a. specifying broad learning competencies, and supporting teachers to develop and assess these competencies in schools;

b. introducing an inclusive ‘civics/citizenship’ curriculum that emphasize activity based learning and links to the broader world outside the school;

c. strengthening the capacity of curriculum developers, teachers and managers to incorporate civic values as a cross-cutting concern across subjects, grade levels, and school practices;

d. strengthening the teaching of the second national languages and English;

e. continuing an equitable phased expansion of English-medium instruction;

f. providing a choice of textbooks and materials, inclusive and screened for bias;

g. investing in pre-service and continuing teacher development; and

h. incentivising and supporting school-based strategies for peace building and civics, through school-based planning and management.