

Spotlight Report on Adult Learning and Education in Sri Lanka



Coalition for Educational Development Sri Lanka



COALITION FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CED Sri Lanka)

Coalition for Education Development (CED) is a consortium of organizations involved in the education sector at national provincial and local levels in Sri Lanka. Since its inception in 2004, CED has been involved in promoting civil society participation in formulating and implementing policies related to education in Sri Lanka. It is committed to steer the civil society participation as a vital part in the achievement of goals and targets of EFA, MDG and SDG declarations. Since SDG 4 goals provide the guideline for a new vision for education by 2030, CED has already addressed the issues of promoting civil society involvement in education development tasks of Sri Lanka. CED is a member organization of ASPBAE.

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Introduction

The 4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (ALE), 2019 envisions the message ‘Leave No one Behind’ of United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It highlights the crucial role of Adult learning and education (ALE) has to perform not only supporting the achievement of SDG 4 but also achievement of a range of other goals. It is also significant that the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration is subtitled as ‘Towards inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all’, in words that largely echo those used in SDG 4, recognizing that education and learning continue across the life course. ALE is considered as an important component of educational systems across the world.

The purposes of this spotlight report are to analyze the state-of-the-art of ALE in Sri Lanka, to assess the alignment of the ALE policies and provision of ALE with the targets of SDG 4 and other SDGs, financial commitments, the gaps of implementation, and to make recommendations. Methodology adopted for the compilation of this spotlight report includes a desk review and a supplementary series of stakeholder interviews.

Definitions and concepts

Classic adult education theory, such as Lindeman’s manifesto of 1926/1961, explains that the learning of adults has, in part, vocational utility although the enterprise as a whole goes beyond the needs of employment to the actualization of the interests of the whole person. The principles of ‘andragogy’ by Knowles (1980) featuring in curriculum for the preparation of vocational educators on the understanding that vocational education can be regarded as a special deployment of adult learning. The practical proximity of the fields of adult education and vocational education prompted policymakers to advance the notion of ‘lifelong learning’ as a perspective that allows governments to engage with a broad post-schooling sector.

Defining adult learning and education (ALE) is highly challenging, since it encompasses a wide range of educational purposes. The boundaries of adult education are really fuzzy and difficult to delimit (UNESCO, 2015). The country specificity in defining ALE makes the situation even more complex.

‘Adult Education’ was the term preceded ‘Adult Learning and Education’. The 2015 UNESCO General Assembly recommendation provided a broad definition of what ALE encompasses, and states that its aim ... is to equip people with the necessary capabilities to exercise and realize their

rights and take control of their destinies. It promotes personal and professional development, thereby supporting more active engagement of adults within their societies, communities and environments. It fosters sustainable economic growth and decent work prospects for individuals. Therefore, ALE can be considered as a crucial tool in alleviating poverty, improving health and well-being and contributing to sustainable learning societies. (art. 8) cited by Milana.2017 p.625.

ALE provides a variety of learning pathways and flexible learning opportunities, including second chance programmes to make up for lack of initial schooling, including for people who have never been to school, early school leavers and drop outs.

UNESCO (2016) defines Adult Education and Learning “as integral parts of the right to education and lifelong learning, and comprises all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies”(UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education [2015]: Para. 1).

The UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education, which was adopted in 2015 in support of the Education 2030 Framework for Action, defines ALE as:

‘a core component of lifelong learning’ and the three key domains of adult learning and education are ‘literacy and basic skills’, ‘Continuing education and vocational skills’ and ‘liberal, popular and community education and citizenship skills” (UNESCO, 2015). The third domain is rephrased as ‘learning for active citizenship’ (UIL, 2019).

When considering the definitions ALE can be considered as one of the most dynamic approaches towards community development playing a crucial role in socio-economic change in the society. In ALE the emphasis is given to the provision of basic learning and education and livelihood skills to the ones who have not received education or are from minority or marginalized groups. Another noteworthy aspect is that ALE not only focuses on elderly but plans to provide education to the youth and literate men and women regarding the importance of their roles and responsibilities. ALE contributes to empower the whole community with the participatory and inclusive approach.

The notion of “adult” which is a socio-cultural construction, like the notion of “senior”, and depends on a particular society in a particular time (Merriam & Brockett, 2011). In the EU context,

an adult is pragmatically defined as “Any person aged 16 years or older who has left the initial education and training system”, since 16 is the legal age of majority in some EU countries (Brooks & Burton, 2008). Accordingly, adult education would cover the age range 16 to 60, 64, or 65 implemented in Formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities in summary are:

However, it is also worthy to note that reference populations differ across sources (adults aged 16-65 excluding students in initial cycle vs adults aged 25-65) Desjardins (2015, and also that the boundaries of youth and adulthood are shifting in most cultures, the term “adult” denotes all those who engage in adult learning and education, even if they have not reached the legal age of maturity (UIL, 2016)

According to Desjardins (2015, 2) adult education provision includes:

1. Formal education programs undertaken by ‘non-traditional adult students’ includes second chance education for any adult to attain a secondary qualification or lower (i.e., ISCED 3 or lower), and adults 25 or older to attain a post-secondary qualification (i.e., ISCED 4 or higher). Formal education institutions to *non-traditional students* vary across countries. It also recognized that in countries with well-developed adult education modalities have in recent years made extensive progress in linking organized adult learning to comprehensive qualification frameworks, which may have otherwise been considered as non-formal.

Non-traditional adult students are usually defined as aged 25 and over, also include those under 25 but who have characteristics indicative of adult responsibilities, such as working full-time, being financially dependent, has non-spousal dependents, is a single parent, as well as having a nontraditional educational trajectory, such as delayed enrollment into higher education or did not complete high school (Horn, 1996 cited by Chen, 2017: 1).

2. Non-formal education activities undertaken by any adult aged 16 to 65. This includes four distinct types; open or distance education, on-the-job training or training by supervisors or co-workers, seminars or workshops, courses or private lessons,

In addition to above another significant aspect of ALE is Lifelong Learning (LLL). Lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering learning activities for people of all ages (UIL 2015: 2). A recent definition includes not only a “lifelong” but also a “life-wide” aspect of learning was necessary through formal, non-formal and informal learning strategies that enhance personal development, social inclusion, active citizenship and

employability (Yang & Yorozu, 2015, p. 8). Never before has the notion of “lifelong learning opportunities for all” been articulated as an international development priority. Lifelong learning comprises all learning activities, from the cradle to retirement and beyond, undertaken with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences, within personal, civic, social and employment-related perspectives (UIL 2015). Furthermore, a distinction is made between formal and non-formal adult education undertaken for job related and non-job-related reasons.

The global indicator for ALE is ‘the youth and adult participation rate in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months’. The typology of Adult learning and education includes many learning opportunities for equipping adults with literacy and basic skills; for continuing training and professional development, and for active citizenship (UNESCO, 2016).

Adult education is necessary to transmit knowledge and reproduce the culture and indigenous knowledge. It enables to maintain the social system and reproduce existing social relations (Dangal & Khanal, 2019, p.28).

ALE in selected countries

The ALE participation rates differ in countries: Finland has above 60%; the USA is between 55% and 59%; and Korea exhibits an OECD average of 48% to 53% (OECD, 2014). Varying degrees of inequality in ALE participation have also been identified in all of these countries as well (see Lee and Desjardins 2019)

ALE in Finland

Providing equal opportunities for all citizens to high-quality education and training is a long-term objective of the Finnish education policy. The keywords in Finnish education policy are quality, efficiency, equity and internationalization. The basic right to education and culture is recorded in the Constitution. The policy is built on the principles of lifelong learning and free education. Education is seen as a key to competitiveness and well-being of the society (EAEA, 2011).

In Finland Adult Education is defined as “organized learning opportunities for adults, who, after having completed or discontinued their school education, normally are or have been members of the working community”. With this definition the two aspects highlighted are; age is not significant and adult education is an organized activity in contrast to incidental or societal learning without teacher learner interaction. In Finland Adult learning is an integral part of

Lifelong Education. Objectives are promotion of democracy and civic competence, equality in educational opportunity, development of professional skills, and encouragement of personal creativity and cultural pursuits. (Niemi, 1990).

Key Providers for Adult Education in Finland is 'Non-Formal' having a long tradition of network of 'liberal' education centres including adult education centres. Their objectives are not set by external or 'top down' governing bodies but are decided by the institutions. These organisations usually include associations and foundations and may represent different ideological or views, but also base their decisions on local cultural and educational needs.

Municipal adult education centres where the emphasis of instruction is reliant on the needs of the locality, courses or subjects can be added at the request of students. Most of the courses provided are language based, arts subjects, or music and crafts. The courses are generally organised as evening classes, and is predominantly 'study group' based, or through short intensive courses. These courses are often run by part time teachers who are specialists in the subject they wish to teach.

Vocational Institutions and career-related training, labour market training is provided through vocational adult education institutes and other higher education institutions and is financed through the Ministry of Labour. These can take the form of long or short courses, or apprenticeships and are also arranged with co-operation of companies to raise individual skill levels. The National Board of Education confirms the guidelines for these further and specialist qualifications, which is directed specifically towards adult learners. Vocational Education and Training (VET) have been regulated and directed through the idea of 'key competencies', which in this case means the knowledge and skills students need for learning throughout their life time, coping with new situations, managing their futures and operating in a world of work in flux. It is seen that these skills are an important part of vocational competence; they reflect the individual's ability to deal with different situations and add to the vocational knowledge and citizenship skills needed.

The key competencies in Finnish vocational qualifications are: learning to learn and problem solving, interaction and cooperation, aesthetics, communications and media skills, technology and IT, vocational ethic, health, safety and operational capacity, initiative and entrepreneurship, sustainable development, mathematics and natural sciences, and active citizenship and knowledge of cultures. These key competencies form part of the general studies which

supplement vocational competence (core subjects), and form the basis of the vocational skill requirements and assessment criteria of the vocational core curricula.

There are around 20 universities in Finland, all of which provide study opportunities for adults. This can be through short term or long-term education (diplomas, undergraduate degrees, master's degrees and research), through the Open University education system or through employment training. University education is currently subsidized by the government (or more recently also opening up to private sponsors) which means that there are no fees for students.

Each University also has a continuing education centre which organizes continuing education varying in form and duration, from short courses to specialization studies. Continuing education is primarily meant for people with a university level first degree as additional training. These courses usually are subject to costs met by the students.

The Open University system in Finland is operated throughout various institutions rather than one organization, with many universities or institutions having a section of Open University within it. An interesting dimension to this is the addition of the University of the 'Third Age', targeted directly at older and elderly learners with little or no formal qualifications. It provides opportunity for self-directed non-degree study, with activities including multidisciplinary lecture series, seminars, courses, IT teaching, distance teaching, online teaching, research, publishing, study groups and study-related travel. The emphasis is on learning with a dialogue between teacher and student, and the older student having an impact on the learning environment through their existing knowledge and experiences.

'e-learning' is also taking an increasing role in Finnish adult education, and looks set to grow over the coming years. The Open University system does include online learning (although much of the teaching is still in a physical setting or via the television through collaboration with the national network YLE), however an important part of this effort is the Finnish Virtual University (FVU). The FVU was created in 2001 as a collaborative initiative of all the universities in Finland and provides a collaborative forum for universities when developing their eLearning approach. The FVU serves both regular students and lifelong learners and aims to act as a learning provider, an academic network, a technical service and a laboratory for the development of ICT-based education.

ALE in selected Asia Pacific Countries

In a regional synthesis report (2016) to explore how the concept of lifelong learning has been implemented in seven selected Asia-Pacific countries, based on comprehensive education sector reviews and some data reveal a range of commonalities and specific successful practices. The report is based on Bangladesh, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The report shows that adult literacy rates in the Asia-Pacific region have improved significantly over the past decade; nonetheless, more than a half of illiterate adults in the world live in the Asia Pacific region. Among the seven selected countries, there are high performers such as China, Thailand and Viet Nam, and there are low performers such as Bangladesh and Nepal. Japan and the Republic of Korea have both achieved near-universal rates of literacy. Countries regarded as low performers – Bangladesh and Nepal – have difficulties not only in seeking to expand literacy education to all but also in providing neo-literate people with further learning opportunities. It has been noted that many illiterate people are still hard to reach even in high-performing countries

The report indicates that adult education has been treated as a marginal area in comparison with regular schooling. In all the seven countries, education and training opportunities for adults still have lesser standing than those of schooling for children and adolescents.

It is recommended that data of adult participation in learning should be managed properly to make meaningful changes in planning and delivery of learning for adults. However, there is hardly any statistics collection and data analysis for research-based policy making and research-informed practices for adult learning. These data are needed to be compiled to remove barriers and obstacles to the participation of adults in lifelong learning. Due to the lack of systematic databases, however, there is little empirical evidence on actual implementations.

It is stated that countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal have hardly intervened due to non-formal education's lower priority and lack of resources. On the other hand, CLCs in China and Viet Nam also have difficulties when top-down mechanisms that are prevalent in the operation process may deprive them of chances to improve their competencies. As a result, large numbers of CLCs suffer from a lack of autonomy and insufficient support, which prevents them from enhancing their competencies and may make their programs unsustainable. Since decentralization requires the capacities of communities and their residents, more attention

should be given to processes of operation and their quality assurance measures. Creating quality assurance frameworks are discussed widely among the stakeholders, developed and utilized. The accreditation and professional development of related specialists, such as via national Community-Based Lifelong Learning and Adult Education: Situations of Community Learning Centres in 7 Asian Countries 39 certification courses, is one of the needed provisions for quality assurance. The importance of monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) also needs to be made clear. More national commitment is needed to bridging policy and financing that is required for the effective implementation of CLCs. Since CLCs are a powerful channel and platform to enrich human learning at the community level, it is imperative to empower CLCs and provide autonomy as well as practical authority to them.

It is pointed out that the notable differences among the seven countries is the differing levels of provisions for lifelong learning, such as qualification frameworks and recognition of prior learning.

Socially agreed frameworks for qualification let people have flexible pathways where they can make their learning from formal, non-formal, and informal situations valuable for their betterment in education and work. However, many countries are still in a germinal stage and learners have difficulties utilizing them.

Introducing nationally agreed National Qualification Frameworks should be incorporated in a country's system of lifelong learning since they promote easier comparability as well as better understanding and transparency of qualifications and therefore enable learners to make more informed decisions in their lives.

Fragmented policy interventions and a lack of systemic approaches on lifelong learning hinder the enrichment of a lifelong learning society. Therefore, countries need to establish holistic policies from the phase of baseline study to the monitoring and evaluation in the field of lifelong learning.

The policies and programs of lifelong learning need to be comprehensively extended to all disadvantaged groups. Equal access to lifelong learning should be ensured in practice.

International collaboration or cross-national comparative research and cooperation on lifelong learning can be very effective for the capacity development of CLCs. Diverse experience of

different CLCs in the Asia-Pacific region could bring about the evolution of lifelong learning society gradually.

It is worthy to note a few aspects from the Education Law of the People's Republic of China (adopted in March 1995), it is clearly emphasized that: "The state implements the adult education system...". The state encourages the development of different forms of adult education so as to enable all citizens to receive appropriate professional and lifelong education in the fields of politics, economics, culture, science and technology. All these provisions have guaranteed the legitimate position of adult education and promoted the development of adult education. There are more than 5,000 universities for senior citizens with a total enrollment of nearly a million senior citizens in China.

Specifically, in China the adult education should fulfill the following tasks:

- (1) To provide remedial basic education to those citizens who have failed to complete basic education and secondary education;
- (2) To offer pre-employment training according to employment needs to help those looking for jobs to meet standards of ideological development, moral cultivation, cultural knowledge, vocational skills and practical ability;
- (3) To offer continuous education to specialist professional personnel to help them adapt themselves to rapid social progress and technological development;
- (4) To provide varieties of socio-cultural and life education to all citizens to satisfy their increasing spiritual demands; and
- (5) To satisfy individuals' needs for personal development and assist individuals and social groups to seize personal and social opportunities for overcoming future challenges.

Editions / AED 60/2003 / 25 YEARS OF COOPERATION: ASPBAE AND IIZ/DVV / Adult Education in China: Present Situation, Achievements and Challenges

Chinese adult learners have extended their higher and lifelong education options across geographical and digital borders. Online adult education in China is an established market with a history of more than two decades. Over two-thirds of respondents whom had used or are using online education services are 26 years of age or above. The China's government has promoted 'massification' of higher education with the aim to develop skills and capacities for the Chinese

workforce. With widened education access, *Online Education and Edtech Opportunities in China: The Adult Learning Sector, 2018*.

South Korea has a Lifelong Learning Act dedicated to imparting skills. Vocational education is a part of this Act. KLPCS means 'Korean Lifelong Education Program Classification Scheme', and it includes six large categories and three sub-categories for each large category. The six large domains of the program are classified similarly to the legal classification of Lifelong Education: 'Basic Literacy Education', 'Schooling Complementary Education', 'Vocational Competency Education', 'Culture & Arts Education', 'Humanities & General Education', and 'Citizen Participatory Education'. In the Vocational Competency Education domain, there are three functional elements: 'Professional Preparation Program', 'Qualification and Licenses Program', and 'Continuing Professional Development Program' (Han, 2017).

ALE Domain 1: LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Non-formal Education branch (NFE) of the Ministry of Education (MoE)

Launches a range of programs for early childhood, children of compulsory education age and for young and adult community. The programs for young and adult groups included literacy (Basic and Functional), vocational training and income generation and programs to improve quality of life.

According to NFE Census which commenced from 2016 regional statistics are available. Literacy classes are conducted in all provinces of the country by the Non-Formal Education centres. In 2017 a total of 167 literacy classes were conducted to serve approximately 1000 participants of which 389 of 15+ year individuals. But the literacy classes are attended by children under 6 years as well. The participants were non-schooling going or never schooled due to a range of reasons of which economic reasons were the most common. "Literacy Programs" are the second chance education for youth and adults. It helps to enter into the formal education. Therefore, Literacy program classes are conducted in all provinces in Sri Lanka. Most number of literacy classes, the highest number of participants (843) also reported from Southern Province. Seven hundred and three (703) participants have reported from Western province is not far behind. By considering the sex of the participants male are higher than female in all the provinces except Central province. Literacy class participants are mainly at the age groups "6-10" years and "11-15" years. Children and Youth are willing to attend these Literacy class more than elders. While Two hundred and sixty-four (264) participants' age not reported. Literacy classes are conducted in

Sinhala medium, Tamil medium. Non-school going children attend to the formal schools, after studying in the literacy classes.

In addition, 89 Community Learning Centres have been functioning with 4500 participants over 14 years. It is an institution run by the community as a public place where the community can easily and willingly participate in the implementation of the Non Formal education programs at the local level. They run the institute for conducting various courses, retaining necessary equipment, aesthetic and other entertainment programs and exhibitions. The participants of the NFE programs belonged all ethnic communities. Physical facilities such as toilets, computers, Internet & library of these Community Learning Centers are very limited.

Additionally, 789 Centres outside the Community Learning Centres also conducted a range of programs for which nearly 20,000 participated and with a majority of females. These centers are conducted short courses to start self-employment for participants to make quick earnings (MOE, NFE Census Report, 2017).

However, the participation rates in these programs are not up to expectations. A study done by Bandara (2004) on Community Learning Centre initiated in 2002 reveal that more advocacy is needed and steps taken to make the community aware of the programs in the Community Learning Centres as the community awareness was not adequate and effective. This aspect is found to be even applicable to date as Jayasekera who is a journalist and a trainer (through stakeholder consultation) highlights it as a significant issue at the community level. Further, according to Herath (Education consultant, through stakeholder consultation) making observations on the implementation that the CLC's focus on literacy promotion is not sufficient expressing the concern about the doubts in achieving the targets of SDGs. Wellala indicates (a trainer through stakeholder consultation) that adults are a group that is difficult to motivate and therefore a concerted effort has to be made make adults participate even of ALE programs are organized. A Deputy Director, from MoE attached to the Non-formal Education, through stakeholder consultation indicates that lack of funding for Adult Education, under emphasis to ALE through policy affirmation are main issues for the current unsatisfactory status of ALE.

Non Formal education programs are implemented by the public sector and various NGOs. The Non Formal and Special Education Branch of the Ministry of Education taking the lead.

Open school of the National Institute of Education (NIE)

Open School, Sri Lanka A government-run alternative formally-accredited secondary school program for those who have not completed secondary education. Initially was funded by GTZ and operating in 13 centres around the island. Open School is described as a 'second chance' for those who have passed the age of lower secondary schooling

The Open School Program, a product of the National Institute of Education (NIE) Sri Lanka and operating since 2007, runs countrywide access to sustainable and learner-led quality education and targets the poor and marginalized as an alternative to formal schooling. This is a unique model having the following objectives:

- Provide an alternative learning pathway to the formal school system, especially for those who have not completed their school education at grades 6-7, 8-9 and 10-11, and to provide, through Open School Level 1 (6-7), Level 2 (8-9) and Level 3 (10-11) continuing education through its regional and sub-regional study centres, island-wide.
- Link up and expand opportunities for vocational education and build a bridge between general education and the world of work. Those with certificates from the Open School at levels 1, 2 or 3 are qualified for different levels of vocational courses.
- Provide continuing education to the farming and other working communities to upgrade their education so that they become eligible for specific courses and programs and can enter the world of work.
- Improve productivity through the upgrading and updating of skills and competencies.
- Promote facilities for continuing education so as to enhance the quality of people's lives, whether in their workplace, or in academic, professional or other life enrichment areas.
- Enable those whose education has been disrupted by natural disasters or other causes to return to mainstream education through the provision of short-term bridging courses.
- Provide learning opportunities for people with disabilities, by taking education to their doorstep.
- Provide opportunities to those who want to complete their education at secondary and senior secondary levels.
- Provide opportunities to citizens who have been unable to gain adequate literacy and numeracy skills through formal schooling.

- Promote social harmony in spite of diversity, through access, equity and quality education for all.
- Promote the development of a learning society.

The Open School is promoted through provincial awareness-raising programs. For the most part, participants in the Open School Program are drawn from marginalized groups, for example women who have difficulties in accessing education, people with special needs, learners who dropped out of formal school and people who need vocational training. The program has no special entry requirements and offers a flexible schedule for learners. Open School courses are offered in both Sinhalese and Tamil. <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/open-school-programme-sri-lanka>

The program is offered at three levels and is organized in accordance with the formal secondary school program, including: At present there are three main levels of Open School courses: Level 1 which corresponds to Grades 6 and 7; Level 2 which covers Grades 8 and 9; Level 3 which covers grades 10 and 11.

At the end of each level a certificate is awarded equivalent to a school certificate. The learners who complete the third level will be awarded a certificate which makes them eligible to sit the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level or GCE (O/L) examination. The program adopts distance and open learning modes of delivery to maximize flexibility:

There is no upper age limit for registration on the program – the lower age limit for admission is 15 years. For anyone who would have difficulty in terms of self-directed learning or language competency in beginning Level 1, there is a Foundation course.

The program focuses on literacy (the National Institute of Education was one of the winners of the 2015 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize) and was nominated for the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD in 2017. (<https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/education/190715-sri-lankan-open-school-programme-providing-alternative-learning-pathway>)

ICT training by Ministry of Science and Technology

There are around 700 *NenaSela*, a semi government initiative in the realm of ICT in Sri Lanka, cybercafés, and e-kiosks for public access. 73 Several e-programs such as for governance, commerce, and learning have been developed. Unicode and fonts in Sinhala and Tamil are being

developed to overcome the barrier of lack of English proficiency in rural, plantation, and low-income urban areas.

Education to Migrant workers by Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment

Provision of pre-departure awareness for the migrant workers through a range programs such as decision making on foreign employment, finding employment through an agent or friend, pre departure training and orientation, pre departure loan facilities, job agreements etc..

<http://www.slbfe.lk/>

Non formal Education through radio and television

The Education channels of radio and television is adopted to reach the interested learners. However, the programs are based on formula education curricula. With the Covid 19 pandemic the implementation of education programs had become a highly demanded source of education.

NGO participation in ALE

The issues that concern most NGOs currently operating in Sri Lanka are: poverty alleviation and sustainable development; environmental conservation and green technologies; health and sanitation; education and training activities; rehabilitation and reforms; human rights and issues of peace; conflict-related trauma and rehabilitation; disaster management; rural development; development of slum communities; development of social infrastructure; organizing credit and services; building and sustaining community leadership; cultural politics and rights; research and publication; evangelization; women's issues and empowerment; and rights of children (ADB, 2013). The National Secretariat for Non-Governmental Organizations has a register of NGOs.

The focus of CSOs and NGOs on ALE has to be studied with an extensive search. Some selected examples are given here.

- (a) 'Room to Read' is an INGO that runs literacy and girls' education programs in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government can utilize these resources and work with them to create equal opportunities for men and women both during and after their attendance at educational institutions. *<https://www.roomtoread.org/>*

- (b) *Sarvodaya* as an educational endeavor. Sarvodaya's activities and the organization has established the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning (SIHL) to improve its effectiveness in educational initiatives by working to create a network between pre-existing educational programs and strengthen them with unifying standards.
- (c) Community Development Foundation (CDF) is an NGO focusing on the social and life skills development of the women and children of plantation community in Ratnapura region. Since women and children are the most vulnerable and subjected to violence and harassment.

ALE Domain 2: CONTINUING EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS

Given the high enrollment rates in primary and secondary education, only a small proportion of students exit from the school system during or after primary to junior secondary. With the exit from the school system occurs mostly at GCE O/L and finally at GCE A/Lan increasing number of students join the TVET sector; others join the labor market for employment. Still another proportion go unnoticed to the system. Based on the data from the Department of Examinations, every year, about 165,000 individuals leave the school system after GCE O/L and 90,000 leave after GCE A/L. Out of those who not enter the state University system and the Non-state University system, except for a small portion joining the labor market, most join the TVET sector for further education.

Tertiary education is enrolment in university, TEVT, and other educational institutes. One of the main issues confronting the higher education sector in Sri Lanka is the limited access to formal higher education, the state Universities. Sri Lanka's university system can only absorb about three per cent of students who complete secondary education.

According to classifications on ALE, Technical and Vocational education is a component of ALE.

Technical and Vocational Education provision in Sri Lanka

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a comprehensive term commonly used by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics to refer to education, training and skills development in a wide range of occupational fields, production, services and livelihoods. Vocational education may have work-based components (e.g. apprenticeships, dual-system education programs).

Successful completion of such programs leads to labour market-relevant, vocational qualifications acknowledged as occupationally oriented by the relevant national authorities and/or the labour market (OECD, 2019).

Program	Theme of Program	Target groups	Type of ALE
Department of Technical Education and Training (DTET) (Technical Colleges) http://www.dtet.gov.lk/en/	39 Technical Colleges scattered throughout Sri Lanka. To meet the challenges of 21 st century in technical education	Course specific	Vocational training
<i>Ceylon German Technical Training Institute (CGTTI)</i> https://cgtti.lk	Under the National Apprentice and Industrial Training. Electrician (Maintenance), Authority (NAITA) training scheme Automobile Mechanic Millwright Fitter, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration, Machinist and Diesel Mechanic	School levers after GCE O/L 6 passes including Language and Mathematics Age 16-22 Pass in entrance test	Tertiary Education
<i>Sri Lanka Institute of Printing (SLIOP)</i> https://sliop.edu.lk/	The study programmers leading to Advanced Diploma Programmers in Printing & Visual Communication technology in collaboration with the University of Colombo.	Who are engaged in Printing & Visual Communication technology	Inservice Professional Development
The National Institute of Fisheries and Nautical Engineering (NIFE) https://www.university-directory.eu/Sri-Lanka/National-Institute-of-Fisheries-and-Nautical-Engineering-NIFNE.html	Educational and training institute in Fisheries and allied fields upto degree programs	Course specific	Vocational Education

Program	Theme of Program	Target groups	Type of ALE
National Youth Awards Authority (NYAA) http://www.youthskillsmin.gov.lk/	Award of internationally recognized certificates & medals for youth and making opportunities to improve international experiences on youth	Youth	Youth Development
National Youth Services Council (NYSC) https://www.nysc.lk/	Carried out in centres across the country on Language training, Vocational training for job placement for youth completing study programs, awarding the youth, guidance for training and higher education opportunities, financing and guidance to enable young entrepreneurs to skill building in new technology, farm development	Youth between 15 and 35 years	Youth Development
National Centre for Leadership Development (NCLD) www.nclld.org	Assist in providing efficient and effective services and training needs, to generate a community with self confidence and for the success of the varied programs conducted by the governmental and nongovernmental organizations	Government and non-governmental organization employees	Professional Development
Sri Lanka Foundation (SLF) https://www.slf.lk/allcourses	Pioneering adult education center. A range of courses	Course specific	Course specific
National Youth Services Corporative Ltd. (NYSCO) https://www.nysco.com/	entrepreneurship training, loan schemes and career guidance for self employment, and directing them to obtain credit facilities from conventional banks	Youth to emerge as entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurial skills

Program	Theme of Program	Target groups	Type of ALE
<p>National Crafts Council (NCC) http://craftscouncil.gov.lk/crafts-training-project/</p>	<p>Encouraging creations in field of handicrafts, upgrading the traditional handicraft products to suit the modern markets, providing the necessary knowledge and training in order to train the skilled handicraftsmen required to the field of handicrafts through training sessions and seminars</p>	<p>Providing the necessary practical training and theoretical knowledge to the unemployed youth</p>	<p>Craftsmanship and Entrepreneurial skills</p>
<p>National Apprentice & Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) http://naita.gov.lk/index.php/en/for-trainees/part-time-courses.html</p>	<p>Providing vocational and Technical Training for youth, to acquire employable skills through well formulated skills programs with highest professional Standards to meet the skilled manpower requirement in the industry.</p> <p>150 craft training courses operating under 22 vocational fields and you are able to enter into any vocational training filed according to your educational level. Conducted in all districts.</p> <p>National Trade Tests have been developed for about over fifty trades.</p>	<p>For youth</p>	<p>Apprenticeship training of institutional training followed by an On-the-Job Training (OJT) component.</p>
<p>Gem and Jewellery Research and Training Institute http://www.gjrti.gov.lk/</p>	<p>Research and training services for the promotion and sustainable development of the Gem and Jewellery Industry.</p>	<p>Personnel in the gem and jewellery industry</p>	<p>Professional Development and Research</p>

Program	Theme of Program	Target groups	Type of ALE
Vocational Training Authority (VTASL) <i>vtasl.gov.lk</i>	Skill development to find employment locally and internationally. 22 District Vocational Training Centers (DVTC), 7 National Vocational Training Institutes (NVTI) and 215 Vocational Training Centres (VTC).	vocational training more accessible to rural youth	Vocational training
Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) http://www.sliate.ac.lk/	Engineering and Business Studies in every province.	Course specific	Vocational training
National Youth Corps (NYC) <i>www.youthcorps.lk</i>	Comprises of two six-month sessions and includes career guidance, leadership training, English, Information Technology, Tamil, aesthetics, drill squad, adventure based training In 50 centres of the country	Personality development and vocational training for youth 18-28 years	Vocational training
Sri Lanka Institute of Textile & Apparel (SLITA) https://www.slita.lk/	Training and Technical Service Provider for the Textile & Apparel Industry	Selection test	Vocational training
The Institute of Continuing Education in Animal Production and Health (ICEAPH) http://www.daph.gov.lk/	In-service training and further training for staff	DAPH staff mainly. Also to semi-government and the private sector	In-service and further training
Institute of Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences, University of Colombo (UoC) https://uciars.cmb.ac.lk/	Bachelors Degree Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences	Rural farmers, no barriers to entry	Degree awarding
Institute of Human Resource Advancement of University of Colombo	Skills development, leadership qualities and understand their	all categories of workers	In-service training and certification

Program	Theme of Program	Target groups	Type of ALE
https://www.ihra.cmb.ac.lk/	responsibilities as a workers so that they can make an effective contribution in their workplace and mainly offered Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree		
Open University initiated Open and Distance Learning (ODL) <i>ousl.lk</i>	Certificate in Industrial Studies offered by Open University of Sri Lanka provides an opportunity to those who are engaged in the relevant industry to gain an in -depth knowledge on the subject of specialization.	Open Entry	Vocational training
Vocational Training to persons with disabilities The Department of Social services https://www.socialservices.gov.lk/web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=22&Itemid=131&lang=en	Training in a vocation to help them to improve their inborn talents	Young men and women with disabilities (16-35 age)	Vocational training
National e-learning centre (NeLC), School of Computing, University of Colombo https://www.ihra.cmb.ac.lk/	Nationwide online learning programme for a Bachelor of Information Technology (eBIT)	Course specific	Tertiary education

ALE Domain 3: LEARNING FOR ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Active citizenship education seeks to foster civic participation at the local, national and global levels through the use of methodologies that involve learners actively in their own learning and build their capacity to think critically and creatively. In many countries GCED is not (yet) part

of adult learning and education programs. (UIL, 2019). Sri Lanka will have to place an emphasis on this in the future although an emphasis on this domain is found to be embedded in Domain 1.

The context for ALE in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a middle-income country with a population of approximately 21 million, located to the south of the Indian peninsula. Sri Lanka is ranked 71 with a value of 0.782, within the high HDI category out of 189 countries for 2019. The high HDI countries are categorized from rank 67 (Human Development Report, 2020).

The indicator of literacy in Sri Lanka has a high figure when compared to the other south Asian countries. The adult literacy rate is the percentage of people of age 15 and above who can both read and write with understanding a short simple statement about their everyday life. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy', the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations. This indicator is calculated by dividing the number of literates aged 15 years and over by the corresponding age group population and multiplying the result by 100. (Dept. of Census and Statistics, 2019). The adult literacy rate for 2018 was 91.71%, although a 0.19% decline from 2017. Sri Lanka literacy rate for 2017 was 91.90%, a 0.49% decline from 2016. Literacy rates of males and females was 93.4% and 91.6 respectively (Central Bank, 2019).

Sri Lanka has many successes in the Education sector at the primary and secondary levels not only within the South Asian region, but also among both middle-income and high-income countries (VNR, 2018, p.112). According to the Compulsory Education Act, it is compulsory that all children go to school till grade 9 (age 14). Regulations making education compulsory for children in the age group 5 to 14 were passed by parliament and came into effect in January 1998. Although Sri Lanka provides free education from primary to higher education level there are issues of non-enrolment, completion or non-completion and low achievement resulting to wastage in education at each level. 12 per cent of children do not complete secondary education up to grade 11. The survival rate (SR) to grade 11 is 88 per cent and the SR for girls (90 per cent) is higher than for boys (86 per cent). Some of the contributory factors for dropping out are poverty and the need to support families - especially with respect to boys causing higher dropout rates - transport problems, health issues, early marriages, irrelevance of the courses of study to the world of work, focus on academic attainment and national examinations in the school system,

lack of due recognition, encouragement and support for students who wish to follow vocational training and education, and poor service delivery in certain areas.

About 96 percent of its citizens have completed primary school, 87 percent have finished secondary school, and there is gender parity in school completion at primary and secondary levels. The net enrollment rate (NER) is 99 percent in primary education and 84 percent in junior secondary, and there is gender parity in both. In senior secondary education, NER is 70 percent, which is relatively high for middle-income countries.

Out of school children and adolescents have been on the decline especially since 2015. In 2018 the number of out-of-school students in total and adolescents is 9296 and 1818 respectively (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/lk>).

Nevertheless, the illiterate adult population in Sri Lanka as at 2018 is 1,330,811 and it is noteworthy that of the total illiterate population 38,104 are between 15 and 24 years (<http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/lk>). The existence of illiterate population could be due to non-schooling and which is reflected by the Net Enrolment Rate of Primary Education. In 2015, net enrolment rate in primary education for Sri Lanka was 98.9%.

However, there is a lack of equal provision and access to quality General Education across the country. These include inequities in delivery of services and facilities i.e. non-equitable teacher distribution, supply of teachers of unequal standards and training leading to difference in the quality of teaching, supply of insufficient services and facilities for children with special needs, for science and mathematics etc. (Presidential Secretariat Sri Lanka, 2019).

According to Peiris an eminent community leader (personal communication) has forwarded a range of issues on rights to education. Out of several examples one example is as follows: in 2005, out of the 8027 students who sat for GCE O/L examination in the 219 schools of the Puttalam district only 2607 passed (32.5%) the examination. In an in-depth analysis it is revealed that only 33.7% passed in Mathematics, 27.7% passed in English and 46.9% passed in Science. These figures show the realities of outcomes of the system of education. Peiris suggests that micro level analysis of educational provision and education attainment needs to be analyzed to address the disparities of education across the regions to optimize the investment on General Education.

The national statistics show, out of a General Certificate of Education Ordinary-Level (GCE O/L) a cohort of about 450,000 students, only about 20 percent will attend a higher education

institution (HEI), and another 33 percent will attend TVET programs, leaving about 47 percent of them with no options other than exiting the education and training sector, entering the labor market, or going abroad for further studies.

Both the state and the private sector are involved in the provision of higher education. Sri Lanka has 15 state universities and 18 Higher Education Institutes (HEI) under the University Grants Commission (UGC), and five additional government universities and one HEI that operate under the purview of relevant ministries. Further, the UGC recognizes the degree-awarding status of 21 institutes, both public and private. It also recognizes foreign degrees offered by private institutions in Sri Lanka, conditional on the foreign university being listed in the Commonwealth Universities Yearbook or International Handbook of Universities.

How is ALE attended to in the specific policies since 2015

Several policy documents which address ALE can be identified.

Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour campaign Manifesto of H.E. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa

The following policy statements of the presidential manifesto include ALE in Sri Lanka:

- A system will be introduced to address the difficulties encountered by those with disabilities in accessing education, in learning and in sitting for examinations in schools, universities, and other educational institutions, establishing a separate Authority for the services of issuance of circulars related to employment in the Provincial Councils and the private sector.
- The age limits for 'O levels and 'A' levels will be amended in accordance with the norm at international examinations,
- Activities of all TVET institutions will be reviewed and a special coordinating mechanism will be established under the concept of 'One TVET system'.
- As a result of all these initiatives, it is the primary objective of our government to reduce the unskilled category in the labour force to 20% within the first two years and to bring it down to 10% by 2025.
- 'Youth Entrepreneur Counselling Centres' will be established under the Ministry of Youth Affairs to provide integrated services in entrepreneurial learning, identifying business opportunities, resolving business issues and identifying and expanding market opportunities.

The TVET policy

The current National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education Sri Lanka was approved by the National Education Commission in November 2018. http://nec.gov.lk/wp_content/uploads/2019/05/TVE_NP_2018_English.pdf

TVET policy formulation is the responsibility of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission which was established in 1991 as the apex body in the technical and vocational education and training sector under the provisions of the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No 20 of 1990. The TVET Policy Framework of Sri Lanka and the TVET Policy, Strategy and Action Plans for Vulnerable Groups of Sri Lanka came to effect in 2010.

TVET sector especially focuses on the youth in the age cohort of 15 – 29 years who are expected to engage in education and training for acquisition of skills. Those who leave schools at different stages and do not enter conventional higher education remain the main group who shall be diverted for skills acquisition in pre-employment training. Nevertheless, the flexibility of the policy to accommodate uncertified and experienced workers, returnees from overseas work, persons in employment wishing to upgrade their skills contribute towards ALE.

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) System

The National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) introduced by Sri Lanka Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) is now a well-established NVQ skill evaluation system and successful with good numbers of certificates and diplomas being awarded and an increasing range of institutions accredited to offer the several hundred new national technical and vocational qualifications. At present the TVEC is under the State Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational Education, Research and Innovations.

The NVQ framework consists of seven (7) levels of skills. NVQ levels 1 to 4 are for craftsmen designation and successful candidates are issued with National certificates. NVQ levels 5 and 6 are Diploma level, whereas Level 7 is for degree equivalent qualification.

NVQ has a high tendency to be considered for foreign employment. NVQ certificate provides recipients to be enthusiastic to gain higher qualifications; the system encourages upgrading their career development. With the analysis of advantages to employers, NVQ system is the best fit to employ NVQ holders in their institutions and NVQ Qualification could be used for the

recruitment of technical hands for institutions, and also make eligible for promotions and higher salaries etc.

The routes of obtaining NVQ certificates there are two routes to obtain NVQ certificates

1. By following a TVEC accredited course.
2. Through recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) if the candidate could prove his/her ability with adequate evidence of his/her competencies pertaining to qualifications stipulated in the National Competency Standards, then the candidate is eligible to obtain NVQ certificate through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Application for RPL assessment should be forwarded to National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA) or Vocational Training Authority (VTA).

Since obtaining a NVQ certificate imposes no criteria on the age, the students can secure NVQ certificates based on the competencies.

Integrating NVQ into SLQF

In 2012 Sri Lanka established the Sri Lankan Qualifications Framework (SLQF), which is a nationally consistent framework for all higher education qualifications offered in Sri Lanka. It recognizes the volume of learning of students and identifies the learning outcomes that are to be achieved by the qualification holders. With the objective of having a uniform system in naming a qualification, the designators and qualifiers of each qualification have been identified in the SLQF. SLQF integrates the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) developed by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission and the pathways of lateral mobility between the vocational education sector and higher education sector have also been identified since 2012. In accordance to the policy directive Public sector TVET networks are expected to bring large majority of their training courses under the NVQ framework (UGC 2015).

The National Youth Policy

The National Youth Policy, 2014 reaches all youth and addresses the total development of youth. It also calls for the improvement of non-formal education for out-of-school youth through alternative training options and the inclusion of soft skills training at all levels of training and education (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, 2014).

The principle of 'Leaving No one Behind'

The principle of 'leaving no one behind' is well-included in the country's legislations and policy frameworks. It is at the heart of Sri Lanka's development agenda. This has provided the foundation for the country to make significant progress under the 2030 Agenda. The Government is taking action to further enhance the inclusion of marginalized groups in making Government policies and plans at the provincial and national levels. In addition, it is essential to raise awareness of SDGs among all stakeholders including the general public, and especially the vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Furthermore, there is a need for more disaggregated data - for example based on gender, disability status, migrant status, etc. - in order to enable evidence-based policy formulation fully equipped to ensure that no one is left behind (VNR, p. 40).

The cabinet paper on 13 years of Guaranteed Education in Government schools affecting entry to tertiary education and/or World of Work

Implementation of the 13 years of Guaranteed Education program in Government schools was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in 2019 to be implemented in 860 schools to address the issue of high rate of (approximately 80,000 annually) school leaving after GCE O/L due to failure of getting qualified to continue to GCE A/L. The implementation of certified education for 13 years would enable students regardless of their results at the GCE O/L Examination to continue another two years of school education to gain competency of at least in one subject out of the 26 vocational subjects. It is referred to as the 'Professional Entry'. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.lk/>

The Sustainable Development Act, No.19 of 2017

The above Act aims to support the development and implementation of the National Policy and Strategy on Sustainable Development and establishes the Sustainable Development Council. The Council is mandated to formulate the National Policy and Strategy, in collaboration with all relevant parties and the nine Provincial Councils. Accordingly, "The National Policy and Strategy on Sustainable Development shall be in conformity with the Sustainable Development Goals and associated targets and "the National Policy and Strategy on Sustainable Development shall be in force until the end of the year 2030" (part II, paragraph 11, Sustainable Development Act).

Financing ALE policy implementation

The global perspective for funding for education is at a crisis. As a global advocacy for funding for education, the report *Fund_the_Future* (2014) which down the Action Plan for Funding the Global Partnership for Education makes an advocacy call for action for increasing funding foreducation in a Global Campaign of education partners.

<https://www.globalcampaignforeducation.nl/gce-2014-fund-the-future-an-action-plan-for-funding-the-global-partnership-for-education/>

4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education by UNESCO (2019) highlights the importance of ALE and shows that some countries, particularly in the Asia Pacific, are behind the global average in allocating resources and formulating policies for ALE.

The report *FinAle* of European Union illustrates the slogan, Adult Education is not a cost but an investment. Nevertheless, the report highlights the issue of lack of public funding for ALE sector, there is a growing need to raise awareness of the benefits of adult education and the reasons why it should be better funded.

According to the Budget Brief 2019 (EU Partnership and UNICEF), Sri Lanka allocated LKR 197.2 billion to the education sector at the central level. Public financing channeled through Ministries. TVET which is the prominent component of ALE in Sri Lanka is mainly funded by public expenditure, in addition contributions from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors and grants from development partners are also made. All fulltime courses inpublic training providers are offered free of charge and students receive a stipend for selected courses (TVET Country Profiles, 2018).

According to COPF (2019, p.18) “The Central Government allocation to TVET in 2019 is Rs. 11,268 million. This is a slight nominal increase from Rs. 11,207 million in 2018 revised estimate, and a decrease in real terms. The 2019 allocation to TVET is 36.8% more than the equivalent actual spending in 2017. But in 2017, the actual spending on the sector was 18.2% less than the 2016 expenditure, due to a shortfall in capital expenditure by 46.1%. The allocation in 2019 is, therefore, only a 11.9% increase from actual spending in 2016. The 2013-2017 annual average growth in TVET expenditure was 23.3% and in relevant capital expenditure was 50.8%. At the same time, the TVET budget was under spent by 25.6% - with under spending of the relevant capital budget as much as 44.5%.” The quoted section shows the magnitude of the issues in

management of finances which as a result would have an impact on the implementation of TVET for the betterment of the country's Human Resource Development and economic development and sustainability.

The COPF makes an observation that "COPF is not satisfied that the allocation to TVET is well laid out and within the scope of policy. Allocations have reduced in real terms, contrary to the expectations set by government policy. This concern is amplified by a pattern from the past where the expectations of the budget estimates are frequently not complied with, by a large margin, in the implementation of the budget" (p.18).

According to the 2019 Annual Report of the Ministry of Finance, the total expenditure on skills development and vocational training was Rs. 10,364 million in 2019, of which, Rs. 6,409 million was spent on recurrent expenditure and Rs. 3,955 million for capital investment (p.100). The expenditure on TVET as a share of budget in 2019 has been 0.34% which is 0.03% less than 2018. (COPF, 2019, p.11).

As stated in the *Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour* campaign Manifesto of H.E. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the budgetary allocations for development of distance education, vocational education and rural schools of Rs. 3000 Mn each have been estimated. <http://publicfinance.lk/2020/12/01/budget-2021-education-sector-allocations/>

The OPEC Fund for International Development has signed a US\$50 million public sector loan agreement with Sri Lanka to support the country's Technological Education Development Program, which aims to improve the provision of technology disciplines in more than 300 secondary schools. Sri Lanka's educational program includes the construction of new buildings and the renovation of existing facilities, as well as upgrading/purchasing equipment. Also envisaged is a capacity-building component for teachers, education officers and curriculum developers. By helping develop pathways from secondary education to vocational training, the program is expected to boost youth employability in productive disciplines. It is expected that that circa 10,000 students per year will benefit from the program, as well as 1,600 administrators and teachers. <https://opecfund.org/news-stories/ofid-signs-loan-agreement-to-boost-technical-education-in-sri-lanka> 2nd July 2018

As given by the UNESCO update on Open School Programme Sri Lanka (2015) financial commitment to the Open School program is given as, US \$ 12,000-US \$16,000. Annual program

cost per learner is US \$ 7.00. The sustainability of Open School is assured through the funding and support of several organizations. In the first five years (2008–2013), the German development agency, GIZ, funded the entire program. Later, it was funded through NIE resources, while, currently, it is funded by UNESCO. In 2013, the Ministry of Education provided US \$3,500 for the Northern Province of Sri Lanka under the compulsory education program. In 2014, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO provided US \$20,000 for Open School activities and agreed to fund the program in future. The National Institute of Education Open School Unit is in contact with delegates of international organizations and local charity organizations to secure their support and to spread awareness of the program. (<https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/open-school-programme-sri-lanka>)

However, public funding for nonformal education adult learning seems to be absent. COPF (2019, p.19) indicates the budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Education for Special Education includes finances for girl guides, boy scouts. However, it does not mention that the Non-formal education which is a portfolio coming under Ministry of Education combined with special education is included in the allocation for Special Education.

Gaps in ALE programs

The right to education recognizes the importance of education as a lifelong process. <https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/th-mes/adult-education-and-learning>

Adult education and learning are integral parts of the right to education and lifelong learning, and comprises 'all forms of education and learning that aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. It denotes the entire body of learning processes, formal, non-formal and informal, whereby those regarded as adults by the society in which they live, develop and enrich their capabilities for living and working, both in their own interests and those of their communities, organizations and societies' (UNESCO Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education [2015]: Para. 1).

ALE has a potential to address inequalities within a country. In Sri Lanka inequalities between men and women, urban and rural, educated and uneducated, employed and unemployed and able and people with disabilities are some of dichotomies that could be addressed through ALE. Since ALE can be organized to empower any group it is a vibrant mode of social empowerment. However, in the policy planning and implementation several gaps exist.

Fragmentation within TVET sector across different ministries and lack of inter-ministerial coordination

Within the TVET system the service provision is very highly fragmented, duplicated and multiplied. Poor coordination among Ministry of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, and Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training is a major concern in implementation of SDG 04. (UNHQ, 2018:57).

Welivita (a pioneer in Nonformal and Adult Education in Sri Lanka) indicates that technical and vocational education is the only focus of all bodies involved in Tertiary Education and it is necessary to assess the need of certain specific programs to be offered by several stakeholders

Inability to meet the demand for TVET

Sri Lanka's gross tertiary enrolment rate which is the main Adult Learning and Education modality, stands at 21%, lower than both the lower-middle income and upper-middle income averages of 22% and 44%, respectively.

According to COPF report on Budget Priorities 2019, the allocations to TVET have reduced in real terms, contrary to the expectations set by government policy. However, the report indicates that the need for TVET has not been met. In 2017, 160,730 students failed to pass either the O/L or A/L examinations, but the annual student intake of technical colleges that year was only 39,910. Therefore, there is much room for expansion of TVET, as envisaged by the government. <https://www.parliament.lk/uploads/comreports/1554455725098505.pdf>

Quality issues of Technical and Vocational Education

The government invests a significant amount of public funds for its expansion of TEVT sector with the aim to produce skilled labour for national and international markets. In the present scenario, skill development is at the forefront of national agendas and policies in Sri Lanka. The technical and vocational training and education have covered almost all townships throughout the country, forming an adult education network covering the country. However, a large skill gap as well as a skill shortage exist. A skill gap can be defined as the difference between the skills needed for a job versus the skills possessed by a prospective worker. Two types of skill gap can be observed: first, a low-educated, unskilled labour force entering the labour market and second,

an educated labour force unable to find jobs matching their qualification due to their lack of technical and soft skills.

World Bank calculations using Sri Lanka STEP Employers Survey. Many existing training programs in the TVET sector suffer from low quality and a lack of relevance to the skills demanded by employers. Importantly, the links between vocational training centers and industry are missing. Employers believe that the TVET system could be critical for providing the workers they need but feel that it does not convey up-to-date knowledge (50 percent) or produce the kinds (54 percent) or levels (52 percent) of skills needed (The World Bank, 2014)

The programs are provided free of charge, but they lack the required quality and labour market relevance due to the weak linkages between training supply, end-users and market demands. Curricula are out-dated while attention to work habits and attitudes and competency in English language is not strong. Support systematic reforms in the TVET sector particularly to match training supply with demand by creating strong linkages between training supply end users and market demands. (2030 Vision and Strategic Path, p. 108, UNESCO, 2013).

As Perera (a former of NAITA through stakeholder consultation) indicates the model of training adopted and developed in NAITA has several advantages. The training includes several steps; Institutional training, apprenticeship training which includes training under a competent trainer, the industry placement which includes observation and learning by doing through problem solving and giving assistance to a competent trainer etc.

A study done by Department of Technical Education and Training highlights that the quality of curricula, quality of trainers and modes of training are to be revisited and improved (Edirisinghe et al, undated).

Premarathna et al (2017) reports a sustainable value creation framework based on LL that is developed and currently being implemented in two villages in Kandy district towards addressing the issues that has hampered and it has threatened the sustainability of the traditional brass industry which has existed for centuries as a caste base livelihood. This research has identified the human and social capital of these traditional craftsmen is not adequate to sustain with these changes, and the initial findings revealed that value creation can be achieved through inculcating sustainable manufacturing concepts among the craftsmen through NFE, LL and SC successfully. (Premarathna, et al, 2017)

As several reports mention there is an urgent need to revisit the Curricula, upgrading professional capacities of trainers updating training modalities of TVET programs to address the quality issues of the programs.

Quality Assurance of ALE programs is an important aspect to be considered. Prisăcariu (2014) describes four models and it is worthy to consider the suitability of these models to assure the quality of the programs.

Model 1: Review of the comprehensiveness, functioning and effectiveness of the quality assurance systems themselves – methods, procedures, instruments and processes

Model 2: Review of the quality itself, against fixed external standards, what is referred to as “the initial contribution”, what the education systems (should) provide to students

Model 3: Assessment of the quality of “results”, what is (should be) achieved through education, the performance of the educational system - Intended Learning Outcomes/Achieved Learning Outcomes.

Model 4: Evaluation against the institutions’ mission and objectives only, rather than against external established criteria, standards or targets - the quality of “governance” of the education system, the guiding principles and internal processes which (should) ensure that the education system can provide quality initial contribution.

The need to address the changing dimensions of literacy for the 21st century through Non-formal education

The conventional concept of literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written (and visual) materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the wider society.

UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 2007 defines Literacy is about the acquisition and use of reading, writing and numeracy skills, thereby fostering the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality. (UNESCO Global Monitoring Report, 2007)

Beyond its conventional concept as a set of reading, writing and counting skills, literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world. (UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/themes/literacy>). Researchers argue that a 'stagnant definition of literacy' would be problematic for the progress in 21st century and a 'dynamic definition of literacy' should be formulated.

Literacy should incorporate the updated dimensions for more comprehensive and valid program planning and assessment of basic literacy.

- Definition for Computer literacy: A person (aged 5-69) is considered as a computer literate person if he/she could use computer on his/her own. For example, even if a 5 years old child can play a computer game then he/she is considered as a computer literate person.
- Definition for computer literacy rate: Computer Literate population expressed as a percentage to the total population, (aged 5 – 69 years) within the respective domain.
- Definition for Digital literacy: A person (aged 5-69) is considered as a digital literate person if he/she could use computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone on his/her own.
- Definition for Digital literacy rate: Digital Literate population expressed as a percentage to the total population, (aged 5 – 69 years) within the respective domain

(Census and Statistics 2019)

The International Symposium on Literacy held in Persepolis in 1975 and the UNESCO General Conference in 1978 adopted a definition of functional literacy which is still in use today, i.e.: A person is functionally literate who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his or her group and community and also for enabling him or her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his or her own and the community's development.

Some aspects of functional literacies included document literacy, consumer literacy, or computer literacy (see Appendix A). Four areas of application were common among sources: workplace literacy, health literacy, family literacy, (Perry et al, 2017)

Another important type of literacy is media literacy. Media literacy is the ability to identify different types of media and understand the messages they're sending. There is a popular saying "In the 21st century, literacy means media literacy". Expands the concept of literacy, as today's messages come in many forms and literacy can no longer refer simply to the ability to read and write.

Mombaur (2018) a foreign national cum researcher who lives in Sri Lanka reports "the country still has a long way to go regarding literacy in the broader sense: especially in rural areas and the estate sector, the low rates of digital literacy, financial literacy, and English literacy are alarming".

This comment is further confirmed due to the inequalities prevailing among communities. Sri Lanka has shown a commitment to providing equal access to education regardless of gender, and this is a very commendable effort. It is noticed that about 40-60 % of elderly women are illiterate in the Estate sector and this data suggests that estate sector elderly females should be given significant attention when planning for welfare and development programs.

While these accomplishments should not be forgotten, the government also needs to be aware of other issues of gender inequality, such as long term unemployment, low income groups, low qualified adults, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. These are concerns that should be addressed through the development of new policies and collaboration with NGOs that work in the region.

Lack of an institutional commitment for Non formal Education

Sri Lanka has to focus on active citizenship education seeks to foster civic participation at the local, national and global levels where learners actively build their own learning and their capacity to think critically and creatively. SDG 4.7, Education for sustainable development and citizenship is one of the most important components of ALE which needs attention to be focused.

In order to develop the quality of life of the community a high priority has to be placed for NFE in national development plans. NFE is most reliable model to implement ALE in a country. This recommendation has been quite overdue as pioneers of NFE and ALE have recommended the installation of a fully committed institution for NFE (Welivita through Stakeholder consultation, Ekanayake, 2009 and Ekanayake et al, 2016)

With the 'second generation NFE' (Rogers, 2019) it is emphasized that NFE is to be relocated – not so much as 'outside' formal educational institutions but as a different kind of learning

program within a continuum of lifelong learning covering formal, non-formal and informal learning. The argument is that the adult learning targets contained in every one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be met by formal learning programs alone and require a much expanded nonformal education program. A concern is raised by Social activists in Sri Lanka whether the integration of non-formal components with formal sector would inhibit participation of most deserving or hard-to-reach communities as formal sector would impose a range of regulations even for the implementation non-formal education programs

The lack of community responsibility through Civil Society Organizations to address increasing incidence of Gender Based Violence and Child Protection

The impact of GBV and sexual harassment is critical--Among those who reported sexual harassment in public transport, 44% had said that their personal lives had been affected by it. Further, in a qualitative study conducted by Care International in four districts, over a quarter of the women who were subjected to intimate partner violence (IPV) had to stay in bed, 16% had to take days off work and 32% had to seek medical attention, while 25% of the women reported having suicidal thoughts. p.42

Cruelty to children is also on the rise in Sri Lanka. According to government reports, violence against children is on the rise, with 2,068 cases reported in 2014 and over 12,000 cases in 2015, 28 an increase partly due to increased reporting. While more than 14,500 children live in long-term state residential institutions, it is estimated that an additional 20,000 children live in unregulated private and religious orphanages or boarding houses. The country's child-protection system lacks the necessary framework, capacity and resources to prevent the abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and to provide timely responses.

Alignment of ALE strategies with the targets of SDG 4 and other SDGs

Adult education is a key component of worldwide collaborative efforts to achieve social justice aims, such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Both the MDGs and EFA goals came to an end in 2015. In 2015 the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda to build on the achievements and address the shortcomings of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2030 Agenda is broad and holistic in nature, covering systemic issues such as hunger, poverty, and inequality, as well as the broader governance issues of accountability, financing, and corruption. It includes seventeen sustainable development goals ('SDGs') which every state

(not just the 'Global South') has committed to achieving by 2030. SDG4 is on education.<https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/education-2030>

Although children and young people are the primary beneficiaries of education under international human rights law, adults are also recognized rights-holders. The right to education is, like all other human rights, universal and applies to everyone, irrespective of age.

The Sri Lanka Stakeholder SDG Platform (SLS SDG Platform) was established in March 2018 by a collective of CSOs, private sector, academia, professional associations, trade unions, etc. to facilitate an inclusive transformation towards sustainable development in Sri Lanka. This platform is expected to initiate discourses at subnational and national level to formulate action plans to achieve sustainability through preventing tobacco, drugs and alcohol. <https://fisd.lk/inauguration-of-the-sri-lanka-stakeholder-sdg-platform-and-national-dialogue-on-the-linkages-between-alcohol-drugs-tobacco-women-youth-children-and-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly reflects this vision of the importance of an appropriate educational response. Education is explicitly formulated as a stand-alone goal – Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Sustainable Development Goal 4 is “Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong education for all”. (UNESCO, 2017, p1)

The review of the sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) and its outcome document, the Belém Framework for Action, and the Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education had come at a time when countries are working to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 on education and lifelong learning. It is therefore critical to move forward in providing quality education and lifelong learning opportunities to youth and adults in order to achieve the SDGs. *The power of adult learning and education – a vision towards 2030*, Sri Lanka is also an adoptee who confirmed the ‘structural, enabling and pivotal role’ of adult learning and education in promoting the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development...and in particular SDG 4’ <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/confintea/power-adult-learning-and-education-across-globe>

However, it is observed that a substantial absence or insufficient articulation of adult learning and education in how the 2030 Agenda conceive SDG 4 and the Framework for Action for its implementation (UNESCO et al., 2015). SDG 4 is made up of ten targets of which five are directly related to ALE. <https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

They are as follows:

Target 4.3 Equal access to affordable, Technical, Vocational and Higher Education:

Target 4.4 Increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success

Target 4.5 Eliminate all discrimination in education

Target 4.6 Universal literacy and numeracy: By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

Target 4.7 Education for sustainable development and global citizenship

The VPR (2018) Sri Lanka shows that of the SDG Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.3.4.4, 4.5 are with moderate performance while performance of 4.6 is not sure and performance of 4.7 is poor. The VNR on the Status of Development of Sustainable Goals (2018) shows that the Government has also committed to improving the quality, relevance, and accessibility of the TVET sector, to equip young people with job-relevant skills. The Government plans to implement a 13-year compulsory education initiative through introduction of a vocational stream with applied subjects for low-performing students at the G.C.E. Ordinary Level exam. This is an important initiative under the 'leaving no one behind' principle, with those dropping out of the academic stream having opportunities to continue their education under the vocational stream. Resources to vocational training institutes will be mainly allocated in districts with high unemployment and underemployment, which in turn will support inclusive growth.

However, it is equally important for the countrywide civic education campaign mainly focused on the communities undertaking community managed development will have coverage completed through specifically identified training institutions involving the local government by 2020, demonstrating scalability to cover the rest of the country by 2025 and 2030 progressively.

TVET is mainly financed from the national budget, and each year the inflation-adjusted allocation is based on the previous year's budget. The bulk of the budget is allocated to the main ministry, Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training, which spends most of it on centers run by the 10 agencies within its purview. In recent years, TVET public spending has been rising in real terms and 58 percent has gone to capital expenditures (World Bank, 2014); only 42 percent is spent on recurrent expenditures. About two-thirds of Sri Lanka's investment in TVET comes from the public sector, with the rest provided by the private sector and households. Although its fragmentation makes it difficult to get full information on sector costs

and revenues, it is estimated that Sri Lanka allocates a total of 0.23–0.34 of GDP to TVET (Education Sector Development Report, 2017)

The changing nature of ministerial portfolios have become a practice and thereby the comparison of financing becomes difficult or impossible. The Budget Brief: Education Sector Sri Lanka 2019 indicates this aspect as a constraint in developing the brief. The report indicates it as, “ministerial portfolios have undergone significant ad-hoc changes, rendering a meaningful comparison of budgets from one year to the next infeasible. The fluidity and movement in portfolios have increased considerably since 2014” (p. 2).

Developing the cross-cutting competencies for sustainability relevant to all SDGs cannot be accomplished through only by inclusion of SDG-related contents in the curricula, but also by use action-oriented transformative pedagogy. All modalities of Education formal, nonformal and informal models have a role to play in attaining SDG Goal. The new 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development also clearly reflects the importance of an appropriate educational response through numerous education related targets and indicators (UNESCO, 2017).

The five other SDGs with direct reference to ALE

- **Health and well-being (SDG 3 target 3.7)**

By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes

- **Gender equality (SDG 5 target 5.6)**

Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education

- **Decent work and sustainable growth (SDG 8 target 8.6)**

By 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training

- **Responsible consumption & production (SDG 12 target 12.8)**

By 2030 ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature

- **Climate change mitigation (SDG 13 target 13.3)**

Improve education, awareness raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction, and early warning.

<https://sdg4education2030.org/the-goal>

In an event, which took place at the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany (UIL) to the United Nations in New York on 9 July 2019 aimed to highlight the often-underestimated potential of adult education for sustainable development. It is as follows:

“Adult learning and education (ALE) is conceived as the ‘invisible friend’ of sustainable development in that its role and function in achieving SDG 4 are not fully acknowledged in the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA). The lack of a specific target for ALE can be seen as striking proof of this deficit” <https://uil.unesco.org/adult-education/meets-invisible-friend-adult-education-and-sustainable-development-goals-new-york>

The speakers of this event had addressed the critical importance of non-formal education approaches within the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) and underscored the many cross-sectoral linkages that adult education shares with other SDGs. They have pointed out that even though adult learning has not been mentioned explicitly in all 17 SDGs, that it is important to realize that none of these SDGs can be achieved without some form of adult learning. In addition, the discussion had focused on the growing recognition of non-formal and informal adult learning.

When considering the setting of ALE in Sri Lanka this aspect can be considered as highly relevant. In Sri Lanka the Sustainable Development Act No. 19 of 2017 enforced in October 2017 provides the existing system of public institutions, applying the mainstreaming principle where the Sustainable Development Council (SDC) plays a central coordinating role. It proposes to establish a SDC as the national coordinating body for implementing SDGs.

A recent report by OECD (2019) defines future ready adult-learning systems along seven dimensions. In addition to the urgency to scale up adult-learning opportunities, the study looks at the overall incidence of adult learning; the extent to which training is equally distributed among different sociodemographic groups; the alignment of training to emerging labour market needs; the flexibility and the quality of learning; and the adequacy of financial investment in training (Infographic 3.1). The study also stresses the importance of having effective governance structures, given the large number of actors involved in adult learning

One aspect to be considered is the adoption of the Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) model as a policy simulation tool. It is designed to help policy makers and other stakeholders make sense of the complex web of interconnections between the SDGs. Unlike databases and indexes that provide a measure of where a country stands, iSDG focuses on the

dynamic interactions within the SDG system to reveal the best paths and progression towards achieving the SDGs. <https://www.millennium-institute.org/isdg>

The challenges and issues evolved on ALE with the pandemic situation

Käpplinger and Lichte (2020) report findings of an on-going worldwide Delphi study on effects of COVID 19 on Adult Education. Closing down of Adult Education centres due to lockdown, forced digitalization, unknown medium and long term effects were found to be the immediate effects.

Online learning by adults

The COVID-19 crisis has resulted in a significant increase in online learning by adults. Much of the training that had started as face-to-face in classroom environments has been pursued online. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-potential-of-onlinelearning-for-adults-early-lessons-from-the-covid-19-crisis-ee040002/>

Around 40 Information Education Communication (IEC) materials including leaflets, manuals, handbooks, posters and videos were prepared in the local language in an easy to understand manner, covering topics such as the Sri Lankan Constitution, human rights, gender and labour laws. 47 information centres were set up in the rural councils of Galle, Matara and Hambantota in collaboration with the Government, where the IEC material was made available to citizens. The Government supported the initiative by establishing the centres in government libraries and appointing special librarians.

UNICEF report on the Budget proposals 2021 observes that the proposals have recognized the possible escalations of challenges in the continuous educational provision due to COVID-19. Towards this aspect updating of the E-Thaksalawa, the learning portal, and to make available the educational television channel, the 'Guru Gedara' are identified and Rs. 3m allocation is estimated. The report positively states that there are also provisions for the expansion of internet coverage to the entire country (an investment of Rs.15,000 million in 2021-22). However, the report points out that the Budget Speech could have emphasized the need to effectively address losses of learning and skills development with adequate funds for remedial measures for learning recovery and mitigation of widening disparities in all stages of education (UNICEF, 2020). <https://www.unicef.org/srilanka/media/1736/file/UNICEF%20on%20Budget%20Speech%202021.pdf>

Although there is an immense potential of online learning to increase adult learning opportunities in the context of ALE in Sri Lanka. However, it is unknown how much of the adult population are in a position to continue ALE through an online mode.

According to OECD (2020) Vocational education and training (VET) has been particularly hard hit by the crisis. Compared to general programs, VET programs suffer a double disadvantage as social distancing requirements and the closure of enterprises have made practical and work-based learning that are so crucial for the success of vocational education difficult or impossible.

World Bank (2020) focuses on the role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) 2 in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides guidance on reducing the adverse impact of the pandemic on TVET provision and enhancing the contribution TVET can make to mitigating the health, social, and economic impact of COVID-19.

Hayashi et al (2020) Sri Lanka made a remarkable transition to online tertiary education after closing its higher education institutions in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. According to the universities surveyed, nearly 90% of student respondents have been able to access online education. Nearly 90% of students were highly or moderately satisfied with online education. Interestingly, differences were not large in online learning adoption by gender, and between state and non state institutions. The study also reports that no large difference between urban and rural residents, active involvement of the employers in designing demand driven education and training programs, and building labour market information systems are essential to strengthen the higher education and TVET system. Encouraging students to work in short-term intensive projects of the private sector under the guidance of industry experts can be an effective method for students to acquire working experience (2019 Central Bank Annual report)

Financial challenges due to COVID 19

UNICEF report on the Budget proposals 2021 observes that the proposals have recognized the possible escalations of challenges in the continuous educational provision due to COVID-19. Towards this aspect updating of the E-Thaksalawa, the learning portal, and to make available the educational television channel, the 'Guru Gedara' are identified and Rs. 3m allocation is estimated. The report positively states that there are also provisions for the expansion of internet coverage to the entire country (an investment of Rs.15,000 million in 2021-22). However, the report points out that the Budget Speech could have emphasized the need to effectively address

losses of learning and skills development with adequate funds for remedial measures for learning recovery and mitigation of widening disparities in all stages of education (UNICEF, 2020). The budgetary allocations for development of distance education, vocational education and rural schools of Rs. 3000 Mn each have been estimated. Budget 2021, <http://publicfinance.lk/2020/12/01/budget-2021-education-sector-allocations/>

Recommendations that need to be introduced to promote accessibility and quality of ALE

➤ *Development of a National Committee and an Action Plan for implementing Lifelong Education and ALE*

Development of a National Committee to formulate an action plan is recommended which has a financial vote as well.

➤ *Formulation of country specific frameworks for ALE at the National Level towards achieving the targets of SDG 4*

As it is observed there is a substantial absence or insufficient articulation of adult learning and education in the 2030 Agenda in the conception of SDG 4 and the Framework for Action implementation. Hence, there is an urgent need to formulate country specific targets for achieving SDG 4 through ALE

➤ *Focus on ALE in the implementation of Remedies, Measures and Implementation Solutions highlighted in Sustainable Sri Lanka: 2030 Vision and Strategic Path*

The report has extensively laid out the present status and issues in details regarding all aspects of education and implementation of the suggestions would be essential to achieve the targets of SDGs. However, there is no direct mention on ALE in the extensive report.

➤ *Lobbying and advocacy for the enhanced provision of community-based ALE programs and Revival and relocation of Community Learning Centres*

Non-formal Education (NFE) is focused for revival across both developing countries and developed countries. This is referred to as the 'second generation NFE'. However, a revived community learning centres (CLCs) can provide a base for operationalizing NFE for educating on SDGs, basic and advanced literacy programs and needs-oriented and context-based innovative programs.

➤ *Implement recommendations of the NEC report on Special Education and Nonformal Education 2014*

The report has identified issues of Nonformal Education including ALE and recommended possible remedial actions for policy, institutional reorganization, professional development of Nonformal educators directed mainly at the Ministry of Education.

➤ *Implementation of the National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education 2018 and COPF (2019) on TVET*

Policy implementation is recommended to resolve a range of issues including accessibility and quality in the TVET sector and effective utilization of the budget allocations.

➤ *National level coordination among Ministries providing TEVT and Quality Assurance*

Central Bank of Sri Lanka Annual report (2019) recommends effective coordination among various stakeholders for periodic review of knowledge and skill development strategies, strengthening the quality assurance and accreditation system and applying the same across both state and non-state higher education and TVET institutions.

➤ *Address the 'feminization of ageing' through ALE*

The feminization of ageing is prominent in Sri Lanka with the proportion of the older population of females increasing. Additionally, the marginalized groups are several who are not recognized in equity measure for ALE. Therefore, effective policies, strategies and programmers should be integrated into development planning that operates at all levels through government and non-governmental organizations.

➤ *ALE's contribution to address inequalities*

Identification of vulnerable and marginalized adult groups by Civil Society organizations and conduct suitable ALE programs to specific groups is recommended.

➤ *Strengthening Adult learning and Education through Non-formal and Lifelong Education focusing on functional literacy programs through Civil Society Organizations*

The programs for developing functional literacy, programs to improve quality of life needs to be strengthened. The computer literacy, digital literacy, e literacy are in the process of getting into the domain of literacy at present. However, many other areas could be identified to be prioritized.

(a) Driver education programs: With the high rates of road traffic crashes the need for driver education programs should be undertaken by the civil society groups.

(b) Addressing the Three Wheeler Driver subculture: In Sri Lanka the average level education of the Three Wheeler drivers' is between Grade 8 and O/L, There is a need for non-formal education programs to address the development of this community.

(c) Parenting Education: Parenting education is a responsibility for the civil society organizations.

(d) The need to ALE to address increasing incidence of Social harassment, abuse and violence: Adult learning and Education programs should address the issues of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and child protection.

(e) Educating the families of migrant workers

Sri Lanka has, since the late 1970s, been a country of origin for low skilled labour migrants. The gap to address the families of migrant workers through ALE needs to be prioritized.

(f) Media Literacy education

Media Literacy is critical to the health and well-being since most adults and children aren't taught to use media thoughtfully.

(g) ALE needs to be approached through Bottom-up or demand-driven strategies

For the successful and sustainable implementation of community-based programs 'Bottom-up' approach which acknowledges community-led processes of implementation and assessment that enhance community participation is recommended.

➤ **Addressing the issues of ALE due to COVID-19**

Convert the ALE provision to online mode in all contexts depending on the feasibility of implementation as it is the most widely adopted strategy to address the challenge of closure of ALE programs done in the face-to-face mode. In this endeavor 'Digital transition' should be supported leaving no-one behind.

It is recommended that communities should design more user friendly social infrastructural approaches with cooperation at local community level to improve communication with the

adult learners through digital as well as traditional methods of door-to-door distribution of material in order to extend support, awareness and resilience building during the pandemic.

➤ *Capacity building of ALE trainers and Training of Trainers*

Adult Education is a specialized profession. The theories of Adult Education needs to learned if any ALE programs are to be implemented. Program planning for trainers and train-the-trainers needs to be institutionalized.

➤ *Strengthening the role of The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) in Sri Lanka*

Sri Lanka should play an active role to strengthen an Asia-Pacific movement to support community and people's organizations, national education coalitions, teachers unions, campaign networks, and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments.

The way forward

ALE in Sri Lanka needs much more emphasis through policy, governance and finance. ALE is concealed by the emphasis given to General Education and University of Education. As a component of ALE, technical and vocational education has gained prominence during the last two decades. With the analysis of ALE policy formulation, ALE provision, and disparities it can be observed that the emphasis on ALE in Sri Lanka has been mainly on the vocational component. It is essential for the government to plan carefully and to examine critically the present needs of the adult education sector going beyond the conventional literacy development. The directives for ALE given in 'Recommendation on ALE- 2015' (UNESCO 2016) will have to be seriously considered in order to uplift the quality of socio-economic framework of Sri Lanka.

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