A situational analysis of the teaching and learning of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Teacher Education courses of the National Institute of Education, Sri Lanka

The Teacher Empowerment Faculty of the National Institute of Education is entrusted with the task of empowering the teachers serving in the school system of the country in order to achieve the national goals and objectives of education.

The faculty at the moment conducts 3 major Teacher Education courses, namely the Bachelor of Education Degree Course (B.Ed.) for in-service undergraduates, the Post-Graduate Diploma in Education Course (PGDE) for graduates and the Master of Education Degree Course for graduates. The courses are conducted in English and Sinhala medium. The clients of these courses consist of a variety of personnel like teachers, master teachers, mentors, principals, teacher educators and officers in the Education Department of Sri Lanka. As such it is envisaged that any message given will be disseminated to the whole education system of the country.

The curricula of these courses have been designed with due consideration to National Goals of Education in Sri Lanka. Out of the 9 common National goals, the following both directly and indirectly are relevant to Education for Sustainable Development.

i. Development of active national cohesion national integrity and national unity.
ii. The establishment of a pervasive pattern of social justice.
iii. Development of a sustainable pattern of life-a sustainable style of life, vital for the year 2000 and beyond., when it will not be possible to imagine that water and air will be freely available.
iv. As mentioned out of the 5 common competencies expected to be achieved at the end of the learning teaching process, the following directly are related to ESD.

Competencies relating to environment

- **Social Environment**
  Awareness of sensitivity and competencies related to being a member of society, social relationships, personal conduct, general and legal conventions, rights, legal responsibilities, duties and obligations.

- **Biological Environment**
  Awareness of sensitivity and competencies related to the living world, humanity, ecosystems, trees, forests, oceans, water air and life (plant animal and human).

- **Physical Environment**
  Awareness of sensitivity to competencies, related to space, energy, fuels and matter and their connection to human life, food, clothes, shelter, health, sleep, transport, leisure etc.
**Competencies related to Ethics and Religion**

This is to a great extent relevant to values and attitudes essential that one assimilates values that enables one to act in a manner consistent with ethical values, religious practices and practices of everyday living as appropriate.

Therefore curricula of the teacher education courses above mentioned have been designed in a manner that most of the topics related to ESD could be identified in them. It is notable that some new perspectives which have an impact on both the contents and methods in ESD are included under these topics.

An attempt is made here to examine the extent to which the content skills and values that are exposed under the rubric of ESD are covered in the teacher education courses mentioned.

**Social perspective**

The topic Human Rights is covered in the PGDE and the B.Ed. courses under the professional component in the subject areas of Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Education and Historical Foundations of Education. The following relevant topics appear in the syllabi.

- Education and Human Rights
- New trends in Education
- Free Education
- Compulsory Education
- Multicultural Education
- Providing Equal opportunities in education and economic unbalances.
- Democratization of Education in Sri Lanka
- Education opportunity and social-economic disparity in Sri Lanka.

The above 4 topics directly cover the ESD related areas while the rest cover them indirectly. Under these topics, equality and equity among different ethnic groups and religious and cultural and language diversity are viewed as valued resources for the community and the nation. Under the last topic regional and social imbalances are covered.

**In the M.Ed. course under the topics**

- Equity and Excellence in education
- Disadvantaged groups and education
- Child Rights and education and
- Multicultural education

Which appear under Social Issues, an in-depth study is being done in the subject Philosophy and Sociology of Education.

Almost all three courses have given due consideration to the topic Gender Equity. In the B.Ed. course under the subject of Historical Foundations and Current Problems, the topic Contemporary Issues and Problems in Education, due consideration is given to the topic "Gender issues in Education". Also in the PGDE course under the subject of Historical Foundation of Education and Current Problems, the topic "Education and gender" is covered. In this topic the following aspects are stressed:
- Equality and equity between men women and
- Stereotyping discrimination, harassment and violence.

The same topic which has to be covered in the M.Ed. course through the subject Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of Education, an in depth study is expected to be done by the students. PGDE and the B.Ed. courses are fully accomplished with the topic Health in the subject areas of Educational Psychology and Guidance and Counselling. Drug-education is highlighted in these courses. Realizing the value of this aspect it is proposed to introduce these topics to the M.Ed. course.

The topic Good governance appears in the subject area of Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education in the B.Ed. and the M.Ed. courses. This is being indirectly given prominence.

Cultural Perspective

The topic Cultural and Linguistic Diversity is covered in all 3 courses. In the B.Ed. course the topics Plural Societies and Multicultural Education are covered under the subject area of Historical Foundations of Education and Current Problems and Issues. In the M.Ed. course in the subject of Philosophical and Sociological Foundations of education, the topic Multicultural Education coming under social issues, is given due consideration. There is direct approach to the topic. Realizing the importance of the following aspects it has been decided to introduce them to all 3 courses.

- Inter culture and Interfaith Understanding
- Intangible Heritage, and
- Cultural goods and Services

Environmental Perspective

Natural Heritage and Resources.

The above area is directly dealt with in the 3 courses, under the topics. "Globalization" and Environment in the subject area of Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education in the M.Ed. course and Historical Foundation of Education and Current Problems and Issues in the PGDE course and the B.Ed. course. It is noteworthy that the following new perspectives have been highlighted in the learning teaching process.

- Basis for all human life needs to be affirmed.
- Only sustainable practices should be encouraged.

The topic Climatic Changes has also been indirectly given due consideration through the above topics. It is accepted that the topics Rural development and Disaster prevention and Mitigation should be introduced to all curricular being implemented.

The following sub-topics covered in the M.Ed. course under Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education in the topic Globalization and Environment the environmental perspective is facilitated.

- The earth as one eco-system with inter-linkages.
- Globalization and its effects in the environment.
  - Exploitation of resource
  - How proliferation of modern consumer products promote environmentally unsuitable consumption patterns.
  - How Extraction of raw-materials contribute to resource depletion and degradation.
Economic perspective

It is accepted the topic **Poverty reduction** has to be given due consideration in all three courses.

**Corporate responsibility and accountability** has been covered to a certain extent in the M.Ed. course under the subject Philosophical and Sociological Foundation of Education in the topic **Current Problems and Issues in Education**. The topic **Work Ethics** is included and under Qualitative Changes in Education, the topic **Value Education** is included. Under these topics, values relevant to environment are covered.

**Pedagogy and Assessment**

Teacher educators are given the liberty to use the learning teaching methods they feel appropriate. But during teacher-orientation workshops the use of the following methods are stressed, so that they will engage trainees in self-learning. The teacher is always advised to be a facilitator and never to act as a transmitter of knowledge. According to a survey done inquiry learning which is a systematic strategy for directly involving trainees in the sequential investigation of key problems about a major topic or an issue in their courses, is used. The following teaching learning strategies are being mostly used by the Teacher Educators

* Lecture-discussions
* Workshops and seminars
* Group discussions
* Group activities
* Brain storming
* Projects

**Research** has been made compulsory in all 3 courses. Trainees are required to conduct research relevant to problems related to experience, deductions from theory, related literature, policy decision and contemporary field of education. As such they engage themselves in case studies, surveys, developmental studies, follow-up studies. Trend analysis and co relational studies.

Involvement in various social services and welfare activities are also included in the above activities. It is envisaged that teachers make the parents aware of the role that they have to play in order to ensure the success of the relevant activity. Eg. Keeping one's immediate surrounding clean; thrifty use of water and fuel. The trainees are encouraged to conduct parent education programmes and give publicity to the successful efforts of students. It is also envisaged that maximum assistance of individuals and organizations connected to ESD is also obtained.

Since the themes and units relevant to the rubric of ESD predominantly are concerned with attitudes and skills, the following assessment procedures are adopted in the teacher education courses. This is to give variety and also to ensure that all trainees are assessed positively and in such a way that their progress and achievement can be supported.

In the execution of certain tasks Eg. Case studies, assigned to trainees, within the school, their responses are considered as criteria of their proficiency in the relevant aspect.
Relevant to research in all 3 courses evaluation is done through Research Reports which may be presented as

- A thesis or a dissertation
- A journal article or
- A paper to be read

Methods used for assessing the learning outcomes are informal observation, outcome assessment, self-assessment, peer-group assessment and individual assessment by the teacher education.

**Informal Observation**
This is done during group work and interactive sessions according to selected lists of criteria.

**Outcome Assessment** is done through, presentation of findings, performance and discussion, which allow the trainee teachers to make a more formal presentation of the work they have done.

**Self-Assessment** - Sometimes, trainee teachers are required to reflect on their own performance and to judge it against a set of criteria.

**Peer-group Assessment** - Individual trainees or groups assess each other.

**Individual Assessment by the teacher educator**- Depending on the topic, teacher trainees are required to present work, to create materials or to write something as an individual. This will be criterion referenced.

**Formal Assessment** - there are occasions when teacher trainees and required to write an essay or present work which shows that they have understood the important elements in a topic.

Eg. Papers, thesis, articles, and dissertation essays and formal presentation

They are marked against specific criteria and form the basis for individual assessment of the teacher trainees which finally will be taken into consideration along with examination marks.

Production of materials for use in schools is an important element of the B.Ed. course. Many of the outcomes from topics are applications of theory that are in the form of classroom materials. These are included in both formative and summative assessments.

E.g. summative assessment may be done with reference to the development of a Human Rights kit, which may constitute a collection of all the classroom based materials and resources made by the trainee over the course of the 2 years.

**Interviews and standard scales** are used as tests for assessment of attitudes and values.

**Resources**

The following resources are used in all courses

- Pictures and photographs
- Magazines
- Articles eg., Obtain from the Environmental Authority Sri Lanka
- Handouts prepared for certain ESD areas Eg. Value education. Human Rights, Child Rights, Gender Globalization and Environment etc.
- Audio visuals - cartographic diagrammatic, programmatic, schematic (as in a concept map), Analytic Strategic and Informative eg. Graphs and Charts.
Apart from the physical resources as mentioned above, the services of resource personnel are also obtained according to needs.

**Outcomes**

- Creation of environment societies in schools.
- Selection off many topics coming under the rubric of ESD for projects, presentations and thesis in the 3 teacher education courses.
- Development of tool kits for relevant topics by certain trainees, can be considered as a few outcomes.

A majority of teacher education curriculum developers believe that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) cannot be introduced as a separate discipline as it would create more burdens on the trainees. They believe that through integration of all ESD topics in the subjects of the Professional Component, ESD could be made more effective. Hence it is our fervent belief that almost all topics under the rubric of ESD will be integrated into all teacher education curricula at the next curriculum revision.

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