Loyola Campus

Loyola Campus, an initiative of the Sri Lanka Jesuits under Northern Mission, was formed in 2017, to offer tertiary and higher education opportunities, especially to the war affected youth, who are at the margins of our society. Motivated by the motto ‘Educate, Empower. Transform’, the initiative hopes to create new learning spaces, where Jesuits, form a generation of young women and men, who burn with the zeal for a reconciled humanity.

First, it was in 2014, during the Apostolic Discernment that the Jesuit Province of Sri Lanka took a bold step in recognizing the need to serve the war affected youth of the country. This intervention in 2014, directed the Province to work in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service – South Asia and Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM) which is now known as Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL). The collaboration of JWL and Loyola Campus primarily aims to form a generation of young men and women who are more acutely aware of the conditions of our time, who are able to think beyond the limits of their socio-economic, religious and cultural horizons and who are committed in re-creating spaces of peace, justice and reconciliation. The collaboration believe that in Sri Lanka in the post-war context education plays a crucial role in creating a culture of peace and healing that is inclusive and socially just.

Loyola Campus – JWL operates in seven places – Mannar, Vavuniya, Puthikkudiyiruppu, Trincomalee, Hatton, Batticaloa and Mullaithivu where students are given opportunities for on-site and online learning experiences. While concentrating on learning center all these campuses also reach out to peripheries for those who have limited access to the centers due various difficulties. Our aim is to bring the best education to where the youth live in the worst of human conditions. Our desire is to Educate, Empower and Transform today’s generation for a better humanity. For, Loyola Campus-JWL believe in Vidaya-adis-danam i.e. in the gift of knowledge as the gift par excellence. We work in the spirit of Magis or Magis at the Margins - the spirituality that offers ‘infinite possibilities’ and interventions.
EDUCATION, EMPOWERMENT and TRANSFORMATION

Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in the context of Education in the Post-conflict Sri Lanka

Edited by Thiranjala Weerasinghe
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Sri Lanka is taking forward a number of reform processes, including setting up of the institutional framework and policies required for its peacebuilding and transitional justice process. Long-term peace in Sri Lanka will require the creation of political, legal, educational, and cultural institutions that will foster a pluralistic and multiethnic environment. Education is one of the key factors for promoting peace and reconciliation. It is important to recognise that the relationship between education and violent conflict is highly complex and that education systems can be both ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ of war and conflict. Sri Lanka’s aspiration to rise from the conflict depends on how skilled and versatile its people are for analyzing and resolving conflict as well as promoting peace within their communities.

The National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion has highlighted two key pre-conditions that together can result in substantial change towards peace and reconciliation, namely curriculum revisions and school to university level models aimed at strengthening competencies among young Sri Lankans for analyzing and resolving conflict as well as promoting peace within their communities. Moreover, the report points out that, while there were many initiatives that took place over the years bringing together students from different backgrounds, little had been documented about the effectiveness of such programmes.
Given the under-theorized and under-studied nature of higher education and post conflict recovery Loyola Campus: Higher Education at the margins attempts to fill the gap. Loyola Campus and its preferred partner Jesuit Worldwide Learning believe that in Sri Lanka in the post-war context education plays a crucial role in creating a culture of peace and healing that is inclusive and socially just.

The significance of this book is that it will strengthen and inform relevant policies to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. It will inform programmes towards promoting peace through Education. It aims to influence policies to revise and implement and to strengthen the development of competencies related to the conflict resolution, conflict prevention and promotion of peace and to develop a system for research, monitoring and evaluation. The research effort will also compliment the exiting work done on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace.

The study could expand conceptual and empirical understandings of the understudied relationship between education and reconciliation and its potential for addressing and repairing the divisions of conflict. Each chapter will contain a summary to enable easy navigation.

Thiranjala Weeresinghe
Manager, Academics and Finance
Loyola Campus
Sri Lanka.
Acknowledgement

The edited book ‘Educate Empower and Transform’ conceptualises the fundamental role of education in empowering and providing impetus for socio-economic and political transformation through a number of processes, reconciliatory and peacebuilding mechanisms. These processes and strategies that are expected to assist the vulnerable youth, women, children and adults who seek a meaningful future have been the topic of discussion and deliberation at every Loyola Campus in Sri Lanka. This sustained thought and discussions at different forums have, indeed, inspired the conceptualisation of the book. The editor remains grateful for the students, facilitators and the collaborators who have inspired this book and assisted in maintaining momentum.

The editor remains indebted to all the researchers who have contributed to this edited book. The support and cooperation in finalising the book and the inspiration through various ideas and writing has enriched this publication.

The Jesuit Province of Sri Lanka and the Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL) have indeed been pillars of support and guiding a force behind Loyola Campus’ ability to reach out in providing educational assistance to those who need it the most. The editor remains indebted to the Jesuit Province and JWL for their guidance.

Editor remains grateful to all who have contributed in making this book a reality.
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leaders between 20 and 30 years old. You can find her on her blog ‘Writing From That Sekaram Girl’ and on Twitter @sharasekaram

**Thiranjala Weerasinghe** graduated from St Aloysius College, Mangalore, India affiliated to Mangalore University, majoring in Psychology, English Literature and Journalism. He finished his masters in Philosophy at Loyola College, Chennai affiliated to Madras University. Thiranjala has also completed a Diploma of Higher Education in Law at London University, UK. Before joining Loyola Campus, he worked for a South Asian research organization, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies [RCSS] where his primary responsibilities were research and project management. He has over three years’ experience in Fund Management, project writing and reporting. His research interests include philosophy, education, human security and sustainable development.

**Roy Fernando SJ** is a Sri Lankan Jesuit. He studied theology at Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. He went on to read Christianity and Inter-religious Relations at Heythrop College of the University of London, before gaining his doctorate in South Asian Religion from the University of Birmingham. His research on the Mysticism of *PeriyaPurānam*, is considered a superior academic achievement in the field of Tamil Saiva Bhakti Literature. In addition to his academic work, he served in a variety of Jesuit works including a Technical school (Cholankanda), a parish (Maliboda), and a retreat House (Lewella) and also in the formation of young Jesuits. He has also worked in chaplaincy in Birmingham City University and gives spiritual direction on a regular basis. He has published extensively on the role of religion in transitional justice, on education and post-conflict reconstruction, on justice and ecology. His work on Transitional Justice: Musings and Meanderings especially highlights the need for Transitional Justice mechanisms to be community-based instead of state-based in the post-war reconstruction of the society of Sri Lanka. He is the country representative for Jesuit Worldwide Learning Sri Lanka and the Country Director for Loyola Campus Sri Lanka.
List of Abbreviations

BBS - Bodu Bala Sena
CAU - Commonwealth Association of Universities
CBSL - Central Bank of Sri Lanka
CEDAW - Convention of the Elimination of all Form of Discrimination against Women
CSE - Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CST - Catholic Social Teaching
ECCC - Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
ECE - Early Childhood Education
EPD - External Degree Programmes
ELC - Essential Learning Competencies
EYC - Early Years Curriculum
GCE A/L - General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
GCE O/L - General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level
GDP - Gross Domestic Product
GoSL - Government of Sri Lanka
HEI - Higher Education Institutions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAU</td>
<td>International Association of Universities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>INSSSL</td>
<td>Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>IPP</td>
<td>Ignatian Pedagogy</td>
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<td>IPS</td>
<td>Institute of Policy Studies</td>
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<td>IQ</td>
<td>Intelligence Quotient</td>
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<td>JVP</td>
<td>Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna</td>
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<td>LFPR</td>
<td>Labour Force Participation Rate</td>
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<td>LGBTI</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex</td>
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<td>LLRC</td>
<td>Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<td>LTTE</td>
<td>Liberation Tiger of Tamil Elam</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MoHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education</td>
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<td>MoYF &amp; SD</td>
<td>Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skill Development</td>
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<td>NCPA</td>
<td>National Child Protection Authority</td>
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<td>NEREC</td>
<td>National Education Research and Evaluation Unit</td>
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<td>NIE</td>
<td>National Institute of Education</td>
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<td>NIS</td>
<td>National Innovation System</td>
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<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualifications</td>
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<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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<td>OISL</td>
<td>OHCHR Investigation on Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>ONUR</td>
<td>Office for National Unity and Reconciliation</td>
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<td>OMP</td>
<td>Office of Missing Persons</td>
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<td>PIP</td>
<td>Public Investment Programme</td>
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<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public Private Partnership</td>
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<td>R &amp; D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
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<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
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<td>SJ</td>
<td>Society of Jesus</td>
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<td>SLFP</td>
<td>Sri Lanka Freedom Party</td>
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<td>SRHR</td>
<td>Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights</td>
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<td>SRGBV</td>
<td>School Related Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>STEM</td>
<td>Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics</td>
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<td>STR</td>
<td>Student Teacher Ratio</td>
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<td>TJ</td>
<td>Transitional Justice</td>
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<td>TNA</td>
<td>Tamil National Alliance</td>
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<td>TVEC</td>
<td>Tertiary Vocational Education Commission</td>
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<td>TVET</td>
<td>Tertiary Vocational Education Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCA</td>
<td>University of Central America</td>
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<tr>
<td>UGC</td>
<td>University Grants Commission</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNAKRT</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance to Khmer Rouge Trials</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>UNHRC</td>
<td>United Nations Human Rights Council</td>
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UNIVOTEC - University of Vocational Technology
UNP - United National Party
US - United States
Introduction
Roy Fernando SJ

The post-war Sri Lanka offers a favourable opportunity for those concerned about the ‘transformation’ of our education system for the development of a ‘shared Global Learning’ while being focused on developing a ‘conflict-sensitive education’ system. A feature that is essential to this transformation of the education system has to avoid, at all costs, reproducing those structures which contribute in the pre-conflict phase to exacerbating or bringing about the political conflicts which ultimately escalate into violent conflicts. The focus of LC-JWL, in this respect, lies not in the reconstruction of the education systems which existed before the crisis: instead it is about the ‘transformation’ of education systems which had in it first place failed to educate the masses to build a humane society. Reconstruction is impossible for two fundamental reasons: first, because the pre-conflict system is itself part of the problem, and its reconstruction would bring about the same cycle that resulted in the conflict; second, after the conflict the participants are no longer the same. JWL - LC collaboration offers an opportunity for pedagogical innovations as well as for a development of a transformative education system.

The transformation of the Education in our post-conflict society demands in the first place that the existing education system has to be depoliticised and decentralised in our multi-cultural society -curricula have to be developed in line with the plurality of the society. In order for ‘transformation’ measures to succeed in our post-conflict society it is
important that the divide between humanitarian aid and development cooperation is closed swiftly and that all development endeavours are based on a strong element of local ‘ownership’. In the transformation following armed conflicts priority has to be given to reinforcing the social capital and fostering trust. With regard to the education system this can also mean that it is more a question of re-establishing societal or ‘shared learning’ than reconstructing schools or institutions. The reconciliation work and coming to terms with the past in the post-conflict phase are extremely challenging for collective learning processes, which have to be consciously and specifically supported in the transformation of education systems.

The transformation of education systems can only succeed if there has already been a critical and uncompromising review and analysis of the destructive potential of the prior education system, its curricula and the widespread educational practices. Without a fundamental transformation of the education structures and practices underlying the societal tensions, the establishment of new pedagogical concepts is ultimately doomed to failure. It is for this reason LC-JWL focuses on ‘shared Global learning’ and education while being sensitive to the local context. This Global vision to form a shared community of leaners and educators enables [i] people to understand the links between their own lives and those people throughout the world, [ii] increases understanding of the economic, cultural, political and environmental influences which shape our lives [iii] develops the skills, attitudes and values which enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their own lives [iv] works towards achieving a more just and sustainable world in which power and resources are more equitably shared. This global dimension in the curriculum and the ability, therefore, of students to take a global perspective on contemporary events and issues is different from the term ‘international’ which refers to connections between countries, as in ‘international relationships’. The key organising concept of the LC-JWL vision is interdependence, which highlights the complex web of interrelationships existing between people,
places, issues and events in the world today. Exploration of local-global connections is at the heart of shared global learning and education, since these dimensions are inextricably related and relevant to all subject areas. We are now faced with a multiplicity of global linkages, far distant events and decisions impact nationally and locally.

Global education places particular emphasis on curriculum process as well as content and is accordingly characterized by approaches to teaching and learning which are both experiential and participatory. The first is concerned with learner-centered education and the development of the individual, the second focuses on the role that education can play in helping create a more just and equitable society. That is why, it is very Ignatian. The emphasis in global education is therefore on both changing self and changing society for neither is possible without the other. One can no longer make sense of everyday life unless this is set in the context of living in a global society. Too often in the past educators have focused solely on the extent of the problems rather than the range of solutions. LC-JWL education in the 21st century is thus about educating in a spirit of hope and optimism, which recognizes the rights and responsibilities of both present and future generations. It speaks to the wider human condition, which is why it can inspire teacher and taught alike. It is an essential ingredient in any formulation of effective education. It is time now to make more widely known the good practice that exists and new initiatives that are currently emerging. Future generations could ask no less than this of educators at this time. It is MAGIS at the MARGINS.

The purpose of this book, therefore, is to highlight that in Sri Lanka, a number of reform processes, including setting up of the institutional framework and policies required for its peacebuilding and transitional justice process has to take note a holistic vision of education that is highlighted above. Long-term peace in Sri Lanka will require the creation of political, legal, educational, and cultural institutions that will foster a pluralistic and multiethnic environment. Education is one of the key factors for promoting peace and reconciliation. It is important to recognise that
the relationship between education and violent conflict is highly complex and that education systems can be both ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ of war and conflict. Sri Lanka’s aspiration to rise from the conflict depends on how skilled and versatile its people are for analyzing and resolving conflict as well as promoting peace within their communities. The research argues that higher education systems in post-conflict states have the potential to contribute towards more effective post-war reconstruction and recovery. Higher education should be conceptualized as an important pillar of recovery; the capacity of domestic higher education sectors in post-conflict contexts is an often under-recognized and under-utilized resource of considerable potential value that can connect to a wide range of reconstruction and recovery processes and effectively drive post-conflict recovery and transitions. Given the under-theorized and under-studied nature of higher education and post conflict recovery Loyola Campus: Higher Education at the margins attempts to fill the gap. Loyola Campus believes that in Sri Lanka in the post-war context scenario education plays a crucial role in creating a culture of peace and healing the wounds of war and peacebuilding that is inclusive and socially just. Promoting research, development and innovation will be essential to expand knowledge and technology-intensive industries and services to meet Sri Lanka’s aspirations to become a peaceful and reconciled nation.

The significance of this research is that it will strengthen and inform relevant policies to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. It will inform programmes towards promoting peace through Education. The research effort will also compliment the exiting work done on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace. It aims to influence policies to revise and implement to strengthen the development of competencies related to the conflict resolution, conflict prevention and promotion of peace and develop a system for research, monitoring and evaluation.
Sri Lanka is posed with a dual responsibility to promote sustainable peace and shared economic prosperity. It is an opportunity to change the socio-economic conditions and a challenge to transform structures that aid equitable and just share of opportunities and development. Any meaningful understanding of peace in Sri Lanka has to definitely include equitable and shared economic prosperity as a necessary condition. This paper attempts to analyse education as a key factor in promoting both economic development (as people and a country) and peace initiatives by giving momentum to the island. Education can become the catalyst of change in creating a sustainable future for the next generation. This can only take place through a sustained effort in education sector reform that are fundamental in re-shaping the position of Sri Lankan economy regionally and globally. The rapid change witnessed globally in the recent decades has put a great emphasis on skill-based and technology-based labour force through knowledge creation as a basic economic activity. If Sri Lanka wishes to become competitive regionally and globally, the need to sustain an economy that is efficiency-driven and innovation driven will be fundamental.

1.1 Introduction

Sri Lanka at the moment stands at an important juncture: on one hand, the island hopes to stabilise its socio-economic performance which will lead towards its consolidation as a lower-middle-income country and a competitive regional power; on the other having gone through a war that devastated the people and the country’s economy, the island hopes to capitalise on peacebuilding and transforming the conflict-ridden society
in creating mechanisms for peaceful coexistence. GoSL’s *Vision* 2025 clearly states its vision of making Sri Lanka economically prosperous: by transforming Sri Lanka into a ‘hub of the Indian Ocean, with a knowledge-based, highly competitive, social market economy’ and making Sri Lanka an ‘export-oriented economic hub’ (GoSL, 2017, p. 11). Moreover, the document also recognises the mandate people had given in fostering reconciliation and peace, equality, upholding and promoting human rights paving way towards inclusive and equitable growth and development of the country (GoSL, 2017, p. 7). This dual priority for Sri Lanka remain a challenge and an opportunity at a unique juncture of its history.

Despite a myriad of challenges that obscure Sri Lanka from its onward march towards development and shared prosperity, the country has been able to steer through its socio-economic and political landscape, though slow, with progress. Moreover, Sri Lanka has been able to perform significantly well in terms of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): About 96 percent of its citizens have completed primary school; 87 percent have finished secondary school; there is gender parity in school completion at primary and secondary levels; primary and secondary levels have reached universal education; infant mortality rate remains at 8 per 1,000 live births; life expectancy is 75 years (UIS-UNESCO, 2018). Notwithstanding the socio-economic and political challenges, the country has faced for the last two decades, Sri Lanka has been able to embrace lower-middle-income status which outperforms many of the countries in the South Asian region. The sustained economic growth has, indeed helped the country in reducing poverty and creating better opportunities for people (Dundar, et al., 2017, p. xiii).

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1 As the World Bank observes, Sri Lanka’s unequal economic development across provinces and land administration coupled with the dangers of a rapidly aging population, marks the key constraints towards growth and development (The World Bank, 2017).

With the global reshaping of economic structures, today Sri Lanka is experiencing fundamental socio-economic shifts. a) Traditionally a majority of employment opportunities were generated through agriculture. But this is changing over a period of time. While the share of agriculture in employment has decreased from 51 percent (1971) to 34 percent (2010), the share of industry and services have risen from 11 percent (1971) to 25 percent (2010), and 38 percent (1971) to 42 percent (2010) respectively. With the expansion of manufacturing and services sector, the demand for skilled labour force too increases (Dundar, Millot, Savchenko, Aturupane, & Thilakaratne, 2014, p. 2); b) poverty and inequitable access to education as a major challenge facing youth today (Nanayakkara, 2017); c) Sri Lanka’s women labour force participation as a pre-requisite for equitably sharing the socio-economic benefits (Arunatillake, 2017); d) Sri Lanka recognises the importance of peacebuilding as a pillar paving the way towards socio-economic development and better integration of its people (De Mel & Venugopal, 2016).

In order to achieve the Vision 2025 of GoSL, it is not sufficient to outperform a couple of regional low performing economies and be satisfied but attempt to move form a factor-driven economy to efficiency-driven and innovation-driven economy. Creation of knowledge, skills and competencies will be crucial in this regard. Education plays a key role in the growth of an economy and the sustenance of the moment created through a number of fiscal policy measures. It is indeed one of the most efficient tools in economic progress and also equitably sharing the economic benefits leading to better integration of certain backward regions which are often neglected. Investment and policy involvement in education can aid sustainable development and bring shared prosperity for the people of the country.

In a recent study, Sri Lanka has received the 71st place out of 138 countries in the Global Competitive Index during 2016/17 compared to the 68th place received in the previous time (Global Economic Forum, 2016, p. xiii). The report shows how Sri Lanka still lags behind in a number
of areas necessary in becoming globally competitive. In order for Sri Lanka to transit from a factor-driven economy to efficiency-driven economy and innovation-driven economy a number of areas needs to be considered: higher education and training, labour market efficiency, technological readiness, business sophistications and innovation etc.

After tax and regulations, firms in Sri Lanka marks quality and supply of skilled technicians as one of the barriers to doing business in Sri Lanka [Dutz & O’Connell, 2013]. This is true due to the dearth of skilled labour who are specifically equipped to perform high end tasks that requires technology, cognitive capacity and language use. Sri Lanka had long ago achieved universal education. Despite the healthy enrolment rates in primary and secondary education and free education opportunities until University, an average of 140,000 youth enter the labour market who have not been educated more than primary and secondary level and they lack specific technical and vocation skills that the industrial and the service sectors require [Dundar, Millot, Savchenko, Aturupane, & Thilakaratne, 2014, p. 31]. There is a serious mismatch between the education system, the type of training that the students receive and the expectations of the students:

While 56 percent employers think that high-skilled workers should pass GCE A-Levels, only 18 percent of population have done so. Similarly, 70 percent of employers think that an average low-skilled worker should have passed GCE O-levels, but only 35 percent of low-skilled employees and 40 percent of self-employed have done so. About 60 percent of employers expect average workers in a high-skilled occupation to have completed technical or vocation education and training, and 25 percent think low-skilled workers should have. Yet only 16 percent of the population has done so [Dundar, Millot, Savchenko, Aturupane, & Thilakaratne, 2014, p. 9].

What distinguishes between advanced economies, middle-income economies and low-income economies is the ‘knowledge content of
their production activities and processes, because economic activities in recent years have become increasingly knowledge and skill intensive. Education is at the heart of human capital accumulation and economic growth thereby increasing the life-cycle earning of people (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 1). Moreover, education which is equitably shared among different regions of the country and among different ethnic and gender groups has the capacity to transform a country. Such an initiative will not only lead to the acquisition of cognitive and soft skills but lead towards peace and shared prosperity of people irrespective of their difference.

Despite the number of developments visible in the areas of infrastructure development, business and commerce, the period from 2009 to 2014 is considered largely one of missed opportunities in terms of capitalising on peacebuilding (De Mel & Venugopal, 2016, p. vii). An absence of a war in a place where previously a conflict was present, is not a sign of peace or a guarantee that one will not happen in the foreseeable future; peace can be only guaranteed through dignity, rights and capacities for all the people irrespective of any difference (United Nations, 2014). Peace can be fragile when it is merely a manifestation of cessation of hostilities as the possibility of another round of hostilities always lingers until the root causes of the conflict are addressed. Hence, GoSL is tasked with the multi-faceted task of peacebuilding that fundamentally demands the transformation of ‘negative peace’ which is experienced in the sense of the absence of war to ‘positive peace’ where societal transformation through peacebuilding is possible (De Mel & Venugopal, 2016, p. vii).

This paper attempts to analyse education as a key factor in promoting both economic development (as people and a country) and peace initiatives by giving momentum to the island. Education can become the

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3 In Sri Lanka, according to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has seen a steady increase from (US$ Bn.) 56.7 in 2010, 74.9 in 2014, 82.3 in 2015 and 81.3 in 2016. At the same time Sri Lanka’s GDP has been 7.4 in 2014, 4.8 in 2015 and 4.4% in 2016. The inflation of the country has drastically decreased from 7.3% in 2010 to 3.6% in 2016. The Unemployment rate also has steadily declined from 4.9 in 2010, 4.3 in 2014, 4.6% in 2015 and 4.4% in 2016 (Ministry of Finance, 2018)
catalyst of change in creating a sustainable future for the next generation. Vision 2025 recognises the importance of education in a number of areas that has the potential in revitalising the shared prosperity of the people which is inclusive of peace as an integral component: a) under Public Investment Programme (PIP), GoSL hopes to prioritise public investment on education, research and development and vocational training; b) education as a potential areas for Public Private Partnerships (PPP); c) increase of female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR); d) Prioritise on skill development of students who match to the skill profiles expected of the industries and firms thereby creating a knowledge-based competitive economic activities\(^4\); e) making thirteen years of education available for all; f) increasing access to tertiary education; g) empowering the entrepreneurial capabilities of the youth. Although such political promises are viewed with scepticism, if achieved, the reforms will pave the way towards a better and prosperous future.

1.2 Understanding Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka

Peace or peacebuilding as a concept has varied definitions and understandings. Different countries with unique socio-economic and political backgrounds work for peace in a number of different ways. Even in Sri Lanka, different sections of people have varied understandings of what constitutes as peace and how and when peace can be achieved [De Mel & Venugopal, 2016, p. 1]. This lack of consensus on the concept makes it ever harder for the people to work towards it and the governments to strategize. For Sri Lankans the term ‘peacebuilding’ is not new. Having gone through a war that lasted for almost three decades, many of the Sri Lankans have grown up listening to this term referred in a number of different occasions. However, since the end of the war in 2009, there is a renewed interest in peacebuilding strategies and achieving social cohesion.

\(^4\) Even after nine years of the war which ended in 2009, Sri Lanka is struggling to address and implement structural reforms that can alone guarantee sustainable peace. The end of the war bellies the oppressive structures that cause conflicts.
It is interesting to note that the term peacebuilding is a new addition to the lexicon of the United Nations, though the organisation has been active in peace-making and peacekeeping since its foundation. It was during the last decade that peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries has become a topic of great concern in the United Nations agencies, donor agencies and other international non-governmental organisations (UNICEF, 2011, p. 6). It was UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali who initiated the peacebuilding dimension of conflict affected societies with the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992. Since then peacebuilding has been a major topic among the UN and other international aid/donor agencies who primarily work in conflict-ridden societies in bringing them back to normalcy. UN Secretary General’s Policy Committee in May 2007 developed a comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding. It notes the following.

Peacebuilding involves array of measures targeted to reduce the risk of relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay foundations for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership... (UNICEF, 2011, p. 11)

The term ‘peacebuilding’ was coined by Johan Galtung with the publication of *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, peace-making and peacebuilding* in 1975. Galtung’s understanding of peacebuilding did not only concentrate on the cessation of war but removing the root causes of war. For Galtung, peacebuilding necessarily involved a process of removing structural and cultural violence and providing the space for an alternative where wars might reoccur (UNICEF, 2011, p. 13). Hence, in this type of understanding we talk about ‘negative peace’ which is the cessation and/or the absence of violence; and ‘positive peace’ which is the absence of structural violence. Removing structural violence and the root causes of war is the only means of bringing sustainable peace for a country affected by years of conflict. In 1997, Lederach wrote that peacebuilding
...is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships [UNICEF, 20]

According to this understanding peacebuilding involves a number of different activities that should be a part and parcel of any search for meaningful peace. Peace is a dynamic social construction where the people contribute in sustaining this process leading towards the creation of better integrated societies.

As earlier stated the term ‘peacebuilding’ also could mean different things to different people. Moreover, peacebuilding becomes problematic when it is homogenously applied to every conflict situation with the same level of understanding.\(^5\) For example, the conflict in Sri Lanka is to a large level characterised by people in their political groups marked by their ethnic identity in relation to the GoSL [De Mel & Venugopal, 2016, p. 7]. The conflict does not necessarily presume hostility between the Sinhalese and Tamils as individuals. Although, there is personal animosity expressed, it is more a product of the conflict that a cause of it. The insecurity of Tamil ethnic group about impartiality of GoSL in terms of governance, law and order, economic resource sharing, political power will definitely fuel disappointment and dejection about the GoSL’s mechanisms that are in place to protect and aid all the citizens of the country [De Mel & Venugopal, 2016, p. 24]. Under these circumstances, if the understanding of peacebuilding is limited to mere interpersonal dynamics and relations between individuals, that type of strategy might not suite a place like Sri Lanka where conflict is clearly characterised by their political group marked by the ethnic identity in relation to a functioning government of a country.

\(^5\) For example, in Lebanon, the notion of peace is so much intertwined with Arab–Israeli conflict. Any attempt of ‘peace’ could be felt by the Lebanese as an ‘unwelcome mode of externally imposed reconciliation with Israel. If peace means ‘compromise’, ‘settling for less’, it could feel as imposed peace [United Nation Children's Fund, 2011]; [Zakaria, 2011].
Table 01: Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims indicating how they identify themselves:
Citizenship and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizenship %</th>
<th>Ethnicity %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Wijetunge, 2007, pp. 51-54]

In a national level attitude survey on social cohesion done by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of University of Colombo in 2007, the researchers attempt to find the predominant identity (Citizenship or Ethnicity) that the respondents prefer to identify themselves with. According the survey, out of the two options, Sinhalese tend to identify by their citizenship (22.1 percent); Tamils and Muslims tend to identify by their ethnicity (20.7 and 36.6 percent respectively). However, as it is noted by NEREC, there are several differences among groups such as students, teachers, lecturers and trainees. Although the data provided here is not sufficient to make an outright judgement on the attitudes with regard to the dominant identity, the need for better integration is highlighted.

Table 02: Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims indicating what they consider to be the biggest difference in Sri Lanka

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Difference between Rich and Poor (%)</th>
<th>Difference between Sinhalese and Tamil (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Wijetunge, 2007, pp. 54-55]
The same survey also measures the perception of these dominant three groups in terms of what they consider to be the biggest difference in Sri Lanka. All the three groups are unanimous in identifying the difference between rich and poor to be significant; the Tamils have scored just 2.1 percent more in marking the difference between Sinhalese and Tamil (47.5 percent) to be the most prominent. Does this mean that for Sri Lankans the difference of their ethnicity to be as prominent as the distinction between the rich and the poor? In the same survey, under categories such as government institutions and governance, the deviations among the Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims are quite visible. Does this fact lead us to the previous debate on the idea that Sri Lankans are more divided in terms of political groups marked by ethnicity in relation to GoSL? If this presumption is correct, then, the strategies used in peacebuilding too have to change accordingly. Otherwise what we do in terms of peacebuilding will be ineffective and not relevant.

1.2 Education in Conflicts

The role of education in conflict affected countries has received renewed attention during the past decade and this runs parallel to the rise of peacebuilding agenda in the international and local levels. This initially spurred from the realisation that the majority of world’s children who are out-of-school are located in the conflict zones [United Nation Children’s Fund, 2011, p. 6]. They remain the most vulnerable and exploited. Engaging with these vulnerable children through education programming was the only way for many countries to reach educational Millennium Development Goals. Since then, more and more international agencies and non-governmental organisations are involved in the education sector reforms in bringing back normalcy to a formerly conflict-ridden society [Smith, 2010]. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, in his report

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6 Although it sounds new, Education Sector Reform (ESR) is not new. The term education sector reform has been used in many development strategies in addressing conflict-affected countries in the world (Penny, Ward, Read, & Bines, 2008). In our current discussion, education sector reform takes centrality of importance due to its capacity for socio-economic transformation in conflict-affected countries.
Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in the context of Education in the Post-conflict Sri Lanka

Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict in 2009 emphasises the role of social services that includes education among five fundamental priorities towards peacebuilding during post-conflict transition [United Nations, 2009]. Education was included within the UN cluster approach in 2008 which established education as a basic human right and a core component of humanitarian response [Humanitarian Response, n.d.]. Access to quality education has become a fundamental right that should be safeguarded in the most challenging circumstances. Education by providing knowledge, skills, cognitive capacity, reflection and critical thinking can in longer term be the basis for transforming conflicts itself. Because education affects every aspect of a person’s life: accumulation of values and attitudes; socialisation and identity formation; employment generation through skill formation [United Nation Children’s Fund, 2011, p. 7]. Education, in this fashion, paves the way towards better economic opportunities and peacebuilding in the society. However, this process does not take place naturally as it has to be planned and well thought of.

In many occasions the challenge remains that several education initiatives in post-conflict scenarios have not been explicitly planned to cater towards peacebuilding efforts and much less towards shared economic prosperity of the population [United Nation Children’s Fund, 2011, p. 13]. For Example, there is a special programme ‘Friends from two Cities’ conducted by the Social Integration and Peace Education Unit attached to the Co-curricular, Guidance and Counselling and Peace Education Branch of the Ministry of Education that aims to inculcate broader social integration, deeper friendship and harmony among different groups of students by bring together students from different education zones for interactions and a common programme. The 19th of such programme brought together 220 students and 66 teachers of 22 schools in Wallakamam education zone in the Northern province and Sri Jayawardanapura education zone [Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2016]. While such programmes among students could promote peace and social cohesion, it is doubtful as to the effectiveness of such initiatives.
Programmes aimed at strengthening people to people contact only lays the foundation for a number of other initiatives that could have a better impact on students in a local context. It wouldn’t be a surprise if many of those students who came from Walikamam and Jayawardanapura didn’t actually had any personal ill feeling, a grudge, hostility as individuals. Many of the programmes conducted in the education sector remain secluded from a grand strategy in accompanying students through different grades where different ideas of sharing, dedication, unity in diversity, tolerance, reconciliation, and justice etc are introduced to the students through a number of different techniques.

It is important that education programming in such conflict-affected geographies be based on high quality political economy and conflict analysis and it remains sensitive to the dynamics of the local contexts. It was definitely a way of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) concerning the education of a country. More and more scholars are recognising the nature of education as a humanitarian response that has the potency: a) to protect and save lives; b) to sustain communities; c) to build knowledge; d) to strengthen resilience among the most affected sections of people [Save the Children]. Moreover, education become a key platform for many other humanitarian interventions in the areas of health, nutrition, water and sanitation, shelter and non-food items, peace education and conflict resolution, disaster risk education and early recovery.

Education has the capacity to change people’s attitudes towards violence; help in better understanding the political system and the implications for the community; and to aid in developing skills related to new technologies and modern industry demands towards economic regeneration; foster relationships among people and communities that were formerly plagued by conflict [UNICEF, 2011, p. 8]. These opportunities need to be utilised by the local governments and different section of the society in bringing economic prosperity and peace. The danger is that sometimes
the governments and the concerned parties can be too concerned about the ‘physical reconstruction’ of the education system in terms of rebuilding and refurbishing school buildings in contrast to ‘ideological reconstruction’ such as democratisation of the education system and the ‘psychological reconstruction’ that deals with loss of confidence and demoralisation[UNICEF, 2011, p. 22].

A study The Role of Education in Peacebuilding collates the findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone where education is thought to be a driver of conflict and not just a strategy towards economic prosperity and peacebuilding. In Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) struggle was on the foundational demands of addressing the elitist, geographically unequal public education system; and the sharp cut on social spending including education played as the catalyst in the eruption of the conflict [UNICEF, 2011, p. 26]. In Lebanon, for example, the highly segregated education system based on the sectarian divide was a key player in the conflict coupled with the strong private education sector in the country that was instrumental in deepening the socio-economic inequalities providing impetus for the conflict [UNICEF, 2011, p. 26]. In Nepal, the education sector and the monarchy which was very elitist had favoured the high castes while providing less and less education opportunities for the people from the so-called low/neglected castes. This has exonerated the socio-economic divisions and paving the way towards the struggle of the Maoists [UNICEF, 2011]. In all the three cases education has been a powerful instrument in promoting conflict. Throughout the past decade a number of studies have shown the implications of education towards conflict [Bush & Saltarelli, 2000]. Education can oppress groups of people through the creation of ideologies, controlling access, denying opportunities, and promoting a language of division and hatred through its syllabus. Hence, it is very important to be mindful and conflict sensitive to the type of education intervention that is being utilised. Moreover, as we earlier discussed depending on one’s own conceptualisation of peacebuilding the intervention of education and the
mechanisms employed will also vary and differ [United Nation Children’s Fund, 2011, p. 25].

1.3 Education for Peace and Prosperity: Learning from the Pitfalls of Sri Lankan Education System

As we have seen in previous sections, education has the capacity to promote both shared economic prosperity and peace. Unless the education policies, investment plans, economic strategies are directly linked to these objectives, the achievement of economic development and peace would be a distant reality. The challenge for those who are involved in the promotion of education sector is that it is not neutral. Education as a process can serve towards the end it is intended: it could bring economic prosperity and also exclude certain sections of the population from those benefits thereby creating hostility and conflict. Education in that fashion can also be used to promote a number of social evils [Bush & Saltarelli, 2000, p. 9]. While education helps to form cohesive societies through shaping of understanding, attitudes and behaviour, it can also play a socially damaging role.

In this section, while being focused on the dual role of education as a generator of economic opportunities and peace, drawbacks of the Sri Lankan system will be discussed with a view of re-creating a better integral process that can take forward the agenda of peace and economic development. While this discussion will be carried on under three main headings namely, Early Childhood Education (ECE), General Education and Higher and Tertiary Education, it includes a number of crosscutting themes: a) equitable access to education opportunities; b) quality of education in terms of education attainment and the skill profile of students; and c) 

7 Although Sri Lanka has recorded a rapid progress in education attainment, the country still remains behind the other middle-income countries in terms of early childhood education (ECE), higher education participation and quality, and the private sector orientation of the technical education and vocational training sector (Dundar, et al., 2017, p. xiii).

It is interesting to note that out of a number of factors influencing how higher education in Sri Lanka is equitable, there are three: gender, location and economic background of the students. These three factors can play a significant role [Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 156].
the participation of women in education that increases the possibility of shared economic benefits and peacebuilding.

1.4.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one of the most important areas within a country’s education as ECE centres help in forming children at an age when they are receptive to a number of crucial areas of childhood development: physical, mental, social and emotional. This also is in line with the developmental goals of the country where the ECE centres are expected perform a greater role (Human Development Unit, 2014, p. 1). This growing recognition of ECE for Sri Lanka is important in building its human capital. Cognitive development, socioemotional skills, capacity for learning and readiness for primary schooling will all depend on the type of ECE that the child receives.

According to the data available, there are around 17,023 ECE centres in Sri Lanka with 29,341 teachers providing services to around 470,000 to 500,000 children (Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 69). Out of the total ECE centres approximately 84 percent are managed by non-governmental organisation and other private parties. The government manages only around 16 percent of the ECE centres. This is a sector that has not received enough attention from the government.8 The resources available for the ECE centres in terms of teaching and learning material, classroom arrangement and teacher qualification are inadequate. Out of all the teachers who are employed in ECE centres only about 43 percent have General Certificate of Education Advanced-level qualifications and only 39 percent have the full year of professional training (Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 72).

8 GoSL has prepared a National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development. While the central government will formulate national policy guidelines on early childhood education, the Provincial governments are expected to regulate the functioning of ECE centres in the respective Provinces. Also, training the ECE teachers and providing necessary input falls within their purview (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013, p. 22). Since each Provincial Government is expected to play a greater role in ECE, there might be individual differences among the nine Provinces of Sri Lanka in the manner and the strategy of implementing early childhood education. For example, in the early Childhood Development Unit of the Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs, Sports and Youth Affairs Northern Province published a teacher guide book ‘Play and Learn’ for preschool teachers on 21st March 2016. This book has been instrumental in standardising ECE content and quality of preschools in the Northern Province (Ministry of Education Northern Province, 2016)
ECE centres which are largely privately own lag behind in a number of areas. GoSL does not have adequate clarity and a strategy of operation and the parties primarily responsible for implementing ECE education in different parts of the country. The government does not have a framework in laying down minimum standards for ECE centre and much less in terms of creating a standard curriculum in order to monitor the learning outcomes of children (Human Development Unit, 2014, pp. 2-3). In many of the occasions, the monitoring and evaluation of ECE centres fall within the purview of the provincial governments. While some provincial governments proactively engage with the ECE centre, a central mechanism in assuring minimum quality of education provided is still missing.

ECE centres could become the most potential grounds for peacebuilding (UNNICEF, 2013). As the children remain small and receptive, they largely remain open to ideas of peace, reconciliation, sharing, living together in a diverse society, treating others with dignity, self-respect and respecting others through various classroom/playroom-based activities. But this requires a clear strategy, planning and training. It requires updating of ECE syllabuses to match with those of international standards and use of latest techniques in teaching.

ECE centres are largely depended on private funding. Mostly the ECE services are provided by non-state actors. Even the government investment in ECE remains at an unsatisfactory level. The practice of GoSL where majority of ECE centres remain outside public financing is an unusual practice by the modern international standards (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, pp. 22-23). GoSL spends on ECE less than 0.0001 percent of the GDP which is much lesser than the spending of middle-income countries (.03 percent) (Human Development Unit, p. 3). Although child’s ability to acquire skills and competencies and greater productivity can be enhanced through the interventions at ECE Centres, the quality of early childhood education in Sri Lanka remains in a questionable state.
Income and location of the ECE Centres play a key role in determining the quality and the type of education that the children receive. ECE centre enrollment has a disparity among the 3-4 age group of children coming from richer households and urban areas. As the report notes:

For example, the ECE enrollment rate for the richest quintile (56%) is 17 percentage points higher than that for the poorest quintile (39%). Similarly, the enrollment rate for urban areas (59%) is around 10 percentage points higher than the enrollment rates for rural areas and estates (plantations) (Human Development Unit, 2014, p. 4).

Hence there is a high possibility of children coming from rural/unprivileged areas receiving lesser opportunities within ECE framework. Although parents might be motivated in sending their children to ECE centres, the quality and facilities provided in centres might differ in several localities. Some of the ECE centres run by private parties might not be accessible to some people due to their economic condition. So, children could either become a part of low quality ECE centres or remain outside the ECE system until grade one. Such children who receive scant attention during ECE can exhibit poor adjustment in certain areas of their development related to socialisation, adjustment and communication (Human Development Unit, 2014, p. 5). This will definitely have a tangible impact on economic prosperity and peace as the child grows.

1.4.2 General Education in Sri Lanka

A regular student in Sri Lanka completes around ten years of schooling that is above the average which is recorded in many of the regional countries. This is definitely a sign of the progress of Sri Lanka in at least primary and junior secondary education; still the participation of students at senior secondary and higher education faces a number of concerns.

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which in turn has prevented Sri Lanka in becoming a skilled-labour intensive and competitive country in the region (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014). The awareness of parents on the importance of providing education for their children coupled with the legal framework set by the GoSL making it mandatory for children between the age 5-16 years to attend school has helped Sri Lanka to experience higher enrollment rates and higher rates of survival during the primary and junior secondary education.

Sri Lanka has a network of schools administered by the Central and the Provincial governments. There are 10,162 government schools spread across nine provinces in twenty-five districts. Out of the total government schools in the country, 9,809 schools (96.5 percent) are provincial schools while only 353 schools (3.5 percent) are national schools. 80.6 percent of total students studying in government schools belong to provincial schools, while 19.4 percent students belong to national schools (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2016).

There are four types of government schools: 1AB [schools having advanced level science stream classes]; 1C [schools having advanced level arts and/or commerce streams but no science stream]; Type 2 [schools having classes only up to grade 11]; and Type 3 [schools having classes only up to grade 8]. Out of the total government schools, a majority of them, 72.3 percent are only Type 2 and Type 3 schools [33.6 percent and 38.7 percent respectively]. 1 AB and 1 C schools are a minority in the country, 27.7 percent [9.9 percent and 17.8 percent respectively] (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2016). This means already by the time of school enrolment, 72.3 percent of students are denied the opportunity to continue their GCE Advanced level studies in the schools where they are enrolled. This is a major concern that affect equitable distribution of resources between the rural and the urban population. According to the statistics approximately between 60-80 percent of government schools are belonging to the Type 2 and Type 3 categories where GCE A/L studies are not available (Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2015, p. 5). In Northern and Eastern provinces, the
share of Type 2 and Type 3 categories of schools are the highest: 78.8 and 75.5 percents respectively. This could hamper the education opportunities of students coming from certain geographies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Student/ Graduate teacher ratio</th>
<th>Student/ Trained teacher ratio</th>
<th>Student/ Untrained teacher ratio</th>
<th>Overall teacher ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1676</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1139</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1304</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uva</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaragamuwa</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>972</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2016, p. 10]

Table 04: Time Trend of Net Enrolment Rates by Gender, 2002-2009/10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Education</th>
<th>Secondary Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 6]

Primary stage of education is unique. While every stage of education is expected to be child-centered and activity-based, the emphasis on these aspects are more crucial during the primary years [Ministry of Education
Sri Lanka, 2013, p. 24). There is less emphasis on examinations but teachers continuously attempt to help the children develop thinking, skills and abilities. Sri Lanka can boast about its achievement in education especially in primary and junior secondary education. Sri Lanka has achieved universal primary education that records a Net Enrollment Rate (NER) of 98.3 percent during 2005/6 and 98.3 during 2009/10 period. This is an indication that almost all the children belonging to that age group attend school. According to the statistics in 2006/07 there were only 1.9 percent and 3.3 percent of children out of school at primary and junior secondary levels (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2013). In terms of numbers, a total of 25,086 children at the primary level and 43,101 children at junior secondary level are out of school during 2006/07 according to the same report. There are no observable gender differences in NER at primary and junior secondary levels.

The teachers who provide education facilities play a major role in forming skills and competencies. It is important to have a healthy number of teachers per student. This can improve the quality of education and improve the attention given to each student. The overall student-teacher ratio (STR) in Sri Lanka is 18 which is quite commendable for a middle-income country and there are no significant deviations between the provinces.
Table 05: Attendance rates of four-years-olds by residence and wealth quintile, 2006/07

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Not attending Primary or Pre-Primary Education</th>
<th>Attending Primary or Pre-Primary Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estate</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household wealth quintile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorest</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richest</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>92.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


However, there are some observable deviations of pre-primary/primary students attending and not attending school considering their residence and household wealth quintile. Estate sector marks the most significant difference: the table shows 20.2 percent of primary/pre-primary children from the estate sector out of schools; and only 79.8 percent of students from the estate sector attending primary/pre-primary education with a difference of 16.4 percent with the number of primary and pre-primary students attending school from urban areas. The differences between estate and even rural areas are quite significant. The Estate sector appears to be the weakest in terms of pre-primary/primary levels of education. This trend could continue for the estate areas in secondary, higher and tertiary education levels too. In terms of household wealth quintile, 12.4 and 8.0 percents of children from the poorest and second quintile are out of school.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. sat for five of more</td>
<td>No. sat for five of more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subjects Qualified for</td>
<td>subjects Qualified for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GCA (A/L) Failed in all</td>
<td>GCA (A/L) Failed in all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subjects (Appeared for six or</td>
<td>subjects (Appeared for six or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>more subjects)</td>
<td>more subjects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% No. No. %</td>
<td>% No. No. %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>34,801 26,173 75.21</td>
<td>34,994 26,828 76.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>73,071 53,062 72.67</td>
<td>75,414 54,994 72.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaragamuwa</td>
<td>24,785 17,342 69.97</td>
<td>25,589 18,117 70.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western</td>
<td>31,733 22,104 69.66</td>
<td>33,833 23,896 70.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>34,652 23,209 66.98</td>
<td>37,665 25,932 68.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>16,560 11,030 66.61</td>
<td>18,558 12,630 68.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uva</td>
<td>18,231 12,005 65.85</td>
<td>19,041 12,632 66.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>21,693 13,784 63.54</td>
<td>23,744 14,617 61.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>17,752 10,719 60.38</td>
<td>17,413 10,562 60.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>273,224 189,428 68.93</td>
<td>286,251 200,208 69.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [Department of Examinations Sri Lanka, 2016, p. 4]
The same type of deviations in the performance of students from different provinces in Sri Lanka is also observed from the achievement level of students who sat for GCE [O/L] exam in 2015/16. While the Southern Province records the highest percentage of students qualifying for GCA [A/L] with 75.21 percent, Northern Province trails behind the list of provinces with 60.38 percent. The Provinces Northern, Eastern and Uva have consistently underperformed in a number of occasions in the same study measuring the achievement of students.

Table 07: Percentage of Grade 4 students scoring 50 or above, and below 50 in English Language, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Above or equal to 50</th>
<th>Below 50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>66.00</td>
<td>34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>64.39</td>
<td>35.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabaragamuwa</td>
<td>59.41</td>
<td>40.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Western</td>
<td>56.91</td>
<td>43.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>55.68</td>
<td>44.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>51.02</td>
<td>48.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>47.98</td>
<td>52.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>47.80</td>
<td>52.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uva</td>
<td>45.89</td>
<td>54.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>55.48</td>
<td>44.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2016, p. 103]

The National Education Research and Evaluation Unit of the University of Colombo had undertaken a study in 2016 that aims to measure the achievement of grade 4 students in four main subjects: Tamil, Sinhala, English and Mathematics. Tables 7 and 8 pertain to the attainment in English subject. English has been used for this analysis taking into consideration the importance of English language as a tool of attracting better economic and life opportunities for the younger generation.
Table 08: English Language achievement of Grade 4 students according to location, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Error of Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Percentile 25</th>
<th>Median 50</th>
<th>Percentile 75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>49.07</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>24.54</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>61.34</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>24.24</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>53.53</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>25.13</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2016, p. 116]

As it was observed earlier, student attainment varies depending on the geography: province and the location. Tables 7 and 8 above depict the achievement of students in English. There is significant deviation both between the provinces and the location (rural and urban). While in the Western province, 66 percent of students scored above or equal to fifty, only 55.48 percent students scored above or equal to fifty in English language. The provinces Northern (47.98), Eastern (47.80) and Uva records the lowest percentages among the provinces. English language achievement mean for rural and urban areas records a significant difference: rural (49.07 mean points) and urban (61.34 mean points). The deviation in terms of geography (both province and location) indicates differences of students’ performance that could create an imbalance in the share of economic resources and prospects in the future.

Table 09: Achievement in sub skills in English Language of Grade 4 students, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>63.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>65.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>45.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>55.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2016, p. 120]
In English language four subs skills are identified in relation to Essential Learning Competencies (ELC) that the students are expected to excel. Table 09 shows the performance of students of grade 4 under vocabulary, comprehension, syntax and writing sub skills. In comparison, syntax and writing skills are the weakest. These areas of ELC would gain much significance as students progress. It is important to acquire expected skill sets proportionate to their level of education and would ensure a higher survival rate and better adjustment in higher grades as they progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>58.75</td>
<td>21.01</td>
<td>60.51</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>26,735.6</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>46.79</td>
<td>18.65</td>
<td>42.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>50.87</td>
<td>20.29</td>
<td>47.51</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2015, p. 30]

Sri Lanka is recognising the importance of STEM education, which is promoting the study of subjects Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics among students [Wijesinghe, 2017]. As the Minister of Science, Technology and Research believes that given the population and the favorable literacy rates, Sri Lanka should have had approximately 22,000 intellectuals with doctorates from all fields engaged in research. According to the Minister’s calculations the country has less than a quarter of the expected number [Ariff, 2017]. One of the main reasons is the lack of competency levels achieved by the students at junior secondary and higher education. The following section discusses the percentage of grade eight students’ attainment of expected competency level in science, mathematics and English.
The achievement of grade 8 students in mathematics are more biased towards the students from the urban areas where the performance is significantly above the rural areas (58.75 and 46.79 mean points respectively). The poor performance of rural students in mathematics could be due to a number of issues: lack of qualified teachers, less attention in school, low IQ, health related issues, poor family situation affecting the general performance of children. Whatever the reason might be, it is important that those issues are addressed to avoid discrepancies within geographies and wealth quintile of people leading to inequality and dissatisfaction.

Table 11: Science achievement mark of Grade 8 Students according to location- Urban/Rural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>58.75</td>
<td>21.01</td>
<td>60.51</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>26,735.6</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>46.79</td>
<td>18.65</td>
<td>42.55</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>50.87</td>
<td>20.29</td>
<td>47.51</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2015, p. 51]

The achievement of grade 8 students in science are more biased towards the urban areas where the performance is significantly above the rural areas (48.10 and 37.67 mean points respectively). Low level of rural students’ performance in science will heavily constrain their future options in studies as well as in searching employment opportunities matching to their expectations. Hence, science as a subject of great importance in generating future possibilities for a better life of these students are in danger.
Table 12: English achievement mark of Grade 8 Students according to location- Urban/Rural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>44.32</td>
<td>21.57</td>
<td>38.41</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>46,122</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>30.53</td>
<td>14.26</td>
<td>28.32</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Island</td>
<td>35.23</td>
<td>18.32</td>
<td>30.05</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2015, p. 73]

The achievement of grade 8 students in English marks the highest deviation among the three subjects analysed here. The achievements are more biased towards the urban areas where the performance is significantly above the rural areas (44.32 and 30.53 mean points respectively).

Table 13: Achievement of Grade 8 student in Mathematics by competency level, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Skills</td>
<td>49.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>48.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning</td>
<td>65.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [NEREC, 2015, p. 35]

The achievement of students in mathematics remain in an unsatisfactory level. Out of the four levels, knowledge and skills and problem-solving skills among the students of grade 8 remain weak. The manner in which they will get adjusted to the higher demand in mathematics during higher education and tertiary education becomes a question.
Table 14: Achievement of Grade 8 student in Science by competency level, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth Science</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (NEREC, 2015, p. 56)*

In general, the performance of grade 8 student in science under the sub skill categories (Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science and Physics) are evidently weak. The knowledge and skills that are acquired during their studies till grade 8 might not be sufficient for them to either become skilled workers or progress in their studies.

Table 15: Achievement of Grade 8 student in English by competency level, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency Level</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: (NEREC, 2015, p. 75)*

As it was stated in other two subjects—mathematics and science—the performance of grade 8 students in English language remain unsatisfactory. Especially the skills of students in writing is extremely poor. With these type of skill sets and proficiency, it would be quite challenging for them to become competitive either in the regional or global market.

It is shown that half of the students, 45 percent, either failed or conditionally passed the GCE O/L exam in 2015 which lays a basic foundation for any further pursuit in the academic field. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is the failure in GCE O/L mathematics (Policy Insights, 2017).
In a recent study *Better Schools for Better O-Level Results in Sri Lanka* by the Institute of Policy Studies, the researchers highlight on a possible link between GCE O/L performance and school resources, especially referring to the lack of qualified and experienced teachers for mathematics and science [Abayasekara & Arunatilake, 2017].

The trends that we have observed in the disparity of performance in students from certain geographical locations, the lack of competency level achievement and the inability to progress to higher studies will definitely fuel unemployment and underemployment. Sri Lanka has approximately 362,999 people (4.4 percent) who are unemployed. Although the unemployment rate in Sri Lanka shows stable (2012-4.0 percent; 2013-4.4 percent; 2014-4.3 percent; 2015-4.7 percent; 2016-4.4 percent), there are other patterns of unemployment and underemployment in terms of geographical location and the education level which reveals interesting facts. The highest age group that records unemployment is the age group between 15-24 (21.6 percent) while other age groups between 25-29 (9.2 percent), 30-39 (2.4 percent) records substantially less percentages of unemployment [Department of Census and Statistics, 2016]. Higher unemployment rate between the ages 15-24 makes a direct reference to the type of primary and secondary education and the quality of acquiring basic skills during the studies. In terms of the education level also the unemployment rate differs. GCE (A/L) and above records an unemployment rate of 8.3 percent, while other education level too records a significant unemployment rate: GCE (O/L)- 5.8 percent; Grade 6 to 10-3.3 percent and Grade 5 and below- 0.8 percent [Department of Census and Statistics, 2016].

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10 Sri Lanka has an underemployment rate of 2.4 percent in 2016, a slight improvement in comparison to the previous years (2014- 2.7 percent and 2015- 2.7 percent). Out of the total underemployment, male consists of 1.7 percent and female 3.5 percent. Females share a higher underemployment rate compared to the males. In terms of sector agriculture records the highest underemployment rate of 4.1 percent whereas industry and services only record 1.9 and 1.6 percents of underemployment rates respectively [UIS-UNESCO, 2018].
1.4.3 Higher and Tertiary Education

World economy is changing in a rapid speed. Unlike the past the value for human capital is growing more than even physical capital. Knowledge based economies of the world which are largely driven by modern technologies demand knowledge generation, research and development and innovation as central key factors. Any economy that wishes to become competitive regionally and globally will have to embrace this new reality of world economy. With the increase in the importance of building human capital, the role of higher and tertiary education becomes a crucial determining factor. All the countries are pressured to build human capital with technology-based skills and competencies. Those who acquire crucial skill profiles will remain relevant to the demands of the industries and other sectors of the economy (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000).

Notwithstanding these changes, Sri Lankan policy makers have paid less attention in strengthening and expanding the higher and tertiary education sector: here expansion is not limited to establishing new Universities and HEIs but strengthening the quality and relevance of study programmes; increasing disciplines of studies that are more crucial today; building capacity of the lecturers who are involved with the universities and HEIs; providing equitable participation in education opportunities. Due to this the tertiary education enrolment in Sri Lanka remains at around 15 percent which is modest by international standards. As it is shown, Sri Lanka maintains an average net enrolment rate which is below the lower-middle income countries with 19 percent (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 3).

11 ‘In 2014, Sri Lanka had 15 public universities, 18 other higher education institutions under the University Grants Commission (UGC), 13 private HEIs, and one Sri Lankan Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE) that comprises 13 advanced technical institutes’ (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 149).
Table 16: The student number eligible to enter and admitted to Higher Educational Institutions, 2013-2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013/2014 (%)</th>
<th>2014/2015 (%)</th>
<th>2015/2016 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eligible but not selected</td>
<td>82.47</td>
<td>82.86</td>
<td>81.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected to University</td>
<td>17.53</td>
<td>17.14</td>
<td>18.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [University Grants Commission, 2016, p. 20]

As Table 16 shows, although more than 80 percent of students who complete GCE A/L exam are eligible to enter university, only 17-18 percent of the students have been admitted into the universities and HEIs under the Universities Act. As the researchers show approximately 33 percent students who pass out from GCE A/L enter tertiary vocational education and training (TVET) programmes; and around 47 percent of students are left with no option which forces them to enter the labour market or to go abroad for higher studies [Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 3]; [Ministry of Education Sri Lanka, 2013, p. 26].

Table 17: Student progression in higher education in Universities and HEIs established under the university Act, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Programmes</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Studies</td>
<td>79.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Studies</td>
<td>20.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>62.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG Diploma</td>
<td>27.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPhil</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [University Grants Commission, 2016, p. 85]

12 'Of the 240,000 students who sat for the GCE A-level exam in 2014, some 144,000 passed, in theory becoming eligible to attend an “HEI”; about 47,000 entered public institutions, 14,000 became EDPs, and 26,00 entered a private university. The remaining 57,000 (almost 40 percent) left the education system’ [Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 150].
The numbers of students who enrol to various study programmes drastically reduce with the progression of their studies. While at the undergraduate level it represented 79.20 percent, at the postgraduate level it was merely 20.81 percent. Out of the total students who pursue postgraduate studies only a miniscule number complete their MPhil (3.04 percent) and PhD (1.82 percent). With these numbers in postgraduate studies, Sri Lanka cannot expect a better performance in research and development and innovation. Sri Lanka’s gross expenditure on R & D as a percentage of GDP is 0.16 percent in comparison to India (0.76 percent), China (1.7 percent) and Singapore (2.43 percent). This will greatly debilitate the economy.

Under the technology Readiness Ranking Sri Lanka has been placed: 70 in availability of latest technologies, 53 in firm-level technology absorption and 53 in FDI and technology transfer out of 144 economies. Moreover, under the Innovation Ranking, Sri Lanka has been placed: 47 in Quality of Scientific Research Institutions, 110 in University-Industry Collaboration and 76 in Patent Cooperation Treaty [Larsen, Bandara, Esham, & Unantenne, 2016, p. 5]. While much progress is expected in both the areas, Technology Readiness and Innovation, Sri Lanka is quite weak in University-Industry collaboration [Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 12]. As Sri Lanka attempts to becoming an upper-middle-income country, the economy will have to be more knowledge intensive in order to become globally competitive. Strengthening of University-Industry collaboration will ‘improve the country’s overall capacity for research and innovation’ [Larsen, Bandara, Esham, & Unantenne, 2016, p. 37]. In many of the developing and developed economies where there are competitive education sectors, employers play a great role in the provision of education. Employers can play a central role in guarantying the relevance, quality and skill orientation of HEI and TVET programmes [Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 134]. Employers who are a part of designing, delivery and evaluation of training programmes have the greatest potential in forming a generation of people who are more skilled and competent.
In addition to the lack of opportunities, the quality and relevance of higher and tertiary education is minimal where a significant amount of higher and tertiary education graduates lack the competencies, knowledge and skill demanded by employers especially relating to communication, soft skills and ICT skills. Moreover, as it is shown around 50 percent of students in higher and tertiary education are part of external degree programmes (EDPs) that offer very little academic support. The students who pass out from the EDPs do not find an easy transition from education to skilful employment [Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 13]. Hence, the low level of skills and competencies among the students who pass out form HEIs and TVETs make them less employable leading to higher unemployment and underemployment rates [Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 123]. Although, GoSL has taken steps in increasing the effectiveness and quality of TVET programmes by establishing the Tertiary Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) and the National Vocational Qualification\(^{13}\) (NVQ) system, TVET sector is plagued by many concerns\(^{14}\) [Dundar, Millot, Savchenko, Aturupane, & Thilakaratne, 2014, p. 13]. Although TVET programmes becomes an alternative for students who are not selected into public HEIs, the pedagogy offered has not been productive in providing the skills needed for important industries in the country [Dundar, Millot, Savchenko, Aturupane, & Thilakaratne, 2014, p. 9].

Three prominent reasons for the skill mismatch between the students who pass out from HIEs and TVET programmes affect the growth: a) insufficient matching of curriculums at HIEs and TVET programmes with the skills and competencies expected; b) students continuing their studies in subjects that do not generate so many employment opportunities; c) inability of

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13 In 2005 Sri Lanka introduced National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) system ‘to help define training standards based on occupational requirements.’ The NVQ system is expected to maintain high quality in standard by continually comparing with the with standards expected, updating of the curriculum and course content. This will assist the employers in identifying the suitable candidates who possess the most crucial skills and competencies. [Dundar, et al., 2017](Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 133).

14 ‘The TVET sector in Sri Lanka is complex, fragmented, and poorly coordinated. The public sector consists of more than 30 statutory boards and 15 ministries. The Ministry of Skill Development and Vocational Training (MSDVT) is responsible for more than 70 percent of publicly provided training, delivered through several agencies, each with its own board and procedures’ [Dundar, et al., 2017, p. 131].
training programme to absorb the latest trends in technology, science, communication and research and development.

Table 18: Total Graduate (Bachelor Degree) and Postgraduate Output in 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/ Academic Programme</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th></th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>11,192</td>
<td>80.44</td>
<td>13,912</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>83.52</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Commerce</td>
<td>3,647</td>
<td>64.77</td>
<td>5,630</td>
<td>Management &amp; Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>82.85</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>54.97</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>Medicine, Dental &amp; Allied Health Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Science</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61.53</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Veterinary Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vet. Science</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>64.38</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>58.32</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>23.99</td>
<td>1,617</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>55.80</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>50.42</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>Indigenous Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allied Health Science</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>76.03</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>76.92</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>Indigenous Medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [University Grants Comission, 2016, p. 85]
As it is observed from the Table 18, the ‘distribution of students in public institutions by field of study is highly skewed towards the arts and the social sciences’. In 2014, the students in arts, management, law and commerce was approximately 55 percent, while the science, engineering, architecture and computer science represented only 28 percent out of the total undergraduate enrolment (Aturupane, Savchenko, Shojo, & Larsen, 2014, p. 155). As it is noted in the Table, with the progression of studies form graduate to postgraduate the number of female students decrease. While 68.97 female students were enrolled for graduate studies, only 49.32 percent are enrolled for postgraduate studies. Moreover, the female students have enrolled more for arts, humanities and management studies although their total enrolment rate for graduate studies is higher (68.97 percent). Only 23.99 students who are enrolled for Engineering in undergraduate studies are female. This is in quite contrast to the 80.44 percent representation of female students in arts. The over-crowded arts and humanities faculties will not alone aid in building skilful and competent human resource force in Sri Lanka.

1.5 Conclusion

It is evident that education has the capacity to promote economic prosperity and peace by equitable distribution of resources and opportunities; socio-economic uplifting of individuals and groups irrespective of any difference; empowering people to become active participants rather than spectators in life conditions; changing ghetto social spaces to ones that are critical and creative. The economic prosperity that Sri Lanka expects is not just the wellbeing of a few but the betterment of all people. This shared prosperity equitably distributed among people will definitely become a source of socio-economic and political transformation in the country.

It is important to note some of the major areas of education sector reforms in Sri Lanka expected to aid its vision for future: developing quality and access to education in all the four main areas (Pre-primary,
Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Higher education); revamping science, mathematics, English education in secondary education; promoting technical education that combine skill education, technological know-how with industry specific training programmes; promoting University industry partnerships; sustaining an increased level of public and private investment in education. Unless these fundamental concerns are addressed the effectiveness of the education sector inspiring change and transformation is just a dream.

But this process towards shared economic prosperity and peace has to be a conscious effort. A strategy in achieving these goals play a crucial role. GoSL has a major role in providing sufficient oversight mechanisms that assure the quality, relevance and sustainability of these programmes in the education sector. Sufficient finance coupled with adequate political will and support can foster and build momentum in the reforms that are expected. The biggest hurdle that Sri Lanka faces is the over politicisation of the education sector. Each government that is appointed to power brings in new strategies and visions paying minimal attention to the importance of maintaining and strengthening the programmes that are initiated by the previous governments. Until Sri Lanka develops a mechanism where strategies and plans continue to build momentum despite the changes during elections and the arrival of different political parties to power, the country cannot expect a great deal from the education sector reform as I have discussed in this paper.

Moreover, it is important that the strategies GoSL have made in enhancing the shared economic prosperity and peace of the people and the communities be more in line with their own needs. It is futile to allocate time and funds that are not really beneficial for people. Such grand plans would fall short in achieving what they were expected to accomplish and would only act as a façade that bellies inequalities, injustices and oppression built into the very structures that education sector reform attempt to address.
As Loyola Campus– Sri Lanka envisions, the prime responsibility of all educators is to educate, empower and transform the younger generation in finding meaningful life possibilities and becoming a part of the growth of the community, the country and the whole globe. As people are educated, each one is expected to realise this shared responsibility in fostering better relations with one another, nature and Divine. Education is not just about knowledge. It has to empower and transform people through skill orientation, soft-skill accumulation, value education, and conscientisation.

**Bibliography**


Dreams and Realities of a University and Campus Ministry in Asia

Egerton Perera SJ

The study analyses some of the salient features of a University and Campus ministry in Asia. Asia, perhaps more than any other continent, is home to a rich diversity of people of many cultures, races, religions, and socio-economic conditions, living in several countries with diverse political structures. Whenever a reference is made in this paper to an ‘Asian’ University or Campus ministry, it will be based not on what prevails all over Asia, but on the situation here in Sri Lanka. This presentation rests very much upon my experiences, first as a student and later for ten years as the Catholic chaplain of the University of Ceylon, which after several baptisms is now known as the University of Peradeniya. It is the largest University in Sri Lanka with an undergraduate population of over 9000 students. It is expected that the reader will make comparisons, if they are not odious, with her / his own experiences of Universities and campus ministry. If certain issues are taken up in this paper, it is not because a solution has been found but because a problem or an issue has been identified.

Introduction

Ever since the time our ancestors, long, long ago, discovered that they were able to tame their instincts, to some extent, by thinking and reflection, human beings have experienced an insatiable desire to observe, discover, reflect upon, analyse and enhance their knowledge of, themselves and the world they live in. Ages before the French philosopher, Descartes, exclaimed, ‘Cogito, ergo sum’ people had realised that ‘thinking’ was one of the most characteristic traits of the human person. The intellectual
activity that this realisation engendered has had a steady unchequered growth. It has resulted in an unfathomable and invaluable heritage of human thought and knowledge. It has guided the course of human development and the progress of people.

It was only natural then that people felt the need to express their thoughts lucidly, classify and store them, and hand them down to posterity. Out of this necessity was born language, the various fields of knowledge, the humanities and the sciences, libraries, schools and eventually Universities and Professional Institutes.

A ‘University’ is understood today as a corporate body of teachers and students engaged in the pursuit of higher learning and authorised to confer degrees in various disciplines. Its origins in Asia could be traced either to pre-Christian or early Christian times. In the West they arose in Medieval times. Though centres of higher learning could be traced in India to very ancient times, they would not be considered as Universities because they lacked the characteristic organisational structure of a University. However, with the spread of Buddhism in India and elsewhere in Asia, the viharas that housed the monks, developed into organised centres of higher learning, of which those at Nalanda and Taxila in India, and the Mahavihara and Abhayagiri in Sri Lanka, were held in high esteem. Western institutions such as the ‘studium generale’ of Ireland or the University of Bologna, and later, Oxford and Cambridge, are among the earliest in the West that could be called ‘Universities’. It is from these origins that modern Universities have emerged and developed. In fact, it could be seen that today Universities in Asia have been influenced more by the Western rather than the Eastern structures and traditions.

Early Universities, both in Asia and the West, had strong if not exclusive affiliations to religion. In Asia, they were located where the monks resided. They were established primarily to communicate accurately what Buddha taught, through oral or written tradition, commentaries, translations et al. It was for this purpose that they received the patronage of kings.
and the community. The students were mostly, if not entirely, religious. These Universities served the intellectual, spiritual and even the physical needs of the student-monks. In the West too, it was Popes, the Christian emperors and kings that the Universities received their character. From them they received patronage. They served the needs of Christendom.

The scope of this paper is to make a presentation of some of the salient features of a University and Campus ministry in Asia. Asia, perhaps more than any other continent, is home to a rich diversity of people of many cultures, races, religions, and socio-economic conditions, living in several countries with diverse political structures. Similarities there surely are in plenty, and yet, the diversity is much more obvious. Therefore, to make a description of an ‘Asian University’ or an ‘Asian campus ministry’ is to undertake a generalisation that will be far from accurate and can only be a distortion of the actual situation. And so, whenever a reference is made in this presentation to an ‘Asian’ University or Campus ministry, it will be based not on what prevails all over Asia, but on the situation here in Sri Lanka.

This presentation rests very much upon my experiences, first as a student and later for ten years as the Catholic chaplain of the University of Ceylon, which after several baptisms is now known as the University of Peradeniya. It is the largest University in Sri Lanka with an undergraduate population of over 9000 students.

It will have two parts. Part I will make a presentation of what is commonly regarded as ‘the Idea of a University’ in Asia, dreams and realities; and Part II, will deal with what is considered to be ‘the goal of campus ministry’ and ‘the role of the chaplain’ in Asia, dreams and realities. It is expected that the reader will make comparisons, if they are not odious, with her/his own experiences of Universities and campus ministry. If certain issues are taken up in this paper, it is not because a solution has been found but because a problem or an issue has been identified.
Part I: The Idea of a University in Asia

‘The idea of a University’ is an issue that has been the subject of much discussion, debate and experiment. And yet, no consensus has been reached as to the precise role of a University in Asia today. What is a University expected to offer its students? In what ways is a University required to contribute towards the growth and development of the country in which it is located? These issues are rife with a diversity of opinions. This diversity is because what a University needs to be depends upon many factors / variables such as, the availability of human and other resources, the needs of a country, the expectations of students and others.

As a result of these many and often divergent views, there is confusion in the minds of students, parents, the State, administrators, and also even academics, about ‘the Idea of a University’. And so, it is necessary to highlight what would be commonly agreed as some of the salient features of a University in Asia.

1.1 A University is an Institutionalised Body of Teachers and Students Engaged in the Pursuit of Higher Learning and Empowered to Confer Degrees

Asia has a long and ancient tradition of higher learning imparted by a guru, a wise and learned person, to an eager student or a group of students. It dates back to pre-Christian times. This structure, however, ancient in its tradition and excellent in its process, will not be considered a University. Rather, in Asia today, it is commonly understood that a University is a corporate / institutionalised body of teachers and students engaged in the pursuit of higher learning and empowered to confer Degrees.

Why does a young woman or man enter a University? Is it not to read for a degree in some discipline or other? That is the most obvious answer that students will give. That too is primarily the expectation of their parents, their teachers at the University, the people of the country, and the State, especially where, as in Sri Lanka, University education is financed by the
State. Students of a University are expected to acquire, before all else, knowledge, competence and skill in the discipline for which they were admitted to the University. And so, to meet these expectations, among other things, a University is required, through its teaching, research and libraries,

- to pursue, preserve, transmit and expand knowledge in those disciplines that it has been instituted for;
- to create the conditions and provide the facilities for the pursuit of intellectual activity, academic excellence and research;
- to recruit teachers reputed for their scholarship and the quality of their teaching;
- to ensure that curricula are periodically reviewed and brought up to date, and that high standards are continually set and maintained in every department and faculty.

The Mission Statement of the University of Peradeniya, for example, states that primarily, ‘...Mission of the University of Peradeniya is to promote excellence in higher education and research...’[University of Peradeniya, 2001/02].

1.2 The Quality of the Asian Graduate

There are many who question whether Universities in Asia have fallen short of their ideals and failed in their mission. There are misgivings as to whether academic standards are not progressively deteriorating. There is concern as to whether Universities in Asia are no more than diploma-factories where graduates are being mass-produced and dispatched periodically out of their assembly lines to an employment market that they are incompetent to enter. Prof. Ashley Halpe, a much respected academic in Sri Lanka, with a long association with University education, has expressed these sentiments, forcefully, in a statement:
The Lankan graduate of today is a gross betrayal of the original grand design. In place of the aspiring young intellectuals of that once upon a time, we have blinkered diploma-hunters subsisting on slavishly crammed notes...when they are not trying for instant revolution. Their mentors, by and large, blithely capitulate to this student culture, oblivious of their sacred responsibility to nurture the growth of intellectual skills and humane capacities in their charges (Halpe, 2002).

There is much truth that underlies these concerns. And yet, paradoxically, it has also been observed that many Asian graduates acquit themselves creditably, within Asia and abroad, in post-graduate studies or employment. Could these be just the exception rather than the rule?

University students in Asia, especially those from the Commonwealth countries, have difficulties with English. The medium of instruction in high school is the mother tongue, which is not English. Naturally, they acquire a facility, a fluency, in their mother tongue and study English only as a second language. But, most courses at the University, especially those in the science subjects, are conducted in English. Attempts to put the students through an intensive course in English to prepare them for study at the University, have met with minimal success. As a result, the students struggle to understand the lectures and to do their assignments and examinations; they hardly ever read anything outside their discipline, and that too, often no more than the prescribed textbooks. This is yet another reason why the quality of the Asian graduate has deteriorated and the corporate sector often complains that University graduates are ‘unemployable.’ The graduates who feel the impact of all this the most are those from the rural areas.

...the emerging emphasis on English is viewed with hostility and suspicion by the majority of the youth who find that the marketability of their qualifications is low, because they lack a sufficient
knowledge of English. They express righteous indignation as they consider themselves to be doubly disadvantaged in that neither the home environment nor school/university environment has had the facilities to develop their English competency (Economic Review, 1997).

These fears and concerns about the quality of the Asian graduate reveal the felt need to periodically match the goals and objectives of a University, as stated in its mission statement, with its actual performance. Prof. K.M. De Silva another reputed academic has made an important suggestion to improve the quality of the Asian graduate. He has said:

A new system should encourage inter-disciplinary studies cutting across departmental boundaries within a faculty, and indeed across faculty divisions as well. There should be a compulsory requirement of some arts and humanities courses for all students in science-based faculties, and science courses for all students in the humanities and arts courses. It would result in a genuine improvement in the quality of undergraduate education in our Universities (De Silva & Peiris, 1995).

1.3 A University is a Centre of Intellectual activity and so nurtures a Spirit of Enquiry and the Ability/Capacity to Think

A University is required to be a vigorous centre of intellectual activity. As the capacity/ability to think, to think constructively, is a prerequisite for this, the University seeks continually to nurture it in its students. For, this enables the students to observe, explore and reflect upon themselves and the world they live in. It empowers them by giving them the confidence to cope someday with the new situations that they will encounter, wherever they work or live, once they leave the University. Besides, it makes them ‘employable’, for this is an ability, perhaps more than any other, that all employers regard as indispensable. It will also place them securely on the path that leads to wisdom, which most Universities acknowledge is the real goal, the raison d’etre, of a University education. The University of
Peradeniya in celebrating fifty years of University education in Sri Lanka chose ‘Education for Wisdom’ as its motto.

In carrying out this task, however, teachers in Asian Universities face a great challenge. They are required to wean the students from a habit they have picked up in high school, which in Sri Lanka we call the ‘A-Level mentality’, of learning by rote, memorising and reproducing whatever their teachers taught them, without any questioning or thinking. University teachers are required to repair in four years, a damage done at home and in school for over twelve years.

It is imperative therefore that Faculty members be sensitively aware of the common occurrence of this habit among University students and provide opportunities, in the classroom, at tutorials and examinations, and wherever else possible, for the students to develop their capacity to think. In this way, they will nurture in their students a spirit of enquiry, and a taste for learning, research and discovery.

1.4 Autonomy as an Essential Condition for the Success of Asian University

An essential feature of the structure of a University is its autonomy. Universities have been traditionally protected from interference from civil authorities so that they may be free to discover the best ways of carrying out their mission. In order to carry out its mission faithfully, a University needs to be given, as was done earlier in both East and the West, the freedom and the resources,

- to recruit lecturers who are outstanding in their scholarship, who will teach with dedication and skill, and evoke an interest among the students for further enquiry and learning;
- to continually monitor and evaluate the performance of the staff and students;
- to provide adequate opportunities and facilities to the staff for ongoing training, research and discovery;
• to ensure its libraries, laboratories and workshops are well equipped;
• to command the respect of the students and maintain discipline
• to continually review and up-grade its curricula and programmes;
• to have an efficient University administration to ensure the smooth and efficient functioning of its faculties;
• to ensure that adequate residential facilities are available for the staff and the students, on campus itself or close to it; and
• to provide a variety of recreational facilities so that the staff and students could not only relax from their intellectual pursuits but also refine their creative abilities, inter-act with and enrich one another.

It has been observed that many Universities in Asia enjoy a large measure of autonomy, especially with regard to the planning of their courses and use it responsibly. And yet, their autonomy is often curtailed because they depend heavily upon the State for funds. The one who foots the bill, often calls the shots, and so Asian Universities which are often pressed for adequate funds, find that their wings are clipped.

Besides, in countries such as Sri Lanka, there is much politicisation of Universities, because of which too their freedom is very much circumscribed. For example, Vice Chancellors are appointed by the President to whom they are often subservient. The overall administration of Universities and the allocation of funds to them are overseen by the Universities’ Grants Commission whose Chairperson is also appointed by the Head of State. It has often happened that when there is a major conflict between the administration and the staff or the students, recourse is made finally not to the Vice Chancellor but to the Minister of Higher Education, making the former no more than a puppet / lackey of the political party that sponsored his appointment. Sir Ivor Jennings, the first Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon, has said,
If the Vice Chancellor were a Public Servant under political control, his authority would completely disappear. He would be regarded as a ‘stooge’ of the party in power [Jennings].

It is inevitable that the curtailment of the freedom of a University in this manner adversely affects the carrying out of its mission faithfully.

1.5 The Success of a University depends much upon the Scholarship, Professionalism and Dedication of its Teachers

The reputation of a University rests upon the scholarship, professionalism and the dedication of its teachers. It has been recorded that it was the scholarship and excellence of its teachers that attracted students to the stadium generale in the West and to Universities such as Nalanda in Asia. A good teacher is one who is able to stimulate a spirit of enquiry and thirst for learning among the students and to guide them in their quest for knowledge. For this, University teachers need to take a personal interest in the students. There is an old Sanskrit proverb that says, ‘If you wish to teach Sanskrit to Gopi, you must not only know Sanskrit but know Gopi’. If Asian graduates, engaged either in post-graduate studies or employment, at home or abroad, are reputed to acquit themselves creditably and are held in high esteem, it is undoubtedly because they were the privileged students of such excellent and dedicated teachers. To them, the students, their parents and the community are heavily indebted. It is a matter of great pride that Asian Universities do have many teachers of this stature.

But alas, not all University teachers are of this calibre. To be fair by them, there are mitigating circumstances. For example, in some faculties, a batch could have over two or three hundred students. It is too much to expect a teacher to take a personal interest in all these ‘Gopis’. Teachers also complain, quite legitimately sometimes, that they are over-loaded with work. Vacancies are not filled. Besides, when the course unit system and the system of continual assessment were introduced at the University of Peradeniya, members of the staff complained that the necessary infrastructure was not provided to facilitate their coping with these changes.
And yet it cannot be denied that some of them lack the scholarship, the commitment and the dedication that they are required to have as University teachers. The recruitment of academic staff to Asian Universities, and their promotions, are based more upon performance at examinations or the volume of research done, rather than on the quality of the teaching. Nor, till recently, were teachers given any training in methods of teaching upon recruitment. These factors have adversely affected the quality of the teaching at Asian Universities.

University teachers are poorly paid when compared with what they could earn in the corporate sector or abroad. This sometimes drains away good teachers from the University system. Of those who remain, some are compelled to enhance their incomes by undertaking other assignments outside campus. This adversely affects their performance as teachers.

Conflicts that arise among members of the staff, especially as a result of some teachers putting personal advancement before the demands of the profession, have also taken away many good teachers from the University, in disgust. And yet,

Whatever assets a University may have by way of buildings, funds, books, and other amenities, the greatest asset it has is its teachers. They form the king-pin on which the effectiveness of a University rests. The soundness of their scholarship, their concern for the student and their application to the main functions of a University, teaching, research and extension work, determine the quality of a University (Economic Review, 1983).

1.6 Universities and Community
A University is required, in various ways, to serve the needs of the community. This it does, primarily, by offering admissions and planning its courses in consonance with the situation and needs of the country and the aspirations of its youth. To fail in this regard would amount to a disservice to the community. For example, if a University admits a number
of students to a faculty that is far in excess of what the country needs or can absorb in gainful employment, it would not only frustrate them upon graduation, but add, each year, to the host of frustrated, angry, and unemployed graduates.

Historically, the Universities that were instituted in the British colonies such as Sri Lanka, were modeled after Oxford and Cambridge, and produced an intellectual elite whose aspirations were dissonant with the mood and the needs of the country. Attempts have since been made to remedy this situation, more or less.

Higher education has certainly moved away from its ‘ivory tower’ image of the early days to relate more closely to the social and economic needs of a country. In this process however one should be careful not to lose sight of the intellectual dimension of higher learning, that is, to instil life-long habits of critical thought and also to avoid the narrow concept of a ‘vocationalised’ higher education - that is training for jobs [Economic Review, 1983, p. 17].

A University serves the community also by instilling in its students the responsibility of placing their knowledge and skills at the service of the community. Asian graduates have received much and so much is expected of them. The State, parents, teachers and several others, have generously, financially and otherwise, helped to produce an Asian graduate, and so students need to be inspired to be socially aware and willing to place the country before themselves. Whenever Asian graduates go abroad, seeking better prospects, regret is expressed that those on whom so much was spent / invested are making no return to those who made their education possible. It is also regrettable that far too many of our young graduates, not too long after graduation, join the prevailing system and place their own advancement before all else, quite unwilling, even in some slight measure, to reach out to others in the community who are in need.
1.7 The Mismatch between University Education and Employment

Universities in countries in Asia where Buddhism had widely spread were instituted primarily to communicate the Dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha, to its students, most of whom were monks. And yet, they were holistic in their vision, focusing on training or forming a person while also teaching a discipline. And so, the curricula of Universities traditionally included subjects such as Grammar, the Arts and Crafts, Logic and Spirituality, apart from the Dhamma.

Modern Universities in Asia offer their students a wide variety of courses in the humanities and sciences with a view to providing them with a liberal education. In more recent times, however, with economic necessities pressing upon them, students in Asia have had ‘future employability’ in mind when choosing a course to study. In fact, there are many who choose to read for a professional qualification in, say law, accountancy, management, or marketing, rather than a University degree, because of better employment prospects. At the University, the more ‘professional’ courses such as medicine or engineering, are preferred by students to others such as the humanities or general sciences. At the University of Peradeniya, a few years after an Honours degree in Psychology was offered by the Department of Philosophy, the vast majority of the students chose to specialise in Psychology rather than in Philosophy for the same reason:

Current thinking on Higher Education makes great play with the notion of employability...the student...sees himself primarily as a marketable product. There is no concern with the nurture and the realization of the whole human person [Halpe, University Education after Fifty Years of Independence, 1998-1999].

Should the Universities of Asia then capitulate to these demands of their students? It has been observed that Asian Universities are reluctant to drop their traditional courses and replace them with courses which will make the students more ‘employable’. In this they are supported by many
in the community who think that to do so will be to sacrifice the pursuit of academic excellence at the altar of the commercial demands of the corporate world. A researcher in Sri Lanka, has said:

University education does not have to be made more ‘job-oriented’, more ‘practical’. That is the task of a polytechnic, a vocational training school, and not a University. A University must impart knowledge and the ability to comprehend and analyse. A University must produce well-educated young adults, who have the capacity to think [Jayatilleka, 2003].

Education at a University is costly. It costs the State a lot of money. And so the State expects some return in the form of a significant contribution to national development. Parents in Asian countries, who usually bear the cost of educating their children till they are gainfully employed, are often poor and find the expense burdensome. And yet, they bear this burden selflessly, out of a desire to offer the best to their children. And so, quite naturally, parents look upon a child’s education at a University as an investment. So do the students. It is not merely out of a ‘love for knowledge’ that a student seeks admission at a University. Certainly not these days. Certainly not in Asian countries. They too invest a lot: their time, their energy in long hours of study and the psychological and emotional resources needed to meet the strain of frequent deadlines and assessments. They often make many sacrifices in the course of their University career. And so, they look forward to some gainful employment at the end of their studies at the University. In fact, they feel cheated and frustrated if they are deprived of opportunities for employment. There is for example, a talented young lady who read for a degree in Commerce and obtained a first class. She was delighted with her results. And yet, though it is now over a year since she graduated, she has still not been able to obtain any employment and feels let down. Grievances such as these are legitimate, which when not redressed for long, have given rise to wave after wave of armed insurrection in Sri Lanka as well as in other Asian countries.
And that is why, Universities especially in Asia and other developing countries need to be aware of the needs of the country, the needs of the state and corporate sectors, the expectations of students and their parents and plan their courses accordingly.

There has been a clamour for degree courses that are more practical and job-oriented such as those in physiotherapy, aquaculture, hotel management, marketing, etc rather than say, those in the humanities. However, an experiment tried out in Sri Lanka along these lines failed to bring the desired results and so was discontinued. A study that looked into ‘what employers look for in University graduates’ both in UK and in Sri Lanka revealed that it was communication skills, personal appearance, personality, inter-personal relationships and the ability to work with others as a team that were most sought by employers (Economic Review, 1997).

As a result of the mismatch between University education and employment, most students feel the need to enhance their ‘employability’ by following courses in Accountancy, Management, Information Technology, Marketing, etc, outside their campuses. These courses are costly and so entail additional expenditure to students and their parents. They also deprive the students of the time and the opportunity to make the most of the extra-curricular activities that are provided to them on campuses for their integral formation.

Though many Universities conduct workshops on Career Guidance and have appointed Directors to help the students to channel their time and resources in the most constructive way, such guidance has not been, by and large, effective or helpful. In fact, students do not usually make use of these facilities.

1.8 University Education is free and residential

Both in the East and the West, the Universities that first sprang up were free and residential. The Maha Viharas that housed the students were endowed with land and the produce of the villages to ensure that the
basic requirements of teachers as well as their students, by way of food, clothing, lodging, medical and other needs, were adequately provided for. In the West, kings and emperors, popes and prelates, and several others made endowments of land and money to pay for the education of the students at the Universities.

But, in today’s commercial world where everything is acquired at a price, students are required to pay for their education. And yet, because the cost of a University education is exorbitant and soaring, Universities in Asia are, to a greater or lesser extent, subsidized by the State.

In Sri Lanka, in keeping with ancient Asian tradition, University education is free, provided by the State. Parents chip in with the cost of food and clothing, books et al. And as this too is burdensome to most parents, the State or the University offers scholarships by way of a grant or a bursary. In 2003, the University of Peradeniya offered a scholarship or a bursary to nearly 7000 of its 9238 undergraduate students.

Because University education is paid for by the State, admissions are restricted depending upon the funds available. Not all who wish to may enter a University. There is therefore fierce competition for admissions. Admissions are made on the basis of grades at the Advanced Level examination, which therefore is the most difficult examination in Sri Lanka because of the stiff competition. As a result, students cannot choose the discipline of their choice, but are compelled to follow the course for which they are admitted, depending upon their grades.

There is much pressure being brought on the State, from many within the country and abroad, to privatise University education. This is a touchy issue among University students in Sri Lanka. A private medical college was begun in the late 1980s, but it led to such a violent protest that it was compelled to closed down.
When the University of Ceylon moved some of its faculties from Colombo to the present campus at Peradeniya, reputedly one of the most beautiful in the world, all students were required to reside on campus, even if their homes were close by. Comfortable homes were put up for the staff as well. The dream was to build, in this way, ‘a University community.’ Facilities were provided not only for learning but for food, laundry, health, sports and several other religious and recreational activities. But with the leap in admissions in the 1970s, without proportionate improvement in the facilities provided, the University now offers accommodation to no more than fifty per cent of the undergraduate population, compelling the others to find lodgings in the vicinity, which are costly. The residential facilities at the other Universities in Sri Lanka are even less.

1.9 Asian Universities are Located on Sites Conducive to Higher Learning and Research

From earliest times, much stress was placed, in Asia, on the suitability of the site of a University. The site was required to be conducive to meditation, study and mental growth. The campus of the University of Peradeniya, sprawling over 1700 acres, in the valley of the Hantane hills, through which meanders the Mahaweli, the largest river in Sri Lanka, is one of the most beautiful in the world. It is a planned campus, planted with varieties of flowering trees and shrubs that bloom in sequence throughout the year. Its older buildings have been constructed according to traditional Kandyan styles of architecture. One of its Chancellors, an illustrious academic, playwright / director and author wrote:

If ever a community of young and old sought the tranquility and inspiration of a natural environment in which to engage themselves in the pursuit of knowledge, they could not have found a place where nature was more kind or more anxious to please them, than the valley of Peradeniya [Saratchandra, 1993].
1.10 The Well-Rounded, Integral, Formation of the Students

What is the ‘idea of a University’? From the presentation that has been made so far, it has emerged that it is necessary that a University, among other things, guides the students in the pursuit of academic excellence, nurture in them the capacity to think, instill in them a thirst for learning and scholarship, help them to become more ‘employable’. These goals and objectives could well be summarised by stating that the ‘idea of a University’ is to provide students with a well-rounded, integral, formation, that will enable them to be wise, responsible and committed citizens of the country, who will be seen, reputed to be, and looked up to, as women and men of some undisputed worth and stature.

A question that is frequently asked today, and about which much concern has been expressed and much anguish felt, is whether or not University education in Asia provides such an integral formation and prepares its students for such a place in society and for life.

Though it is to facilitate such a formation that chaplains and counsellors are appointed and that ample facilities, such as out-door and in-door sports complexes, music, literary and film societies, science clubs, explorers’ clubs etc. are provided at every University campus, this is a dream that does not come true for many students because they do not avail themselves of these facilities.

This is especially so since the introduction of the course-unit system and the system of continual assessment. Students complain that they are over-loaded with endless assignments, quizzes and examinations throughout each semester and that hence they do not have the time to participate in social or recreational activities.

And so it is necessary that efforts be made continually to make the students aware of the benefits that accrue to them if they make the most of these activities and facilities. The goal of Campus ministry is the
PROVISION OF OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDENTS TO OBTAIN AN INTEGRAL FORMATION AND WILL BE TREATED IN DETAIL IN PART II OF THIS PRESENTATION.

PART II - THE GOAL OF CAMPUS MINISTRY AND THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY CHAPLAIN IN ASIAN UNIVERSITIES

2.1 The Goal of Campus Ministry in Asia

The goal of campus ministry in Asia is primarily to provide the students with an integral, a well-rounded, formation, with a spiritual foundation. The need for this is understood if we recall that the education of our youth, not only at the University, but even at home and at school, has been abysmally lop-sided. The human person is many splendoured and could be observed and admired from different aspects: the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, aesthetic and the spiritual. In the training and formation of youth, beginning at home and later at school and University, the intellectual aspect of their lives has been nurtured and expanded far, far in excess of the aspects. The other aspects are practically ignored. This is especially so in today’s world where parents and teachers continually urge their charges to get better grades and fare better at examinations. Such a lop-sided formation can only produce lop-sided persons in society. This is a serious condition and demands urgent remedial action It is imperative that at all stages of a young person’s education and life, a holistic view be taken and a well-rounded, integral, formation be given.

A University provides an ideal setting for such a formation. For at a University are gathered staff and students, from every part of the country, from diverse ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. At a University are found the good, the bad and the ugly. And in inter-acting with them, cheek by jowl, in classroom, hostel or lodgings, library, playing field, mosque, temple or chapel, one learns those lessons of life that are not written in books or taught in lecture-rooms, but are learnt from the experience of daily living. A University is therefore one of the best and largest human laboratories in any country.
...the mere act of living together is an education. Common rooms, hostels, refectories and so on are designed also to enable students to have experience of the sort of social intercourse which they will need every day in their careers, to be able to mix with their fellows easily, and to learn something of human nature. This mixing of students is very important to us in Ceylon because of the number of races, castes and creeds (Jennings, Peradeniya University Bulletin, 1993).

An important constituent of an integral formation is a training in ‘value-education.’ The importance and indeed the sanctity of values handed down from one generation to the next, by parents, teachers and others, cannot be doubted. And yet, in Asia as well as in the West, there is such a reversal and an erosion of values among people that our societies could be considered sick. Greed has become the ruling principle of life among an increasingly large number of people. For such people, no price is too heavy to pay, no principle is too sacred to sacrifice, no person is too precious to betray, in order to grab something they want for themselves. And so, it is necessary that teachers and chaplains take every available opportunity, in the classroom and outside it, to provide students with a training in value-education.

2.2 The Newman Society at the University of Peradeniya

It is this problem, this lack of an integral formation of University students, that the Newman Society, which is the Catholic Students Movement at the University of Peradeniya, seeks relentlessly to solve through its vision and activities. The Constitution of the Newman Society states, that its aims and objectives are to train and organise Catholic students to live a meaningful and exemplary life by:

- acquiring an informed Catholic mind and fostering Christian fellowship among the members;
- participating in liturgical services;
• committing themselves to social and educational activities;
• getting the necessary leadership training to build a better and just society through the promotion of knowledge and application of Christian principles;
• working in cooperation with other student and religious organizations whenever possible.

Each year the Newman Society spells out this vision by offering the students many opportunities for an integral training, though creative activity, an annual retreat, exposure programmes among the poor and the marginalized, workshops on meaningful and relevant themes such as self-awareness and self-acceptance, the need for value-education, leadership, personal relationships et al, lectures and panel discussions, film fora, training in social and other skills, so that they could participate in them actively, whenever time permits.

These programmes are devised to train the students to be concerned about the important issues of our country, and to be committed not only to their own welfare but to that of others and to the building of a more just and equitable society. The hope is that the students, when they leave the University, will not merely have read for a degree in some discipline, but will be more self-confident, self-reliant, and self-giving citizens of our country. The programmes reach out to Catholics, yes, but also to non-Catholics, when they are not specifically Christian.

The Newman Society and indeed the University also provide the students with opportunities to learn how to choose their friends and build up lasting relationships with them. After graduation, such friends are known to gather together from time to time to provide one another with a healthy support system. Many Universities have Alumni Associations too in the hope that such bonds of friendship will be strengthened.
2.3 Asian University Students

Once on a visit to the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, which offers post-graduate courses in many disciplines, to meet some of our young graduates from Sri Lanka, one of them told me that they were, ‘serious about their studies and responsible about their behaviour’ After ten years of experience in campus ministry at the largest University in Sri Lanka, I have no hesitation to say that this is true of most of our University students.

However Asian University students are restless. This is mostly due to the insecurity they feel when they think of their future, after graduation. The slow rate of economic growth and development in Asian countries and consequently the inability of the State and the corporate sector to absorb the graduates who qualify each year, is a cause of much anxiety, insecurity, and restlessness among Asian University students.

After twelve years or more of schooling comes the major hurdle, for those aspiring to a higher education, in the form of the ‘A’ level exam. At no stage is the competition greater, and the selected few finally enter University with full of hopes and enthusiasm. But many among them, particularly those following courses where employment prospects are doubtful, soon develop fears of an uncertain future and are often irked when their demands and requirements as students are not met. These frustrations together with idealist motives towards a better society are released in various forms including protests and demonstrations[Economic Review, 1983].

University students in Asia are reputed to be a difficult, rebellious lot. In Sri Lanka, University students are written off by many as a set of ‘ne’er-do-wells’ who are not in any way a boon to Society, but rather a drain. But this is not true, certainly not true, of the vast majority of our students. It is the behaviour of say about five percent of the students, backed by powerful political parties, that has brought about so much censure upon them all.
Attempts by other students to confront and oppose this minority have resulted in violence and thuggery. And so, the majority of the students choose to avoid direct confrontation and to express their disagreement and dissatisfaction with non-participation.

No description of Asian University students would be complete without a reference to the ‘ragging’ of first year students, that goes on at every University. A legacy of the British, ragging has developed in Sri Lanka into a criminal form of harassing innocent first year students, that has led, far too often, to serious injury and even the death of a few of the victims. Though the students claim that the purpose of ragging is to initiate new entrants into life on campus and for the senior students to get to know them, the serious injuries that are sometimes caused, however infrequently, have resulted in many parents fearing to send their children to a University. A parent once told me, ‘every death is one too many and I would never expose my child to such a risk and harassment.’ Ragging is one of the main reasons why Asian University students are so poorly regarded by others and draw no sympathy from them. Once again it is a small minority of the students who resort to ragging in such a criminal way but alas, all students are tarred with the same brush.

Student unrest is of course not new to Sri Lanka...The escalation of violence however, including vicious assaults on rival student factions resulting in tragic deaths and the wanton destruction of University property, is unprecedented. It cannot be condoned...

But we cannot really expect our Universities to be perfectly tranquil ivory towers of learning when our nation is undergoing so much political, economic, and social ferment. It seems to me that the fundamental nexus between the community and the University has also broken down...

The brutalisation of our society through war and terrorism has seriously undermined the stability of our society...Can one seriously
expect the Universities of our country to be unaffected by all this? It is hard for our young students to focus on their studies and look forward to a secure future if this is the society and country they are going to inherit. How many role models are there in the community at large that our students can look up to and respect? (Dhanapala, 2003).

Catholic Students Movements in Asian Universities are privileged to be affiliated to the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS) Asia – Pacific. Communications are periodically exchanged among them. Several times each year IMCS organises international conferences at which student delegates take an active part enthusiastically. These conferences enable the students to be aware of and understand the issues and concerns of University students in the Asia – Pacific region. They are also an occasion for them to build up friendships across the region. Asian University students are thus heavily indebted to the IMCS team of volunteers for their invaluable service.

2.4 The Role of the University Chaplain

The role of the chaplain, in Asian Universities, is to ‘accompany’ the students and the staff of the University. It is to walk along with them, sharing their joys and hopes, their griefs and anxieties, in such a personal way, that the chaplain could sincerely say, ‘I know my sheep and my sheep know me’. This is undoubtedly a challenging task. And yet, as I have discovered, it is also a very rewarding and unforgettably enjoyable experience.

At the University of Peradeniya, the chaplain, while accompanying the students and the staff, guides the students in their integral formation and the activities of the Newman Society according to its aims and objectives. In order to live up to this dream and be faithful to this ministry, the chaplain, first and foremost, needs to be a mature and integrated person, a person who befriends her / his ambivalences and is engaged, continually, in liberating and transforming herself / himself. The chaplain has to be patient, kind and loving, a woman / man alive. Besides the chaplain has
to be available and accessible to the students. The students must know where and when they could meet the chaplain, whenever they are in need. The chaplain needs to be someone who trusts the students. I remember, very vividly, that when I was a student here, our chaplain trusted us implicitly. I decided to follow in his footsteps and discovered with pride how trustworthy the students are in carrying out some responsible task, in the handling of money or in their behaviour.

The chaplain needs to be someone who creates an atmosphere of friendliness, someone who is seen and known by the students to understand, unconditionally accept and sincerely esteem each student, as s/he is, without any discrimination or reservation. This will make it easier for the students to confide in the chaplain and seek her / his help for counselling and spiritual guidance, if necessary.

It is important that the chaplain be an inspiring leader among the students. What this means is that the chaplain needs to be a person who, openly shows appreciation of the strengths and the pluses of the students, and in that way brings out the best in them, and helps them to actualize their potential; someone who inspires them ‘to have life and have it more abundantly.’ The effectiveness of a chaplain will depend on whether s/he guides and leads the staff and the students, not so much by word but by example. The authenticity, compassion and dedication of the chaplain goes a long way in successfully carrying out the tasks of campus ministry.

Many Asian students come from poor families, and so face many financial constraints. Some students have been compelled to abandon their studies at the University and seek employment due to the poverty and indigence of their parents. The University, the alumni associations and others offer scholarships and bursaries to help such students. The genuine demand is always greater than the supply. It will be a great boon to the students if chaplains are able to be channels through which financial assistance flows from those who can afford it to needy students, irrespective of race or creed.
In Sri Lanka, the Catholic University chaplains meet periodically, along with the Bishop in charge of Higher Education, to discuss common concerns and discover the best ways and means of reaching out to staff and the students. Every year, they organise a National Workshop lasting three days, on some relevant theme, which is eagerly looked forward to and actively participated in by the Catholic students of all the Universities in Sri Lanka.

2.5 Campus Ministry in a Multi-Faith Environment

There is among most Asian people an anxiety and fear about ‘unethical conversions’ to Christianity. Christians and Christian churches are alleged to offer material inducements in the evangelization of peoples. This fear springs undoubtedly from the many mistakes that the early missionaries made in this regard. Though most Christians and Christian churches have abandoned such unethical practices, they have not been able to eradicate them entirely nor to wipe out these anxieties and fears.

As a result, these anxieties and fears are seen even among Asian University students. Anti-Christian posters are put up and debates are held on campus, from time to time. However, they seem more the exception than the rule. At the University of Peradeniya, where students of the four major religions, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian, study and live together, there is much understanding, friendship and cooperation among the majority of the students. They even visit each other’s temples and churches and participate actively in their activities and programmes when able. And so the Newman Society invites all students for workshops, panel discussions and film fora, for example, which are not specifically of a religious character.

University chaplains often meet students of other faiths when visiting their students in the faculties and halls of residence. These are occasions for the building up of mutual understanding and respect. At the University of Peradeniya, the Buddhist, Hindu, Protestant and Catholic chaplains
meet periodically to discuss issues on the campus and to discern better ways of reaching out to the students and cooperating with one another.

**Conclusion**

The Universities in Asia have, as every other human institution has, their ambivalences, their pluses and minuses, in carrying out their mission. And so, from time to time, they are evaluated and remedial reforms suggested. However, the implementation of these reforms has often suffered by default. And so, it is necessary that Universities be more vigilant, in the future, to gather up their resources to ensure the faithful implementation of these reforms and the carrying out of their mission.

What Universities in Asia need to do in the future is perhaps well spelt out in the Mission Statement of the University of Peradeniya. It states,

> The Mission of the University of Peradeniya is to (i) promote excellence in higher education and research and (ii) contribute towards national development. The University intends to achieve its mission by,

- giving students intellectually rigorous and creative education in their chosen disciplines;
- encouraging the total and harmonious development of every student regardless of sex, race, religion, caste or physical disability;
- maintaining an environment in which a community of scholars and students can flourish;
- supporting creativity in aesthetic activities;
- contributing to society in developing moral integrity by education of students to accept social responsibility;
- advancing, updating and disseminating knowledge;

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• advising on and collaborating in programmes of national development. [University of Peradeniya, 2001/02, p. 3]

As for the future, I have a dream.

I have a dream that at the University of Peradeniya,

• high standards will continually be set and a reputation for academic excellence maintained;

• more autonomy and funds will be given to the Vice Chancellor and the Administration and that there would be less political interference and control;

• the members of the staff will be reputed for their scholarship, dedication and the quality of their teaching;

• there will be better staff-student relationships;

• the students will continue to be serious about their studies and responsible about their behaviour;

• the students will be guided, on admission and thereafter, in choosing their careers and making the best use of their talents;

• the students will make the best use of the time they spend at the University to obtain a well-rounded, integral, formation, by participating actively in its activities and programmes;

• the students, when they leave the University, will be more self-confident, self-reliant and self-giving, and in that way be reputed to be first class citizens of our country.
I have a dream

- that the people of our country will someday come to regard and esteem our University students as our greatest treasure.

As the former Catholic Chaplain of the University of Peradeniya, I commit myself, along with the staff and the students, to making this dream come true.

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, Where knowledge is free; Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, Where words come out from the depth of truth, Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection, Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit, Where the mind is led forward by You into ever widening thought and action, into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let ..." our Universities awake.

Bibliography


Engaged, Integrated, Global: Jesuit Higher Education in the Post-Conflict Sri Lanka

Roy Fernando

The Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) forms the very core of Jesuit education for it is grounded in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and combines an Ignatian vision of the human being and the world with a dynamic five-step methodology of context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation. This study examines as to how appropriating Ignatian pedagogy can revolutionise the faulting higher education in the post-conflict situation in Sri Lanka and the contributions it might make to the current pedagogical literature for higher education. First, the article presents the development of higher education in Sri Lanka and presents as to how the denial to access to higher education has been one of the root causes of conflict in Sri Lanka. Further, it presents in nutshell Ignatian teaching methodological elements, Context, Experience, Reflection, Evaluation and Action that foster the development of the whole person, service to others, and social justice as core Jesuit values. Further, it points out that Ignatian pedagogy is viable for higher education in the post-conflict Sri Lanka. These results positively affirm the validity and viability of Ignatian pedagogy in the post-war reconstruction, a nearly 500 year-old Jesuit educational tradition and way of proceeding, in light of 21st century higher education pedagogical knowledge and practices. This pedagogy of accompaniment provides optimal support for youth to make progress toward their divinely gifted potential.

Introduction

Education is a contentious subject in fragile contexts (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). While education can become a victim of war, it can also play a complicit role in the production of violent conflict by exacerbating socio-economic divisions, denying educational access to disadvantaged social
groups and promoting manipulative historical narratives. However, on the positive side, it can act as a catalyst in the reconstruction and reconciliation of societies emerging from conflict - in building peace and social cohesion, in facilitating economic recovery, and in guiding a country along an accelerated development path. While peace is crucial for quality education, conflict sensitive education can be a driver for social transformation and sustainable peace. In protracted crises such as in Sri Lanka, the authorities have expressed concern over an increasing number of unemployed Tamil graduates from North and East of Sri Lanka, where economic pressure and poor prospects are creating conditions that could have negative consequences for the future development of the country.

1 Access to higher education in Sri Lanka since 1970s has been ethnicized (Kelegama, September 2011). Tamils have had strong cultural norms which valued education. Many Tamils attended English language schools which were the passport to higher education and better employment in the colonial period. The net result was the relative over-representation of Tamils in higher education, professions and the administration in comparison to their status in the general population. By independence, Tamils accounted for over 30% of government services admissions, a share larger than their proportion in the general population - i.e., Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils have never totaled more than 25%. By 1956, it is estimated that Tamils constituted 50% of the clerical personnel of the railway, postal and customs services, 60% of all doctors, engineers and lawyers, and 40% of other labor forces. In this context, post-independence Sinhalese nationalism sought to curb the Tamil presence in education and thus also in the professions and civil administration. While the passing of the “Sinhalese Only Bill” was one attempt in this process, more direct hurdles were placed on the path of Tamils’ realization of educational goals since the 1970s. From 1971 onwards, a new “standardization” policy was adopted, which ensured that the number of students qualifying for university entrance from each language was proportionate to the number of students who sat for university entrance examination in that language. In real terms this meant that Tamil speaking students had to score much higher than Sinhalese speaking students to gain admission to universities. This also meant that for the first time, the integrity of university admission policy was tampered with by using ethnicity as a basis. Prior to this, individuals entered universities on the basis of national competitive examinations marked on a uniform basis. Those who scored highest, gained access to different faculties in universities irrespective of their ethnicity or districts from which they came. While there was no inherent bias, Tamils from Jaffna and Colombo did particularly well - e.g., in the 1969-1970 intake to science and engineering courses, Tamils constituted 35% and over 45% of the intake in medical faculties. In 1972, a district quota system was introduced in order to benefit those not having adequate access to educational facilities within each language. These changes had a serious impact on the demographic patterns of university entry. Tamil representation in the science-based disciplines fell from 35% in 1970 to 19% in 1975, while Sinhalese representation in all disciplines increased quite dramatically. In general, these policies seriously impacted upon not only the chances of Tamils to gain access to higher education, but also on the overall process of ethnic relations as well. In addition, many other aspects of education - including the structural organization of schools and universities, contents of text books and training of teachers - have impacted directly on ethnic conflict.

16 According to figures available, in the Northern Province, there are 4,429 unemployed graduates; while in the Eastern Province, the number is around 4,500. The number of unemployed graduates in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces is much higher than the number of unemployed graduates in other provinces in the country. Comparatively, the Northern and the Eastern Provinces are in a much worse off position than the graduates in the other provinces (Sampanthan, 2017).
Therefore, rebuilding society through educational development is crucial. In a society that had suffered from the debilitating impact of armed conflict, rupturing of social fabrics and ethnic tensions that maintain state fragility, higher education can produce knowledge and skills not only to revive economic development and physical rebuilding but also in reinstating democratic polity. Poorly designed educational strategy, or one designed with the purpose of political control, could have the opposite effect; stagnating economies, slowing the pace of development, increasing inequalities, and reproducing socio-political hierarchies and eventually, risking peace and security. We need a paradigm shift in our approach to education.

This paper will try first to situate the present higher education sector of Sri Lanka, then it will present the core of Ignatian pedagogy with its concern for justice as an alternative paradigm to re-shape Sri Lanka’s educational system in the post-conflict scenario. Finally, it would argue that higher education in Sri Lanka need to be re-imagined as a key pillar in the post-war reconstruction.

1. From Colonial Past to Present Day Sri Lanka – Higher Education on a Journey

1.1 Access to Higher Education in the Colonial Period

Sri Lanka has a long colonial history, but the most noticeable influences nowadays are of British descent. The British Crown rule was established in Sri Lanka in 1815. By imposing British political, social and economic rule, the Empire influenced Sri Lanka in many aspects, of which the education sector is observed here.

A consensus within the academia accepts that the modern higher education university system in Sri Lanka evolved from the system established under British colonial regime in 1921 when a University College, the Ceylon University College was established at the former premises of Royal College Colombo affiliated to the University of London³.

³ The first beginnings of higher education in Ceylon, however, can be traced to 1870 when the Ceylon Medical School was established followed by Colombo Law College (1875), School of Agriculture (1884) and the Government Technical College (1893).
Tertiary Education system in Sri Lanka began formally in 1921 with the establishment of colonial-oriented University College, which was later elevated to the fully-fledged University in 1942. Initially, there was little academic activity and the universities functioned more like affiliated and examining bodies, rather than being the comprehensive institutions we associate with the term ‘university’. It is further acknowledged that all the universities established afterwards were developed in an isomorphic way, with British legacy more than visible within the higher education, where the language of instruction was exclusively English. It is noted:

Both these institutions - the University College (1921) and the University of Ceylon (1942) functioned as elite institutions, catering to a limited number of students, and it restricted its intake of students because they were expected to adhere to colonial objectives of education. The University College (1921) was very much of a colonial institution and it functioned on the basis of the colonial objectives of providing limited higher educational opportunities. The University of Ceylon was modelled on the Oxbridge formula, at its inception accommodated only 904 students, which later expanded to cover a number of universities and it remained as an elite oriented university as stated by Sir Ivor Jennings, catered to a small number of students and exclusively residential (Jayasundara, 2014, pp. 41-42).

The education system that was promulgated by the British Empire was, in retrospect, little sensitive to cultural, social, linguistic, historical, and local contexts. What is obvious is the fact “while education in English has been advocated as a unifying and modernising force, it is also seen as a marker of imperialism and class privilege and a terrain of struggle among elite groups” (Faust & Nagar, 2001, p. 2878). As such, a weak and struggling education sector in Sri Lanka, fueled by elite groups, ‘class privilege’ and ‘imperialism’, can be blamed on the period of British occupation (Faust and Nagar 2001).
1.2 Postcolonial Higher Education Reform

Sri Lanka’s postcolonial educational reforms have been marked by attempts to straighten a ‘crisis-ridden’ colonial education system, through various initiatives, like the successive introduction of the ‘Free Education Scheme’ or ‘Social Demand Model of Education’ under which Education is free from primary onwards until one obtains a first degree from a University. In addition to the introduction of the Free Education Scheme, there were two other important developments which directly demanded an expansion of university education in the country. The medium of instruction was changed to Swabasha\(^4\) – one’s own mother tongue, where education of the students in the national languages began to enter the University of Ceylon in 1960. These events ‘demanded an expansion not only of the intake of the students’ but also demanded unlimited extension of the university education’ [Jayasundara, 2014, p. 42]. As Niruba notes: “The beginning of an expansion university education took place with the conversion of the two leading Buddhist centres of learning into universities in 1959, and with the creation of two more universities, the University of Ceylon lost its monopoly over university education [Jayasundara, 2014, p. 43].

With the expansion of access to University education, higher education sector has witnessed a tremendous increase in the number of Universities/University\(^5\) level Institutions & Colleges since Independence which demanded the creation of University Grants Commission. The University Grants Comission (UGC) was established on 22nd of December 1978 under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978. The UGC is an apex body whose mandate is to allocate resources to the public universities and specialised

\(^4\) The swabasha movement included both Sinhalese and Tamils who campaigned for their respective languages to replace English. It must be noted that the swabasha movement was primarily was not designed to revamp the [colonial] governmental structure. On the contrary, it was an attempt by the hitherto marginalised vernacular speakers to change the criteria by which the opportunities for socio-economic upward mobility via education and government employment were determined [See. DeVotta, 2004].

\(^5\) The term ‘University’ is essentially owned by the government of Sri Lanka, since a university can be only created by an act of parliament. An independent institution may be authorised to offer degree programms but cannot call itself a university.
institutes. The government, thereafter embarked on establishing first, a
government-owned but more liberal Open University and thereafter a
private medical college was permitted in 1981 (North Colombo Medical
College – Ragama), while foreign university affiliated intuitions such as
the Institute of Technological Studies were promoted since the mid-
1980s. These initiatives could be considered as first acts of encouraging
private sector involvement in higher education. Over the years, the private
sector participation in the higher education sector grew, in particular,
during the 1990s and 2000s.

As currently practiced in Sri Lanka, the education sector is governed by
several ministries with varying responsibilities. However, three ministries
carry the main responsibility: Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of
Higher Education (MOHE), and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills
Development (MOYA & SD). Post-secondary education is offered by
vocational training centers, technical colleges, and advanced technological
institutes under Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education
and universities. Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) operate under both
state and non-state sectors. There are also post-graduate institutes
affiliated with national universities, as well as semi-Government and non-
State higher education institutes that offer many courses of studies at
the level of Diploma, Degree, Masters and PhD on a fee-levying basis.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) is responsible for admission
to the undergraduate programmes of national universities. Selection is
based on student merits and district quota. Due to stiff competition and
limited places, excellent grades are typically required to secure a place at
university, in particular in study areas that are in high demand, such as
medicine, engineering and management. Some institutes in Sri Lanka offer
both local and foreign qualifications through joint programmes with foreign
universities. In 2016, approximately 20,000 students were enrolled in this
mode of study. It is estimated that around 10,000 students go abroad
annually to pursue higher education. Most of them return after completion
of their studies, while a small number find employment outside Sri Lanka.
1.2.1 Types of Higher Education Institutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEIs that are fully funded by the state and managed under government regulations, with admissions controlled by the University Grants Commission</td>
<td>HEIs that are fully or partly funded by the state and managed with varying levels of independence from the respective government, authorities, but admission criteria determined independently of the UGC</td>
<td>Privately owned. Can be for-profit or non-profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, University of the Visual & Performing Arts, University of Jaffna, National Institute of Business Management (NIBM), Institute of Human Resource Advancement (IHRA), Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT), IDM Computer Studies (Pvt) Ltd, South Asian Institute of Technology and Medicine (SAITM)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, UvaWellassa University, Eastern University Sri Lanka’ Gampaha Wickramarachchi Ayurveda Institute, Institute of Indigenous Medicine, South Eastern University</td>
<td>Ocean University of Sri Lanka (Ocean U), National Institute of Education [NIE], The Open University of Sri Lanka, General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University [KDU], Institute for Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences, The National Institute of Social Development [NISD], University of Vocational Technology, Institute of Surveying and Mapping</td>
<td>Regent International Institute for Higher Studies [RIIHS], Business Management School [BMS], Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology [APIIT], Auston Institute Informatics Institute of Technology [IIT], ESOFT Computer Studies [Pvt] Ltd., Australian College of Business &amp; Technology [ACBT], CFPS Academy of Legal Studies, Colombo Institute of Research and Psychology, Matrix Institute of Information Technology, Royal Institute of Colombo, Colombo American National College / ANC Education, Mercury Institute of Management, Lanka Institute of Fashion Technology [LIFT], Imperial Institute of Higher Education,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateway Graduate School</td>
<td>University of Ballarat Sri Lanka, Study Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan College of Business and Technology (CCBT), American College of Higher Education, Brandix College of Clothing Technology, City School of Architecture Pioneer Institute of Business and Technology (PIBT), AIMS College of Business &amp; IT GISM - Graduate Institute of Science &amp; Management, Londontec City Campus, Open Arc School of Business and Technology Ltd, Colombo School of Construction Technology, Spectrum Institute of Science and Technology (Pvt) Ltd, Aquinas College of Higher Studies, Asian Aviation Centre, Oxford College of Business, British College of Legal Studies (BCLS), Horizon Campus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Public-UGC Institutions (17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Non-UGC Institutions (10)</th>
<th>Private Institutions (46)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London Business School (LBS), British School of Commerce, Northshore College of Business and Technology, Western College for Management &amp; Technology,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Public institutions for which admissions are not mediated by the UGC, but enrollments are restricted to special categories such as army personnel, teachers, surveyors and those holding National vocational Qualifications (NVQ)</td>
<td>Only a few are located outside of Colombo: BCLS-Wattala; IIHS Welisara; RIHS-Gampaha</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2.2 Control of the Public Higher Education Institutes

Table -2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry of Higher Education</th>
<th>14 universities, 3 institutes and The Open University of Sri Lanka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Defense</td>
<td>General Sir John Kotelawala Defense University (KDU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>National Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Higher Education/University of Colombo</td>
<td>Institute for Agro-Technology and Rural Sciences; Institute of Human Resource Advancement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Skills Development and Youth Affairs</td>
<td>National Institute of Business Management (NIBM); Ocean University of Sri Lanka; University of Vocational Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Work</td>
<td>National Institute of Social Development (NISD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Surveys</td>
<td>Institute of Surveying and Mapping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2.3 Legitimacy

Table - 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boards of Study</th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Same as the institutions offering the programmes | 14 Public-UGC institutions are universities authorised to award degrees by respective acts of parliaments  
3 institutes are affiliated with universities |
| Same as the Institutions offering the programme or parent Body. | award degrees from their parent university (IAT, IHRD at the University of Colombo)  
5 are authorized by acts of parliament to award their own degrees (NIE, KDU, Ocean University, Open University, UNIVOTEC)  
3 are authorised by UGC to award certain specific degree (ISM, NIBM, NISD) |
Boards of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Legitimacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign institutions</td>
<td>44 foreign institutions are members of the International Association of Universities (IAU) or the Commonwealth Association of Universities (CAU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[49]</td>
<td>4 are not members of but recognised by authority in country or original is governed by an intergovernmental board (AIT) (SLIIT and Aquinas have awarded degrees under the authorization the country of origin and by UGC).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Vision 2025 and Higher Education

The government’s economic policy statement issued in 20.10.2017\(^6\) highlights, “Sri Lanka envisions achieving sustainable development by linking the country to global supply chains and increasing trade”. As articulated in the vision 2025\(^7\) the goal is to make Sri Lanka ‘the hub of the Indian Ocean, safeguarded by a knowledge-based, highly competitive, social market economy’. For this to happen, the policy statement states, “our crucial need is to enhance education and skill development to enable all citizens to contribute to a knowledge-based economy”. The government hopes to create more exposure and opportunities for entrepreneurs and skilled professionals in various sectors, including the digital economy, tourism and commercial agriculture and to attain the status of a modern manufacturing economy. Sri Lanka’s human capital is an essential resource in achieving the envisaged development goals and transforming the economy into a modern manufacturing one. Thus, it is increasingly important for the country to be equipped with new technological innovations and an educated workforce with market-oriented skills. High-quality human resources with expertise in science

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\(^6\) [http://www.economynext.com/Economic_policy_statement_by_Sri_Lanka_Prime_Minister___full_text-3-8979.html](http://www.economynext.com/Economic_policy_statement_by_Sri_Lanka_Prime_Minister___full_text-3-8979.html)

and technology and a skilled labour force are necessary, specially to compete globally. Even lower-skilled jobs increasingly require talent and knowledge. As such, vocational training and secondary education need to prepare prospective employees for a complex, digital work environment.

While the Government looks at the higher education sector in a positive light, scholars have recently noted that higher education is oftentimes viewed as ‘Achilles’ heel’ of the education sector, as the last decades have not seen important increase in research, neither managed to sustain high-tech development (Asian Development Bank, 2016, p. xii). For instance, Sri Lanka’s gross tertiary enrolment rate (21 percent) is below the averages for lower-middle-income countries (22 percent) and upper-middle-income countries (44 percent), according to the World Bank’s World Development Indicators of 2014 (World Bank, 2014).

In Sri Lanka, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) is mandated by legislation to register and monitor all tertiary educational institutions. Currently, over 1000 institutions that offer diploma or certificate programmes are registered with TVEC. Sri Lanka’s tertiary enrolment rate is low. As of 2014, only 5 percent of 20-24-year-olds were enrolled in a university, while another 8 percent were enrolled in other educational institutions and only a 3 percent of the same age group were enrolled in technical education and vocational training (TVEC) courses. The main reasons behind Sri Lanka’s low tertiary enrolment rate are capacity constraints of the state university system, unavailability of a proper parallel higher education system with the private sector’s involvement and underdeveloped TVEC. For example, the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) annual report of 2016 shows that, of the 155,450 students who were eligible for university entrance from A-Level exams in 2015/2016, only 18.6 percent were admitted to state universities due to limited placements. Consequently, each year, about 125,000 students who qualify have to abandon their ambitions to enter a university.

8 http://www.cbsl.gov.lk/pics_n_docs/10_pub/_docs/efr/annual_report/AR2016/English/content.htm
### Performance of candidates at G.C.E.(A/L)

Table - 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School candidates sat for the GCE [A/L]</td>
<td>209,906</td>
<td>207,304</td>
<td>210,340</td>
<td>211,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School candidates qualifying to enter University</td>
<td>122,913</td>
<td>126,971</td>
<td>131,137</td>
<td>134,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of school candidates qualifying to enter University</td>
<td>58.56</td>
<td>61.25</td>
<td>62.35</td>
<td>63.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All candidates applied for the GCE [A/L]</td>
<td>277,395</td>
<td>290,517</td>
<td>302,501</td>
<td>310,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All candidates sat for the GCE [A/L]</td>
<td>241,629</td>
<td>247,376</td>
<td>255,191</td>
<td>258,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All candidates qualifying to enter University</td>
<td>140,993</td>
<td>149,489</td>
<td>155,447</td>
<td>160,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage qualifying to enter University</td>
<td>58.35</td>
<td>60.43</td>
<td>60.91</td>
<td>62.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Department of Census and Statistics*

### University Education

Table - 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of universities</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of other higher educational institutions</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students [Undergraduates] [Exclude external degrees]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>77,126</td>
<td>80,222</td>
<td>83,778</td>
<td>86,061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: http://www.statistics.gov.lk/DataSheet/2017DataSheet_En.pdf*
Institutes | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016  
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---  
3,254 | 3.317 | 3,307 | 3,376  
Open University | 16,739 | 20,916 | 22,097 | 22,546  
No. graduated (Include external and open university) |  |  |  |  
Basic degree | 20,839 | 29,243 | 29,545 | 30,819  
Post graduate degree | 8,636 | 8,141 | 7,513 | 7,682  
New admission for basic degree | 24,198 | 25,200 | 25,676 | 29,083  
Admissions as a percentage eligible for university entrance | 16.7 | 17.5 | 17.1 | 18.7  

Source: Department of Census and Statistics^10

1.4 The Weaknesses far outweigh the Strengths

The fact is the weaknesses far outweigh the strengths since the percentage of population enrolled in higher education barely reached 20%, compared to other developed countries. Further, it is acknowledged that the higher education system lacks a solid top tier of universities, and most poignantly, Sri Lankan universities have become large bodies, under-funded, difficult to govern, with less than usual qualified academics (Report’, 25 October 2016). Despite the government’s commitment to helping out the higher education system, there is very little concern for developing capabilities for critical analysis, creative thinking, experimentation, exploration, for testing of concepts and for a range of other skills characteristic of mature and well-developed systems of higher education. Scholars critique that “systemic reforms have largely failed” (Tharmaseelan, 2007, p. 176). The often-invoked reason for failure has to do with governmental approaches, or lack of funding. The lack of visibility for reforms. Government control over the higher education sector, including over the private higher education institutions represents a serious factor in the implementation of education initiatives.

The report of Asian Development Bank further identifies the realities of Sri Lankan higher education:

1. The lack of management autonomy,
2. Lack of accountability,
3. Lack of internationalisation,
4. Lack of institutional and policy support,
5. Low quality of graduate output,
6. Low quantity of research output,
7. Heavy dependence on public funds,
8. Slow expansion of postgraduate (i.e., graduate) education,
9. Poor learning environment, and

In this regard, the report identifies the following as priority areas for immediate attention, with a view to taking Sri Lankan higher education to a more competitive level internationally:

1. Promoting equitable access,
2. Improving the quality and relevance of undergraduate programmes,
3. Strengthening research and development capabilities,
4. Strengthening graduate programmes and external degree programmes,
5. Promoting better governance,
6. Building management capacity, and

Further, while access to higher education has improved for all social groups, including the disadvantaged, their relative disparities have not reduced substantially. The report states “Sri Lanka still needs to address the issue of equity” ... “Promoting equitable access to higher education for the underserved segments of society would require offering incentives
to service providers and giving additional support to students from the lagging geographic areas, specifically, Northern, Eastern, and other outlying provinces” (Asian Development Bank, 2016, p. xiii). These inequalities are not one-dimensional: gender, disability, class, caste, religion, locality and region are some of the principal dimensions of inequality and when more than one of these conditions exist; their impact is compounded. Access to higher education, especially to prestigious programmes and institutions that are in demand, continues to reflect inherited social privileges. Most of these institutions are located in Western Zone of the country.

What is obvious is the fact that in the increasingly difficult global economic landscape, Sri Lanka has an important position to reach, from an educational perspective. While Sri Lanka survived on the international arena with a less than optimal higher education system so far, in the globalised economy, it has become increasingly important that the higher education system meet global requirements (Vision 2025). In order to regain economic stability and international status, Sri Lanka needs to build a better higher education system. This could be achieved through supporting national research and improving the quality of the existing curricula and, correspondingly, of the knowledge and technology. Higher education is the principal site at which our national goals, developmental priorities and civic values can be examined and refined. Essential to any educational reform is a renewed attention to the relevance of education for human development; an education, which facilitates intercultural dialogue and fosters respect for cultural values, democratic and pluralistic society, religious and linguistic diversity, which are vital for achieving social cohesion and justice. The predominant instrumental approach promoted by the government in Vision 2025, that higher education needs to provide the country and the world with highly skilled professionals, for economic gain, comes at times in contradiction with global educational norms, concerned with equal rights and possibilities for long-life learning. The higher education system of the county needs to depart from the image of an “immobile colossus - insensitive to the changing contexts
of contemporary life” (Faust & Nagar, 2001, p. 18). The system needs to embrace an efficient strategy, which will eventually allow it to stand next to other global higher education systems, not only in enrolment numbers, but also in quality, attention to local context, and universal education rights.


The formal end of the war in Sri Lanka came in 2009 and while the peace generally persisted, the war took a heavy toll on the country’s population. It is widely acknowledged that the war in Sri Lanka was plagued by “mass abductions, violence and disappearances” (Dibbert, September 19, 2017). The lack of a proper functioning education system is seen as a contributing factor to the high youth-toll of the war. The society in Sri Lanka during the war and the following years after the conflict was driven with inequalities, patronage, deprivation fueled by the general failure of the country to tackle the social inequalities. It is noted that the access to education - particularly access to higher education - has been ethicised. This is visible in the presentation of Saman Kelegama who points out that “employment opportunities have been severely hampered as a result of the conflict” … “the labour force participation rate for the Eastern Province [41.3%] is significantly lower than that of the rest of the country [49.5%]. The unemployment rate among women and educated individuals in the Eastern Province is much higher than in the rest of the country, suggesting a lack of work opportunities in the region” (Kelegama, September 2011). In addressing the issues, policymakers faces several challenges it suggests and that “investments in education and skill development must be made in a manner that generates skills that are in demand in these areas”… “Such investment must be made equitably and speedily, as uneven treatments and delays could give rise to new conflicts within these communities” (Kelegama, September 2011).
In these circumstances, simply providing basic service delivery of education is often a major challenge. Protecting the education rights of conflict-affected youth should be a key part of programming and planning under post-conflict development. Hence, focus on higher education and importance in peacebuilding are essential for identifying ‘ingredients’ for democratic capacity building, good governance and protection of human rights in the country. Keeping education opportunities open in the aftermath of conflicts can have important psychological effects, can help guide people’s perceptions on war and in general, can significantly and positively affect post-conflict recovery.

In 2016, the government of Sri Lanka, indeed, devised and launched a plan for post-conflict Sri Lanka. The plan, Vision 2025, represented a step in the right direction for the higher education sector, as it acknowledged the brain drain at higher education level, with many professionals having fled the country during the civil war, and the lack of qualified teachers and professionals. From a peacebuilding perspective, the education initiatives were mainly directed towards teacher training. It showed the government’s intention to improve the quality of and access to higher education through increased national funding, supervision and research. The state provides the bulk of funding for public higher education institutions in Sri Lanka. Funding towards the higher education in Sri Lanka is mainly based on the national budget, national priorities and historical allocation.

Overall, the higher education was minimally considered in peacebuilding projects and a marginal component in the post-conflict reconstruction of the country. The general consensus is that education was largely marginalised in peacebuilding strategy in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka is also an example for undeveloped relation between the higher education system and peacebuilding approaches, given that education is potentially an important factor in the successful implementation of peacebuilding projects, but too little is done to analyse the potential role of higher education in peacebuilding.
On the other hand, as the report published by the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka notes “there are substantial mismatches between demand for and supply of workers, especially in terms of higher education and high-skilled workers. Also, there is a wide gap between school and the world of work; the quality of the general education system, mainly provided by the public sector, does not transmit much productive skills to pupils” (Sri Lanka, 2016). Student assessments show a modest level of quality, and employers’ assessments of graduates’ both cognitive and attitudinal skills are also largely negative. This means issues such as cost; quality, access, and accountability provide easy targets for both academic heavyweights and media talking heads. Hence, these are anxious times in the world of higher education in post-conflict Sri Lanka.

Given the quality and creativity of Jesuit institution, these challenges, while real and serious, need not be understood as negative. We cannot bury our heads in the sand. Rather, they present an opportunity to re-examine closely our mission to have higher education at the margins and the presumptions and practices with which we approach that mission. In so doing, we have an extraordinary opportunity to strengthen the mission of the Jesuit Higher Education in Sri Lanka. What the Jesuit Education does to students – specifically to think critically, reason analytically, solve problems, and communicate clearly is necessary, but not sufficient; a Jesuit education should ask more of its students by educating and forming them to become men and women of faith and of service to their communities. This is the “value added” Jesuit Education. As a Jesuit Educational Institute, Loyola Campus “remains the home for the conversation that explores and advances ... an intellectual tradition ... [which] sees no conflict among faith, knowledge and reasons; it looks how they illumine one another” (Buckley, July 2010). At root, our tradition of inquiry is characterised by an “uncompromising commitment to truth” – truth that “is explored and reverenced ‘in whatever way it discloses itself’” (Buckley, July 2010).
3. The Jesuits Education and Ignatian Pedagogy

3.1 Jesuit Education

The goal of the Jesuit Education is to prepare learners to be knowledgeable experts in their content area, practically informed regarding the myriad ways cultural differences powerfully affect learning, and pedagogically and technologically skilled. What is unique about the Jesuit Education and Jesuit pedagogical approach is that along with teaching for academic excellence, it seeks “the service of faith and the promotion of justice” (Arrupe, 31 July 1973). Fr. Ignacio Ellacuría S.J., the former rector University of Central America [UCA] who was martyred for the cause of justice, called Jesuit Education to be as that, which seeks social change. Ellacuría notes:

The first and most evident [goal of Jesuit Education] ... has to do with culture, with knowledge, and the use of the intellect. The second, not so evident, is that it must be concerned with the social reality – precisely because a university is inescapably a social force: it must transform and enlighten the society in which it lives [Ellacuría, June, 1982].

The aim of the Jesuit education, therefore, is to create conditions of socially just society by educating for the promotion of social justice. In any society, the conditions of the poor and the marginalized and the systematic repression of efforts to change such situation constituted a denial of reason itself. It is irrational for the vast majority of human beings in a society to be denied access to the basic needs to secure their lives and live in dignity. The Jesuit education believes that for it to ignore the reality or cooperate with it, is to act irrationally preferring the truth or living a lie. Choosing to participate in the struggle of humanity is to choose reason and truth.

This mission of Jesuit education, as inspired by a rich history of Catholic Social Teachings [CST] and influenced by the founders of the Society of Jesus, calls to “educate professionals with a conscience, who [would]
be the immediate instruments of...transformation” of a society - a transformation for social justice [Ellacuría, June, 1982]. The students are formed to “become leaders in the movement of globalized solidarity” [Yonkers-Talz, Spring 2003, p. 26]. Students are educated to work for the promotion of justice, for solidarity and for “global citizenship” [Yonkers-Talz, Spring 2003, p. 26].

The inspiration to teach students to be promoters of social justice was particularly inspired by Populorum Progressio [1967], which called on Catholic institutions to promote development and peace by promoting social justice. This call sparked a re-evaluation of the Jesuit pedagogy at all Jesuit Schools [Cordina, 2000]. In 1973 at Tenth European Congress of Jesuit Alumni in Valencia, Father General Pedro Arrupe S.J., the Superior General of the Jesuit order from 1965 to 1983, insisted that Jesuit universities should educate “men and women for others [to become] agents and promoters of change” [Cordina, 2000, p. 19]. People who are “completely convinced that love of God which does not issue injustice for [humanity] is a farce” [Arrupe, 31 July 1973, p. 32]. For Arrupe, to “take justice away from love and you destroy love” [Arrupe, 31 July 1973, p. 35]. This invitation called on Jesuit universities to form “agents and promoters of change” by empowering students with the knowledge of the social reality and with the intellectual tools to use their vocational specialties to seek social justice, or positive peace [Cordina, 2000, p. 19].It visualised Jesuit pedagogical method as a means to “educate professionals with a conscience” who would act as “promoters of social change” [Cordina, 2000, p. 19] and to be agents of positive peace. The overall objective of Jesuit education, utilising Ignatian pedagogy (hereafter, IPP) 11, is the

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11 Ignatian pedagogy rooted in a commitment to education prompted by Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th Century. Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) was developed by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE) in 1993 as an outgrowth of the tenth part of a 1986 initiative - The Characteristics of Jesuit Education. Throughout its nearly 500-year tenure, Jesuit education has spanned numerous cultures, languages, and socioeconomic levels throughout the world while educating hundreds of thousands of students of all ages. The IPP flows from an over 450-year old spiritual tradition began by Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556). Not originally considered one of the main missions or ministries of the young Society of Jesus, Ignatius and the first Jesuits eventually recognised that their involvement in education could be one more way “toward better knowledge and service of God” [Loyola, 1970, p. 172]. The early Jesuits engaged in the ministry of education the same way they engaged in any Jesuit ministry, by using their spiritual foundation and distinctly
transformation of the students’ view of themselves and others, of social systems and societal structures, and of the entire human community and natural creation. Yet even with a clearly stated commitment to this curricular backdrop of value-driven content, the primary focus of IPP remains just that: pedagogical practice in classrooms. Indeed, IPP can be applied to any content area since the goal is a “particular style and process of teaching” that is effective in helping students embrace and enact Ignatian values.

The former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Peter-Hans Kolvenback, S.J., lucidly captured the Jesuit pedagogical mission of today in a June 7, 1989 speech at Georgetown University:

> We want graduates who will be leaders concerned about society and the world in which they live. We want graduates who desire to eliminate hunger and conflict in the world and who are sensitive to the need for more equitable distribution of the world’s goods.

Hence, the IPP focuses on the formation of the whole person;

- a reverent posture towards the God-given inherent holiness of all life;
- a ready application of the lens of faith as integral to understanding the world, social systems, cultures, and individuals;
- an openness to growth and reflectivity; a willingness to structure an education that is value-oriented;
- and action-oriented solidarity with the poor.

*Jesuit “way of proceeding”* (O’Malley, 1993, p. 8). According to Jesuit historians, “The Jesuits ministries and how they went about them were quintessential to the Jesuits’ “self-definition” (O’Malley, 1993, p. 18). Influenced as he was by the tradition of ancient Greek and Latin thinkers, Ignatius’ vision quite naturally included a desire to help or “transform souls” (Connor, 2006, p. 25). Researchers have noted that Ignatius used the phrase, “to help souls” (O’Malley J. W., 2000b, p. 62) more often than any other in his writings. Most of the Jesuits’ self-definition, past and present, comes from their experience of their founder’s Spiritual Exercises in which the Ignatian vision, worldview, and methodology of Ignatian pedagogy are encompassed (Duminuco, 21 2000b). In this sense, Ignatian pedagogy is merely this “quintessential” Jesuit spiritual foundation and way of proceeding applied to the ministry of education.
In other words, the Jesuit model of education seeks to raise the consciousness of its students to dedicate themselves to compassion, not the idols of today’s culture, and to use their intellectual tools to combat social injustices. To address these social injustices the Jesuit pedagogical method seeks to develop the whole person – mind, heart and will.

3.2 Ignatian Pedagogy and its Methodology

To develop the whole person for the promotion of justice, the Jesuit pedagogy combines an Ignatian vision of the human being and the world with a dynamic five-step methodology of context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation to “accompany the learner in their growth and development” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 240). To be clear, IPP assumes academic excellence in the traditional sense. However, it also requires something more. More than the traditional meaning of pedagogy, “the art and science of helping children learn” (Knowles, 1980, as cited in Merriam, 1993b, p. 8), or andragogy, “the art and science of helping adults learn” (p. 8), IPP encompasses “human, social, spiritual, and moral formation (Curia of the Superior General, 1995, p. 193, # 414). It directs the development of the human being toward a specific end: “the service of faith and promotion of justice” (Curia of the Superior General, 1995, p. 192, #410). The goal of Ignatian pedagogy, by fostering growth in human development, is realised through one’s developed attitude and action of serving those in need forming “men and women for others” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 241).

The pedagogy validates the student’s context and point of view as a site where education begins. Context encompasses the students themselves with their familial, community, and cultural identities; the socio-cultural, political, and cultural context in which the education occurs; and the experiences and prior knowledge students bring to their learning task (ICAJE, 1993, pp. 253–254). The context in which the learner finds himself or herself is important. All students are the product of a social setting and an environment. Points of view and insights acquired from earlier study or spontaneously acquired from their environment are part of the context. Their feelings and attitudes regarding the subject matter also form part
of the real context for learning. Jesuit education tries to understand “the life experiences of our learners,” because it had adapted a pedagogy to involve students in discerning the educational path that matches their context. By offering the opportunity to demonstrate prior learning, Jesuit education shows how cura personalis, true personal care and concern for the individual, continues as a hallmark of IPP. In this sense, context includes the ability of the educator to situate the material to be learned in relation to the subject matter of the course, its cross-curricular relationships, and with the realities of the world in some way.

One means of cultivating solidarity and inspiring a dedication to the promotion of justice was through direct experience. Experience in the Jesuit pedagogy means to “‘taste something internally’ (ICAJE, 1993, p. 254), which involves the whole person – affectively and cognitively – mind, heart, and will – because without internal feeling joined to intellectual grasp, learning will not move a person to action” (Korth, 2003, p. 282). Helping students experience the social realities of those on the margins of society involves “an eclectic mix of direct activities [such as conversations and discussions, simulation, role plays, laboratory investigations, field trips, service projects, etc.] and vicarious activities [reading, listening to a lecture, etc.]” creating a cognitive as well as an affective response (Korth, 2003, p. 282). In Ignatian pedagogy, experience means, “to describe any activity in which in addition to a cognitive grasp of the matter being considered, some sensation of an affective nature is registered by the student” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 255). Human experience can either be direct (personal) or vicarious such as using textbook, newspaper, story, movie, etc. (ICAJE, 1993, pp. 254–256). The engagement of the affective dimension promotes the development of the whole person by expanding the learning process beyond memorisation and the mind to include one’s heart and will. Affective engagement is the key that will move a person to action. IPP promotes a broad range of experience and inviting students to apply complex skills to the process of learning. The learning experience is expected to move beyond rote knowledge to the development of the more complex learning skills of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis,
and evaluation. The IPP understands experience to describe any activity in which, in addition to a cognitive grasp of the matter being considered, the student registers some sensation of an affective nature.

Third, IPP encourage the possession of knowledge as formulated through reflection. Reflection in IPP means “a thoughtful reconsideration of some subject matter, experience, idea, purpose or spontaneous reaction, in order to grasp its significance more fully...the process by which meaning surfaces in human experience” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 257). Reflection includes a personal appropriation of the subject, connecting one’s existence and values to the subject in some way. Reflection engages one’s memory, understanding, imagination, and feelings leading one to take a position on the subject in some way. In the reflective aspect of IPP, the teacher invites and supports students in the use of memory, imagination, feelings, and understanding in order to grasp the meaning and value of the content learned, the relationship of the new knowledge to other aspects of life, and any implications for future study and response. Reflection is the fundamental key to the paradigm. This is how the student makes the learning experience his or her own and obtains the meaning of the learning experience for herself and for others. Reflection means thoughtful reconsideration of subject matter, an experience, an idea, a purpose or a spontaneous reaction, that its significance may be more fully grasped. Reflection is how meaning becomes apparent in human experience. Reflection helps students more fully understand the root causes of what they experience. It provides them with a chance to reflect on what they have learned and to chart a path to action. Experience and reflection further help students see the national reality, but they also challenge students to ‘judge’ the conditions around them. The move from experience to reflection is an integral part of the ‘conscience raising’ of the individual student. Through reflection, intellectual concepts become personally appropriated and contextually meaningful. Reflection on one’s lived experiences (including experience with various academic subjects and perspectives) in relation to the larger context of life creates new
understandings and perspectives. In this way reflection helps deepen one’s understanding of oneself and one’s relationship to the world. In Ignatius’ *Spiritual Exercises*, this is often referred to as a process of discernment or an individual and communal process of reflection in order to relate ones “lives, talents, and resources to God’s priorities” (Gray, 2000, p. 15). These reflections can lead the student to take some action consistent with the new understanding and broadened perspective.

For Ignatius, “love ought to manifest itself in deeds rather than in words” (Ignatius of Loyola & Puhl, 1951, p. 101). *Action* refers to “internal human growth based upon experience that has been reflected upon as well as to its manifestation externally” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 260). Action is the response, a natural extension of the self, now more fully understood, directed toward the opportunities this new understanding reveals. Action is the goal of the learning process, to move students to do something with the new knowledge they have experienced and appropriated. It involves two steps: (a) interiorised choices, such as a shift in attitude, awareness, bias, or perspective; and (b) choices externally manifested, as in a physical action “to do something consistent with this new conviction” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 261). Action, which is the fourth pillar of IPP, is an interior reordering of priorities and values, but frequently is extended to be an external action consistent with those new values and priorities. Action describes how the learner’s internal state –attitudes, priorities, commitments, habits, values, ideals, and growth – flow out into actions for others. The goal is not merely to educate the mind, but to change the person into a better, more caring human with a developed conscience. The action continues as the student progresses in the program until s/he completes her subject and enters the world to serve others. Action, therefore, means combating the sources of oppression and marginalisation in society. It is fighting for social justice. The goal of a Jesuit education is to instill a dedication to social justice within the heart of every student, so that, they will use their vocation to promote social justice.
Finally, the process of IPP includes regular evaluation of student growth, including academic mastery, but more importantly, a determination of the students’ growth in attitudes, priorities and actions aligned with the goals of Jesuit education. In the IPP evaluation measures more than intellectual success. Evaluation includes “the periodic evaluation of each individual student’s growth in attitudes, priorities, and actions consistent with being a person for others” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 262). For the practitioner of IPP, evaluative measures should not only assess the student learning of course material, but also, as a manifestation of cura personalis or “care for the individual person” (ICAJE, 1986, p. 181) to assist the student in their growth and development. Evaluating students “growth in attitudes, priorities, and actions consistent with being a person for others is essential” (ICAJE, 1993, p. 262).
4. Applying the IPP to Post-conflict Sri Lanka

As noted earlier, education has been widely identified as a one of the factors that had contributed to a violent conflict during the last decades. The IPP can guide educational reform process in the post-conflict scenario or in the context of massive human rights violation with the goal of helping to promote a humane society. The central question is therefore as to how IPP can guide educational reform processes and stand as pillar in the reconstruction of a wounded society? As illustrated, IPP is a distinctive pedagogy, which can provide critical learning about conflicts and can enable students to engage others with differences through dialogue and learn how positive conflict or critical dialogue work in a democracy. IPP has a potent and can be impactful in terms of challenging perspectives by giving students skills, orientations and practice in citizenship and civic action to challenge violence and to construct a more peaceful society.

The distinctiveness of IPP within a reconstruction process can be highlighted in several dimensions, each with key educational implications. First is the question of the context from where the students come from. The treatment of context is the most visible part of IPP’s educational methodology. This is to help students understand that in a post-conflict society, dominant historical narratives have the tendencies to whitewash acts that had inflicted major suffering or to exclude the experiences of non-victors. In this way, IPP shift the focus from the traditional, dominant perspective to one of contrasting alternative perspective i.e. from the student’s own perspective. This allows the students to understand the real causes of the conflict linking human acts with social conditions as well as avoiding simple reductionism. This creates a narrative that allows for contending voices to exist, revealing the aspirations of all actors. Students are made to understand how a context is interpreted and how leaners understand them with their experience. Honest conversation on the context are essential precursors to a democratic political culture. IPP forms students to search for justice in their context and for the construction of a peaceful society. Addressing the wounds of the contexts is a way of building a future that is recognizably better where victim,
perpetrators, and bystanders can learn to live together. This form of “corrective” justice can forge a rights-based culture. It is the recognition of victims as equal rights-bearers and citizens. IPP, in a post-conflict context, can be more powerful than those that stop at encounters with “others” or try to instill empathy or friendship among students.

Secondly, IPP’s strategy is to make student to reflect on their personal experience of conflict. In other words, it invites the student to reflect on their rights, which may have been violated in the past. Here, the concentration is on ‘human values’ in the context of dehumanisation. Such approach will allow the students to consider ‘whose’ value prevail. The focus on the experience of individual of the conflict is not just to create sympathy for past negative experiences. They are intended to create moral standing in the students as individual human beings. It is recognition of students as equal right-bearers and citizens in a society. This approach is crucial as IPP is fashioned to promote spaces for students to form communities of shared learners. For IPP, the universal, indivisible nature of rights is the common humanity. In this respect, IPP is distinctive in its treatment of “difference.” It moves on from bland forms of multiculturalism that rely on student exchanges. These experiences instill in students a sense of actors with identities involved in social change. Past of the IPP, in providing students enough exposure or experience is that they reconstruct local histories, making concrete the experience of rights and making connections between history and the present. One vital perspective, therefore, when considering human rights education from IPP perspective is not to portray the message about past abuses as one just of horror and crime but also to look to a positive future, stressing shared values and commonalities in rights. There is a need to work with their experience in which students can find values and projects to take as their legacies, seeing that not all was dark.

Directly related to this is the area of citizenship or civic education is the element of reflection that IPP tries instill on the students. However, civic education without an acknowledgment of the wrong deeds of the past can
be abstract. A bland form of peace education that emerge after conflict may be counterproductive. In most post-conflict societies, the use of conflict-resolution skills, however important and useful, may remain abstract, through “role-playing” or the teaching of skills may stay at the personal level—mediating conflict between two students, for example. This is not enough. Sustained political education is a key. As a number of writers have pointed out, democracy is not an intuitive practice. It has to be learned with both the acquisition of conceptual knowledge and the skills and behaviors to put it in practice. Unless learners themselves learn in democratic ways, there is little likelihood that they will teach in other-than-authoritarian forms. This is why; there need to be structures for participation - such as student councils or peer-mediation systems that represent democratic procedures. Empowering approaches to citizenship education require teachers to model a democratic climate. This may be difficult in societies overcoming political conflict. A curriculum sensitive to the legacies of past injustice sneeded in justice-sensitive reform, includingskills in encouraging critical thinking and a democratic, participatory pedagogy, with students reflecting on their learning. A post-conflict society requires openness - alternative versions of history andalternatives to authoritarianism and violence. Dialogue and questioning should become an everyday habit. Such questioning of the status quo or reflection should be linked to a practice in skills for active citizenship, so that young people can engage in future concrete and positive work for civic agency.

In post-conflict societies, especially those in which the conflict is very recent, practicing teachers will most likely have experienced violent confrontation from the perspective of one of the parties (either as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses), and, accordingly, they will likely have suffered the consequences of such experience. They may themselves have experienced trauma and need to heal. This will affect their capacity to teach about the past, regardless of the study program and teaching materials they have. Ultimately, the educator mediates between the system and the students. The key power of IPP is the positioning of learners as central.
From the constant juxtaposition of past and future and the skill set they acquire, students can envision themselves in the middle of the transition to act. They are not just recipients of curriculum, but active learners using curriculum for social change as well as individual progress. IPP lay to rest the assumption that young people are not interested in the events of the recent past; in contrast, that they speak passionately about events that took place before they were born. There is the awareness that people in the immediate past created both justice and injustice, that justice needs to be kept alive and they as learners and as citizens can be part of that struggle, however small their efforts. In active justice-sensitive education, the constant backward-forward gaze means students creating their own history and students creating their own future should incorporate new narratives of history as well as education in human rights and democratic citizenship.

This experience will naturally lead to action where one is guided to become the seeker of truth. In times of conflict, Truth is the first victim of any repressive regime. It could be said that the heart of IPP lies always in search for truth and the acknowledgment of the implications of such truth. In terms of acknowledgment, truth seeking includes the necessary identification of real people in the conflict - that is, the victims and the perpetrators as well as the bystanders. In identification of responsibility for harm committed, one start to see important but controversial issues for educators. Further, in a post-conflict society justice processes are usually accompanied by an eruption of creative activities. But strengthening the public space requires the population’s capacity to assess accurate information as well as platforms to exercise freedom of expression and association under conditions of equality and inclusiveness. Education is deeply implicated in the achievement of these requirements and skills. The distinctiveness of such IPP model of justice in education is that it forms students to be “men and women for others”. This pedagogy would seek to understand how education itself and how it may have been implicated in conflict and violence. This justice seeking approach is very much a context
and conflict sensitive approach which helps answer some of the critiques for peace building.

A summary model of what has been stated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-conflict societies Peacebuilding Mechanisms</th>
<th>IPP Contribution</th>
<th>Element of IPP model of Peacebuilding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to know</strong></td>
<td>Context: Know the complex causes of conflict and continuing legacies. Know rights and their violations.</td>
<td>Addressing grievances related to education. Supporting freedom of speech, pluralistic debate, and the fulfilment of the right to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Right to reparation</strong></td>
<td>Reflection: Memorialisation and outreach projects. Reforming educational pedagogies to become more democratic; understanding and practicing democracy.</td>
<td>Respecting others’ rights; fostering a rights-based culture and respect for rule of law. Supporting active citizens in the public space; strengthening civil society institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guarantee of Non-Recurrence | Action | Breaking cycles of revenge by individuals and groups; supporting a culture of moderation using nonviolent approaches to solve problems
---|---|---
Understanding the rule of law in protecting Rights | Disseminating knowledge | Using nonviolent approaches to solve problems

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan education system faces new challenges in improving the quality and relevance of education to equip workers with evolving skills demanded in a more globalised world and in the post-conflict situation. There are substantial mismatches between demand for and supply of workers, especially in terms of higher education and high-skilled workers. Also, there is a wide gap between school and the world of work; the quality of the general education system, mainly provided by the public sector, does not transmit much productive skills to pupils. Although, there have been attempts to improve the quality and relevance of general education by introducing market-oriented subjects, and more practical-oriented curriculum, etc., there have been many implementation issues at the ground level; financial constraints, lack of resources which obstruct the expected outcomes of attempted reforms were some of the more critical.

As discussed earlier, the goal of Jesuit Education is to bring about a change in the student’s “frame of reference.” Similarly, the IPP seeks to generate change in the learner. Specifically, IPP seeks to form “men and women of competence, conscience and compassionate commitment.” The inspiration for this phrase is the Spiritual Exercises, in which self-awareness, and especially of God’s love for us as sinners, is the first form of knowledge one develops. Each student is uniquely the product of his/her life experiences. Those experiences will naturally color one’s views of the world. Only by recognising our built-in bias, can we reach a level of Ignatian detachment and make a truly free decision. This educational strategy
calls for personal transformation that would lead to transforming society. The ideal of a personal transformation requires a rigorous education to prepare students to become ethical and compassionate leaders who will infuse society with faith and justice, informed by knowledge. For personal transformation to be effective, academic, moral and spiritual experience must be integrated with and enhanced by leaning outside the classroom. It must be experiential learning in which immersion, reflection and experience are intertwined and focused on the needs and concerns that many in our world face.

Loyola Campus uses the Jesuit pedagogical tradition to foster a vision of a peaceful and just society by teaching according to the context of the culture students come from and by developing an intellectual commitment to justice. To move students to action, the Jesuit pedagogical tradition emphasises the role of experience to build a sense of solidarity. Loyola Campus attempts to create a sense of solidarity in their students by requiring each student to complete significant number of hours of service learning in the poor neighborhoods and communities of Sri Lanka. The hope was that through witnessing the struggles of marginalized and through a process of guided reflection students would develop solidarity. This sense of solidarity would compel students to action on behalf of justice. The privileged students studying at the Campus would likely become the future professional class of Sri Lanka; it hopes these students would use their vocations as a means of advancing social justice, thus becoming agents or promoters of positive peace. Finally, through a constant process of evaluation students would deepen their commitment to social change and constantly seek new avenues to pursue of social justice.

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Aiding Reconciliation through Promoting a Shared Narrative

Shakti Devapura

Present day Sri Lanka remains divided on ethnic and religious margins just as it was prior to and during the civil war. Having concluding the conflict through military means, the country struggles to implement a holistic reconciliation mechanism which could help cease the animosities that exists amongst sections of its population. Education could play an important role in this regard as it helps disseminate the ideas of peace and coexistence but to also provide a platform from where the experiences of the conflict and injustices faced could be shared and heard. Such a dynamic role for education as a tool for reconciliation could be further strengthened by the presence of a shared narrative. As the paper would explore, such a shared narrative would be the first step in admitting the past and attaining a better understanding of it, to acknowledge that mistakes were made. It would also be the first step in a healing process that allow victims to voice their grievances and seek justice. The role that Truth and Reconciliation Commissions play has also been identified and paid particular attention to in this paper as it has the unique ability to bring both perpetrators and victims to a single platform. A narrative created through exercises as such could have a lasting effect in healing communal divides and complement the role of education in promoting reconciliation. The paper draws up conclusions based on challenges such an initiative could possess whilst making the case for using education as a catalyst for reconciliation and more particularly in sharing a narrative.

Introduction

Coming out of a nearly three decade old conflict, Sri Lanka finds itself at an interesting cross road at the moment. One path leading to peace and reconciliation and another leading to division based on ethnic and nationalistic sentiments of different communities that inhabit the island. Almost all generations of Sri Lankans have been affected by the conflict
in one way or another. The younger and the newer generations are just as vulnerable to the ideas of divisiveness rather than unity that could see the fractures in the society widening to further polarise communities and create distrust. Also amongst other reasons, such polarisation could create the conducive environment that initially led to the nearly three decade old conflict. The period of violence claimed thousands of lives and pushed back Sri Lanka’s economy for decades in comparison to many of its peers in the greater region.

It is under this context that education becomes an important catalyst for reconciliation. Though not exclusively targeted at the youth or the island’s younger generations, education plays a pivotal role in shaping the mind-sets of the future generations, to change their perception of sensitive issues and to learn to forgive and reconcile. Sharing a common narrative becomes vital due to this. As this paper would discuss, communities emerging from violent conflict would often times have contesting narratives that lay counter claims over the narratives of the other. This is true to Sri Lanka as well. Hence, the role that education can play in harmonising the different narratives also becomes pivotal. In this regard, it is not only the sensitivity of what narratives exist that matters, but also the structural capabilities of a country’s educational system also becomes a key determinant. This is particularly applicable for a developing country like Sri Lanka, who with its limited resources should strive to address such deficiencies that could hinder reconciliation.

**Current State**

Sri Lanka’s brutal twenty six year old conflict ended in May 2009 sans a peaceful, negotiated settlement. The wholly militaristic nature of the conclusion of the conflict in the absence of any form of negotiations or a peaceful settlement places Sri Lanka in a unique position as a post-conflict nation. The military campaign has helped further polarise the communities living in the island. As in a majority of cases, the victory over the LTTE has been dubbed as a victory by the Sinhalese over the Tamils.
though it was not the case (Högland & Orjuela, 2011). Hence, the peace that exists in the island at present is a fragile one, with deep rooted issues amongst factions still not addressed. Thus the chances for a permanent and meaningful peace have somewhat waned off.

The change of administration in January 2015 allowed for a fresh approach towards reconciliation. Since taking charge, Maithripala Sirisena led government has implemented a number of initiatives to make the Tamil population of the island feel more inclusive in the Sri Lankan society. Amongst these are the approaches like the introduction of a Tamil version of the Sri Lankan national anthem. Various bodies have also been established to specially implement reconciliation initiatives and to promote reconciliation. Such bodies include the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) and the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms. The role these institutions play will also be discussed within the context of this paper. Though the initiation of such bodies and softer approaches towards reconciliation are not uncommon, there have also been widespread opposition from specific groups in the island towards initiatives that are controversial and also perceived as ones which might disadvantage such specific groups and their affiliations. One such controversial body that is yet to be operationalised is the Office of the Missing Persons (OMP) which does not seemingly have the blessing of a significant proportion of the island’s population (Ismail, 2017). Even with the establishment of such bodies and other attempts to do so, the government has failed to appropriately address the concerns and grievances of all communities in the island.

Further to this are the presence of ultra-nationalistic groups at both ends. The annihilation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the country allowed the void left by the terrorist group to be filled by nationalist elements within the Tamil community. The Sinhala nationalist elements found a new enemy for themselves amongst the rising population and influence of the Muslims living in the island though their focus has not completely drifted away from the Tamil issue. In fact, a similar occurrence
was crucial in building up the basis for the conflict that existed in the island. Sinhalese too have begun to feel victimised, feeling their grievances are ignored by the government who are accused of neglecting the concerns of the Sinhalese to create a false façade of a reconciled society by prioritising the rights, concerns and grievances of the minorities over the majority.

Amongst all these occurrences are the external pressures applied and international actors who pay significant interest to Sri Lanka’s reconciliation process. Here, the United Nations has found itself to be a very attentive player, constantly engaging with the country to make sure the organisations’ and a collection of its member states’ interests relating to Sri Lanka are met. Whilst a plethora of reports and other forms of documents have been compiled by UN organs based on investigations, field visits and internal reviews relating to Sri Lanka (Deshapriya, 2017), the single most important document has been the resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on the 1st of October 2015 (United Nations, 2015). Though the resolution was co-sponsored by the Sri Lankan government, there has been widespread criticism that the objectives of the said resolution have not been realised even after two years passing since its adoption.

With this existing backdrop and the context provided, it is easier to fit in to perspective why reconciliation is necessary in Sri Lanka. It is also apparent how a shared narrative could play a large role in helping achieve reconciliation. The role of education in this regard is equally highlighted as a valuable tool for promoting reconciliation and would lay the foundation to this paper to illustrate and argue how a shared narrative of the past could greatly enhance reconciliation and how education could act as a facilitator for promoting a shared narrative.

**The Necessity for a Shared Narrative**

The preceding section has laid out the case for a shared narrative relating to the conflict in Sri Lanka. However, for the purposes of this paper, it would be imperative to look in detail as to how a shared narrative or a
common memory as such could help sustain peace and heal the wounds of the past. The discussion would then move on to explore how such a narrative could be established and what challenges it face.

A shared narrative of past events will be the first step in defining inter community and inter religious relations in the island in the future. It is here that the importance arise to address the past in a way that does not disrupt the peaceful coexistence amongst Sri Lankans. Memories or narratives of violence and victimisation are not ones that fade off over generations [Hayner, 2011]. It is in fact kept alive over generations through narratives passed down and becomes part of the identity of communities. This lasting power of memories could determine the success or the failure of reconciliation initiatives if ignored or addressed inadequately, it could also lead to the distrusting of the government by its citizens as to its resolve on attaining reconciliation [Daly, 2007]. A shared narrative is one that all communities in Sri Lanka could identify and relate to at all levels. It will thus create the platform for forgiving events of the past.

However, it is also important to be mindful of the fact that such a shared narrative or a collective memory should not be a politicised one. Reconciliation as an end goal for political purposes rather than for a permanent peace could give birth to narratives that ignore the real grievances of the victims and fail to address the feelings of those who have suffered [Veitch, 2007]. Due to the inherently politicised nature of Sri Lanka’s reconciliation process, such an occurrence is very much plausible. A shared narrative is also the ideal way to counter politicised narratives that groups who seek political mileage could begin to disseminate. Such narratives are available in abundance within the Sri Lankan society. A majority of such narratives look beyond the time period of the actual conflict. Drawing from one such example would be the statements used by members of the Tamil National Alliance, who present an alternate version of the history of Sri Lanka to the one that already exists along with other remarks based on ethnic lines [Seneviratne, 2017]. Sinhalese factions too are known for dismissing the Tamil’s claim to land in the north
of the island in a similar manner (Coomaraswamy, 1986). Such acts are not only aimed at stirring up ethno religious tensions but also seek to justify the acts that follow to muster political support.

Just as how the creation of a shared narrative should not be politicised, it is important to understand that amongst the multitude of narratives present, varying from community to community, the most dominant one would be the narrative that benefits the country’s elite (Maddison, 2016). Such dominating narratives only serve the politics and the privileges of the few elites. As mentioned in the introduction, this phenomenon could be seen in Sri Lanka too. With the conclusion of the war came the narratives that pitted the Sinhalese against the Tamils. Political elite from both communities use highly divisive language to portray the leaders and their communities as the enemies of the other (Bastians, 2017). This in itself acts as a barrier to reconciliation and narrows the avenues for creation of a shared narrative as narratives and counter narratives further drift communities apart since they often ignore the suffering of the others and glorify past acts that may have brought suffering to the other community.

The creation of a shared narrative compliments and facilitates the launch of other reconciliation methods in terms of accountability and transitional justice approaches. Without the formation of such a collective narrative, other reconciliation methods face the threat of failure. A shared narrative does not merely establish an account of what happened, but it also leads to a greater understanding of how and why it happened, of what experiences the victims may have and to inform each other from both sides of the conflict of such experiences. It leads the way to the acknowledgement of what happened by parties and the victims involved. Moreover, the creation of a shared narrative could help break down existing boundaries between communities and dilute their differences. It could stop the feeling of isolation amongst them and alleviate the fear of constantly being under threat.
Furthermore, such a collective memory or a shared narrative plays a greater role in humanising the perpetrators (Riegert, Scott & Shuler, 2013), leading to a better understanding of what happened and why it happened amongst all communities. This will gradually wear off the animosity that exist amongst communities towards each other. Thus, allowing for greater reconciliation and commemorating the lives lost from both sides by putting aside the causes the conflict was fought over and recognising the shared right of all to live as equals in an united country.

Under this basis, it is important to understand that the formation of such a narrative should not exclusively include the Tamils and the Sinhalese, the two main groups of victims of the conflict. A shared narrative must be one that is shared by all in the island, here, other different groups, ethnicities, religions and races also matter. The Muslims of the North and the East suffered significantly at the hands of the LTTE (International Crisis Group, 2007). Their grievances should also be heard and embedded in to such a narrative. Inclusiveness should be the key to such a practise and it would also be important to explore certain avenues from which this could be achieved.

Creating a Shared Narrative

Perhaps more important than settling on why a shared narrative is necessary, the task at hand would be to initiate creating one. Here, it would be wise to discuss initiatives that can help in this regard and map the discussion for the remaining course of the paper. Truth and reconciliation commissions could be identified as a valuable tool in establishing a shared narrative and formulating a collective memory. Though it is a new concept to Sri Lanka with the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission being the closest the country has had to a truth and reconciliation commission since the end of conflict in 2009, one such body already existed from 1994 to 1997 as three separate Commissions of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal or Disappearance of Persons. Such truth and reconciliation commissions have been established in many of the countries that went through similar periods of violence.
In her book, “Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity,” Priscilla Hayner, a well-known academic of reconciliation studies highlights the four key characteristics required when defining a truth and reconciliation commission [2011]. She highlights how such commissions tend to focus on the past rather than on the present issues in a post conflict society whilst also focusing on abuses that occurred during a fixed time period rather than on one single event or a phenomenon. Truth and reconciliation commissions gather information and evidence by directly engaging with the public or the more specifically affected section of the population. The life span of such truth and reconciliation commissions tend to last from six months to four years and take a temporary nature. This allows its contributions to be made use of in other reconciliation initiatives that follow up on the findings and inputs of truth and reconciliation commissions. Lastly, such an initiative, in order to reap maximum potential and benefits, should always be established by the concerned state and have no power to prosecute but only to make recommendations relating to such in exceptional cases. Due to these aspects, truth and reconciliation commissions form the basis for other reconciliation initiatives that follow and the rationale of such commissions to act as a platform for victims to speak and have their grievances and experiences heard enables a narrative to be formed on how things occurred and why it occurred.

Though a majority of truth and reconciliation commissions are formed as a reaction to conflicts or periods of violence initiated and inflicted by governments, in Sri Lanka’s case such an initiative should cover broadly the alleged atrocities caused by all belligerents involved. A biased or an inefficient truth and reconciliation commission would do more damage to the process of creating a shared narrative than benefit such a process. The fact that such an unbiased and a genuine initiative is instigated and run by the state that is accused of being partially responsible of the violence that has occurred improves the stance and the image of the government in its resolve to address the grievances of the affected and to also prevent such periods of violence occurring again. Here, the
existence of a truth and reconciliation commission will help fulfil several prerequisites needed to establishing a shared narrative. Such a high profile commission would allow to gradually restore “legitimacy, power, access to information, the means of designing and building memorials, influence with all components of society and adequate funding” that are required to establishing a shared narrative (Brahm, 2004).

Sri Lanka too is currently deliberating the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission modelled on the previously existed South African truth and reconciliation commission (The Guardian, 2017). Though the rationale behind this is not exclusively limited to establishing the truth and the formation of a collective memory of the conflict, it has sprung beyond to be an alternative to other initiatives that should be operational to benefit transitional justice and serve the purpose of achieving a meaningful reconciliation. At a recent public event, the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe proposed the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission in lieu of a hybrid court system which he claims would not be politically feasible in the island (Jayakody, 2017). It should be made sure that such hidden purposes should not jeopardise the positive impact a truth and reconciliation commission could create in terms of reconciliation and not end up being a political hoodwink to hide the real issues and problems. Despite the intentions of establishing a truth and reconciliation commission were announced in 2015, no noticeable progress has been made in this regard. While it is understandable that certain sensitivities exist as regards to conduct of the war and alleged abuses committed by both sides, it would be the duty of the government to commit themselves to reconciliation by establishing key bodies that would benefit the peace and reconciliation efforts in the long run. Truth and reconciliation commissions which are least sensitive to the drawbacks of such a political environment in the island in comparison to initiatives such as hybrid court systems is an example in relation to this.

In this regard, the creators of a truth and reconciliation commission should inquire into what time period such a body should cover. Sri Lanka’s
ethnic troubles and the violence that stemmed from it is not contained to the four Eelam wars. The Sinhalese and the Tamils have been victims of sectarian violence for decades following gaining of independence from the British whose divide and rule approaches to administrating Ceylon at that time acted as a seed to the development of such communal resentment and power struggles. Hence, it would be a task at hand to address all root causes to the violence that engulfed the island for the past few decades and to make civilians understand how things happened and why.

Sri Lanka could also draw inspiration from the initiatives that have been carried out domestically. Here, the three Commissions of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal or Disappearance of Persons operating from 1994 to 1997 and the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission could play a positive role in not only showing what successes the domestically implemented reconciliation and truth seeking initiatives have had, but also highlight the weaknesses of the same mechanisms. As an example, the failure of the three Commissions of Inquiry into the Involuntary Removal or Disappearance of Persons to criticise or implicate the military for alleged crimes due to the government’s unwillingness to condemn the military during an armed conflict affected the efficacy of the said commissions (Hayner, 2011). Such hindrances should be taken note of when formulating new reconciliation mechanisms. Though not fulfilling the role of a truth and reconciliation commission explicitly, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report of 2011, recorded the public deliberations and consultations which were used in the formation of the report. This was the first instance that the Sri Lankan government initiated such action to consult the victims of the affected areas. The outputs of the commission dealt with previous violations of human rights, enabling a mechanism for restitution and reaffirming victims’ rights thus making far reaching recommendations in to enabling effective reconciliation (Commission of Inquiry on Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation, 2011).

Moving on from the option of truth and reconciliation commissions as initiatives for establishing a shared narrative, it would also be important
to discuss other avenues that could aid in establishing such a shared memory. Here, inspiration could be drawn from various options existing internationally from states which have gone through similar periods of violence and deals with divided societies. Conflict in most parts is experienced at local level by civilians and therefore any move to address the consequences of such violence should also be initiated at the local level [Maddison, 2016]. It is at local level that the public would have first-hand experience of conflict and the violence encountered by them and why such periods of violence should not be repeated. This would be the base where such experiences could be documented and used for the purposes of creating a shared narrative as such where local communities from both sides of the conflict would have gone through the same periods of violence and share common stories of loss and grief. Exhausting such avenues could help bring peace and reconciliation to parts of the Sri Lankan society that need it the most.

In instances where widespread opposition to the creation of a shared narratives has existed, societies have managed to reconcile on more common lines of religion and language [Ciorciari & Ramji - Nogales, 2012], ironically these are the two main factors that divide them too. Here religious leaders and communities have a particular role to play in fostering peace and harmony amongst different communities. With regards to Sri Lanka, close links between the Hindu and Buddhist faiths could be used for such purposes to highlight how differences are fruitless and the way forward remains in unity. Sri Lanka remains one of the most religious countries in the world with surveys indicating that as much as 99% of the Sri Lankan population identifying themselves as religious [Crabtree, 2017]. Such religiosity could help breed religious and nationalistic sentiments that could lead to violence. However, it could also be made in to an agent of peace where the high regard given to religion could be used to promote ideas of peace and acceptance.
The Role of Education

The primary goal of reconciliation is to not only reconcile the differences that exists amongst communities in post-conflict societies but to also ensure that violence would not reoccur stemming from the same root causes of the conflict that ended. Here, it was discussed in great detail the role that truth and reconciliation commissions could play in providing a platform for people to voice their grievances and to share their stories. It was also discussed as to why a shared narrative is necessary and what role truth and reconciliation commissions could play in establishing such a narrative.

Starting reconciliation and the promotion of a shared narrative from the educational sector have certain inherent advantages. Here, schools and other educational institutions operate at the ground level and enables to convey a common narrative to the general public. They matter the most in such initiatives as the public have been victims of past injustices and would be the first to benefit from the sustainment of peace. Educational institutions could provide the ideal platform for self-reflection and appraisal of the violence that occurred, as the individuals, especially the youth could operate in a safe space away from judgement and hatred to revisit the violence that occurred and to find answers by themselves as to how such acts should not be repeated by their generation. Sharing a common narrative and a history could allow the students to also understand the experiences that other communities go through. The students will also have the opportunity to learn from their peers who belong to other communities, the experiences they encountered during conflicts and to be more receptive towards the ideas and stories of others. This receptivity would in turn complement the process of promoting a shared narrative at school level as the students would already be tolerant to welcoming the ideas of others and respecting them.

In post-conflict societies, individuals, particularly children and young adults, could often display signs of fear, pessimism and passivity
[United States Institute of Peace, 2006]. As mentioned, creating a safe environment to study and the acceptance of a shared narrative which reflects on the sufferings of others, coupled with sensible teaching methods could enable students to become more engaging. This would also allow them to take a lead role in initiating change in the societies they live no matter how divisive or prone to violence they are. Ideas of reconciliation and the promotion of a shared narrative to children from a young age could bring in long term benefits as the ideas of the younger generation grows to replace the divisive ideas of the previous generations. The will of the youth to seek the change they need and the fact that they will play a key role in policymaking and governance of the state in the future would further benefit the sustainment of peace. This is if the young are taught and allowed to experience the benefits of reconciling with each other and to be more receptive to the needs of the other.

On the basis that violence should be prevented from occurring for the future generations, education perhaps plays the most important role in aiding reconciliation by adjusting the mind-set of the future generations to value tolerance and mutual respect. Here a shared narrative as such created through a truth and reconciliation commission could in no doubt be useful. As this paper has suggested, the establishment of a shared narrative is not an easy task but the dissemination of such a narrative amongst the civilians and especially the future generations could be the best way to reap benefits of such an initiative launched to establish a shared memory.

Adopting the teaching of such a narrative to school curriculums require the assistance and guidance of related policy makers and a strong state resolve. The public is very sensitive to what their children learn in school and most parents are actively involved in the education of their children. Here this would allow such civilians to actively monitor what is taught to the future generations. Establishing a broadly consulted narrative through a truth and reconciliation process would lessen the resistance that is shown to the teaching of such a narrative at school level. This is because a
majority of such opposition and contributions would be addressed during the deliberation stages of such a commission. Indirectly, the positive role that education play in reconciliation could be highlighted where the children or the students who are enlightened on such a narrative could be messengers of the same and promote the ideas learnt through a shared narratives in their households. Though not significant, such indirect benefits of using education as a medium to promote reconciliation could in turn have benefits in the future and help change the perception of the public as time passes.

Further to this, additional subjects could be introduced to both school and university curriculum that would complement the teaching of a shared narrative and better aid the understanding of such a narrative. Here, subjects focusing on peace education, conflict studies and human rights [United States Institute of Peace, 2006] could play a major role in preparing the generations of students to be receptive to ideas of peace and coexistence over divisive traditional narratives that exist. Equipping the future generations with the knowledge of how conflicts could be avoided could once again have long term benefits as regards to sustaining peace.

Examples of such could be found in Sri Lanka too. The Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR) is one of the principal government bodies in Sri Lanka operating for the promotion of reconciliation and national cohesion. The official website of the organisation states that “ONUR is responsible for formulation and coordinating the implementation of the policies and programmes to build national unity and reconciliation” [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, 2017]. Under this mandate, ONUR seeks to implement far reaching programmes in various spheres such as arts and culture, religious and cultural diversity, grievance handling and language initiatives to promote reconciliation in the island [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, 2017]. Under this purview, ONUR also deals with education sector initiatives, highlighting the role that education could play in reconciliation initiatives in Sri Lanka.
has initiated programmes targeting reconciliation initiatives in the educational sector by creating partnerships with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education and other provincial government bodies dealing with reconciliation. Whilst new programmes are implemented, ONUR has also sought to improve on the existing programmes to better cater to its mandate [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, 2017].

Importantly, as highlighted in the preceding paragraphs, the introduction of new subjects to further facilitate the promotion of a shared narrative and other reconciliation initiatives has been taken in to consideration for practical implementation by ONUR. Here, groundwork has been laid to design a strategy “for mainstreaming national unity and reconciliation within the education system” [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, 2017] Under this initiative, a wide range of stakeholders are at work to reintroduce citizenship, governance and peace education in to the school curriculum to aid in the fostering of national unity and reconciliation amongst the younger generations. Such action is certainly a welcoming step towards reconciliation and it would be beneficial to monitor the success of such initiatives launched over a period of time.

It should also be stressed that many governments in post-conflict situations would not have the capacity to initiate such changes in the education system or in fact provide free education to the masses due to economic and resource constraints. Here the assistance of external actors such as foreign states, international organisations, charities and non-governmental organisations should be sought and readily offered. Such assistance would help alleviate the negative effects of a state not being able to implement an adequate education system that promotes inclusiveness and reconciliation. This is true to Sri Lanka as well, which is currently working in partnership with a large number of external actors such as the UNICEF to strengthen its educational system [UNICEF, 2017] despite offering free education to both school and undergraduate level at state universities.
Successive Sri Lankan governments have paid attention in to utilising the country’s free educational system to promote the trilingual capabilities of the younger generations. The positive role that language play in enhancing communication and alleviating distrust has been reiterated in many reconciliation initiatives both in the island and also internationally [Hayner, 2011]. In this regard, Sri Lanka launched a ten year plan in 2012 to promote the trilingual capabilities of its population. This document contained widespread recommendations to establish trilingual schools in various parts of the island and also to promote the use of English language as an effective tool of bridging communication amongst communities [Advisory Committee of the Presidential Initiative for a Trilingual Sri Lanka, 2012]. The said document also highlighted the limitations that education officials face in promoting the teaching of all three languages in the school system. In the present context, the government has committed to the creation of employment opportunities with bilingual capabilities in the state sector and plans to educate both school children and adults especially including government sectors workers on trilingual capabilities [Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, 2017] to help serve all strata of the public better and minimise the exclusion and the lack of opportunities that minorities face due to language barriers at government institutions and in their day to day lives.

It is important to understand that there is no one size fits all approach to reconciliation and in some cases, the creation and the promotion of a shared narrative could lead to greater complications in post-conflict societies like Sri Lanka. Here education could play the role of a facilitator to convey the students and the public involved in such educational initiatives that multiple historical narratives could exist as regards to what occurred in the past. The teaching of such historical narratives as opposed to the teaching of just one established narrative could open the eyes of the students to the stories and experiences of the others. Going beyond this, it would also ensure the equal treatment of all involved that could alleviate the feeling of resentment one might feel due to
non-inclusivity or the neglecting of their memories of the conflict. Such platform opened up through education would allow students to critically analyse both the rights and the wrongs in each narrative to understand what has been committed by the parties involved and to also what needs to be avoided in the future. This stems from the idea that communities and individuals should be given the chance to reconcile with their own history and admit what injustices and mistakes were experienced and made. It is only through such self-reflection that individuals would be free to reconcile under a shared narrative. Here, an educational institution could informally play the role of a platform for reconciliation and truth seeking by opening up a space for various narratives to be heard and to encourage the students to learn from such narratives that are shared.

Reconciliation focused education could be promoted outside traditional channels of education too. Here, the high regard given to religion amongst Sri Lankans along with the presence of Sunday schools too could be used as avenues to promote reconciliation. Sunday schools and other religious educational bodies also come in to play here as they could promote tolerance and educate the youth in the value of peace over violence. This would help religious education to complement reconciliation initiatives and act as safe spaces for the young to voice their ideas on peace and coexistence. Such action would help wear off boundaries that exist over religious and ethnic margins and promote peace.

Inspiration could be also drawn from harmony centres that exist in countries which are striving for greater ethnic harmony. Here the Singaporean model of such centres have proven to be a success [Lewin, 2010]. Harmony centres exist across Singapore to promote pluralism and to alleviate misconceptions that prevail in the society about certain religions and communities. In using education as a tool for reconciliation, Sri Lanka too could adopt this idea in to its school and university system. This would promote greater coexistence between the pupils and also allow them to be receptive to the views and ideas of others thus diminishing misconceptions that exist amongst the communities.
Such novel ideas could lead to moderation of ones’ self in relation to cohabiting in an ethnically and religiously diverse island to tolerate the differences and uniqueness of what others offer. This in turn could lead to greater coexistence and complement the role that education could play in ushering in reconciliation.

**Challenges and Conclusions**

Attaining successful reconciliation by means of establishing and promoting a shared narrative and utilising the country’s educational apparatus as a catalyst to this purpose is not an easy task. Challenges could arise in various forms due to political and social sensitivities plus structural and economic concerns.

As regards structural shortcomings in promoting a shared narrative through educational systems, certain lapses could be identified both within Sri Lanka and also internationally. Sri Lanka, as a lower middle income country, allocated Rs. 102.88 billion from its national budget for 2018 for the ministry of education [Parliament of Sri Lanka, 2017] who has the purview over the majority of educational institutions in the island. Since independence, Sri Lanka has also offered free education both at school and university undergraduate level. Such successive government policies have had a positive impact on the country’s younger generations. However post-war reconstruction and restoration has been a challenge to Sri Lanka with assistance need to be sought from international actors and states. This is true to the educational sector as well. Due to various adverse economic conditions both internal and external, the country has found it a challenge to maintain the required funding for the educational sector particularly when introducing reforms to facilitate reconciliation initiatives at school level [Department of External Resources, 2016]. As mentioned before, this had led to the seeking of assistance from external actors to initiate mechanisms to aid reconciliation. The trilingual initiative implemented with the assistance of India is one such example.
It should be understood that attaining reconciliation is a costly venture. The setting up of mechanisms, hiring personnel, establishing office spaces and other logistics, the essentiality to have a presence countrywide could all lead up to staggering costs that a country recovering from a post-conflict situation could not afford. The annual budget for the South African truth and reconciliation commission which the Sri Lankan truth and reconciliation commission is likely to be modelled on was 18 million USD and was largely funded by the South African taxpayers and the international community (United States Institute of Peace, 2017). The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) - United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT) has also faced much criticism for being a costly venture whilst being unable to fulfil its mandate during the given period of time (Dittrich, 2016). Thus it will be imperative that any form of reconciliation initiative that are implemented in the island meet the desired outcomes without draining the money of Sri Lankan taxpayers. Such a negative occurrence could no doubt deter the future promotion of reconciliation in the island.

Sri Lanka’s ethnic segregation issue grew worse during the post-independence time period due to the implementation of divisive policies and the occurrence of sectarian violence (Coomaraswamy, 1986). Ethnic segregation and isolation was adopted as a reaction to colonial rule where it was sought as a means of preserving a community’s identity. The establishment of segregated schools is a practise that stemmed due to this rationale. The formation of schools exclusive to Sinhala and Tamil communities and the growing trend of Muslim only schools in certain parts of the island has done more to create unnecessary divisions in the society than serve the purpose of preserving a community’s distinctiveness. Such schools also act as breeding grounds for religious extremists where certain radicals exploit the conservative, sheltered education promoted in such schools to further radicalise the youth and students. At a recent conference organised by the Institute of National Security Studies Sri Lanka (INSSSL) and the Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation themed “The
Role of Youth in Reconciliation,” State Minister A.H.M. Fowzie reiterated the negative impact such segregated schools have created in the country as the students and youth are taught from a young age to be divided and shut themselves off from the views and perception of others, thus leading to greater mistrust amongst communities [Institute of National Security Studies of Sri Lanka, 2017]. Such admittance by the State Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation is certainly a welcoming step towards attaining greater understanding of what issues need to be addressed. This observation has become more relevant presently as the lack of integration of certain communities in the island to the society they exist in has raised questions. Here, the establishment of segregated schools and universities exclusive to certain communities could pose a challenge to national integration and sustainment of a pluralistic society in the island in the future. Hence, the government should take measures to tackle the potential consequences such segregated educational bodies would have on the country as a whole. It would be beneficial to promote the idea that segregated schools too should promote peace and reconciliation initiatives by means of teaching about other religions, faiths and ethnicities so as to promote greater understanding of other religions and communities.

It should be noted that segregation along language boundaries is also a prevalent issue in Sri Lanka’s education system. Here, schools at regional level typically operate on a single language basis thus barring the chances that children of different ethnicities could have in obtaining education. This has affected the society’s inclusivity and has also limited the chances of children from minority communities getting quality education. Such forms of shortcomings could lead to further feelings of exclusion. The ten year action plan relating to the national trilingual initiative also highlights this issue. It broadly discuss the unavailability of Tamil speaking teachers in Sinhala dominated areas and vice versa [Advisory Committee of the Presidential Initiative for a Trilingual Sri Lanka, 2012]. Such a condition severely disadvantages the minorities living in a concerned area be it the Sinhalese or the Tamils.
Further to the issue of education, the language of choice for education and teaching a shared narrative would also be important. Here the promotion of English as a link language between the Sinhala and Tamil languages as per the Sri Lankan constitution (The Constitution of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, 2015) could be further encouraged. However it is important to remember that students should be actively encouraged to speak their mother tongue and have pride of their native language and heritage. Such matters have also given rise to issues of equal access to education. The lack of opportunity to study in the language preferred has meant that the choices that minorities would have in seeking education opportunities will be limited. At the moment, trilingual schools exist in very limited areas of the island. This has also further hindered the faith that minorities have on the Sri Lankan government to deliver equal access to education and the promises of reconciliation.

Just as language forms an integral part of promoting a shared narrative through education, teachers operating in post-conflict societies should also be given the exposure and training on teaching methods that facilitate the teaching of a shared narrative or in some cases a contested narrative. Here the teachers could be given training on how to handle sensitive topics such as the occurrence of violence and to acknowledge the personal experiences of the students. Educational psychology could also play a great role in this regard. Educators could act both as teachers and counsellors to the students who have faced much anguish and suffering due to a conflict. Such experiences could be deeply scarring to the minds of young individuals and would affect their day to day activities and the future lifestyle. Training based on educational psychology could help teachers assist children with tackling such issues at a younger age. It would also allow for a changed approach and greater understanding by teachers in to the experiences of the students. To further the promotion of a shared narrative through education, the government should take necessary steps to give prominence to the initiative in its school curriculum. Here an overhaul of the educational system in the country
that is geared towards and facilitates the teaching of a shared narrative through subjects such as history or specialised subjects such as conflict studies or human rights could benefit such government initiatives.

Education systems could play both a positive and a negative role in reconciliation. Just as education could be inclusive it could also help marginalise people through narratives promoted and due to language barriers as discussed. Hence, it would be the duty of the policymakers to make use of education as a tool for reconciliation rather than divisiveness. An unchanged educational system that promotes divisive historical narratives that lead to social divisions could help preserve forms of injustices the minorities face rather than change them [United States Institute of Peace, 2006].

Furthermore, since education is provided as a free service by the state in Sri Lanka, politicians involved in the decision making process could have a direct influence on the educational sector and also on the curriculum taught. Here politicians could have an impact on what narrative is taught at national level and how it is taught. The presence of a Sinhalese majority in the legislature and other policymaking bodies as compared to the under representation of the minorities could also lead to the dominant narrative being reinforced through the educational system. Due to this, it is important that policymakers understand the positive role that education could play in reconciliation and take necessary steps to adapt the education sector to promote reconciliation. Education should be understood as an essential component of reconciliation which can have repercussions on other transitional justice mechanisms if not utilised properly. Though truth and reconciliation mechanisms would help establish a shared narrative, it would be the role of the educational sector to disseminate such a narrative to the future generations thus solidifying the positive work of such truth and reconciliation commissions and other initiatives.
In some cases, prominence is not given to the teaching of a shared history or to education as a whole in being a catalyst for reconciliation. Stability, albeit artificial, is preferred over the teaching of a sensitive shared narrative by policymakers who seek to create an atmosphere of peace without achieving reconciliation. This has been true to Sri Lanka as well, where successive governments have focused on economic and infrastructure development without dwelling in to sensitive areas such as addressing contested narratives or creating a collective memory. Though a façade of peace and stability could be maintained in this manner in the short term, it would reap no long term benefits as this would recreate the conditions conducive of communal tensions and violence. Hence, it is imperative that policymakers pay adequate attention to promoting reconciliation and establishing a shared narrative is one such way of doing that. The role that education pay in this regard should also be appreciated with the necessary changes being made to aid reconciliation through education.

Currently, a range of government bodies are involved with the reconciliation process in the island. As discussed above, there is the presence of the Office for National Unity & Reconciliation headed by the former president, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranayke Kumaratunga, the Secretariat for Coordinating Reconciliation Mechanisms comes under the purview of Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe and President Maithripala Sirisena acts as the Minister of National Integration and Reconciliation. In addition to this there is also a Ministry of National Co-existence Dialogue and Official Languages. Whilst all these bodies could indicate the government’s commitment to attaining reconciliation, it also raises questions on the efficiency and the rationale of such bodies operating separately under different heads. It should be monitored as to whether such detached operationalisation is indeed helpful to the cause or acts as an obstacle to attaining a positive end goal. Here the presence of a multitude of bodies could lead to different agendas being implemented whilst attention to more important tasks are reduced. However it would also be crucial to include all stakeholders in promoting reconciliation in the island but with
adequate coordination and oversight. This goes beyond the inclusion of traditional actors of reconciliation to include educational institutes as well. The use of think tanks could also be related in this regard as they produce a vast amount of research and related information relating to reconciliation and offers a varied perspective of what needs to be achieved. Such quality research produced could also be reflected on national policy and used for correctly identifying and addressing underlying issues. Due to the academic based work such institutes produce, it would also be useful to adapt such research to stimulate an academic discourse and to promote the ideas amongst educational institutions to enhance the effectivity of reconciliation mechanisms and to adopt changes that could benefit such initiatives.

Further to this, the Sri Lankan government could actively seek to engage with the Sri Lankan diaspora to not only enhance the relationship and minimise the negative impact diaspora organisations have created internationally regarding Sri Lanka, but also encourage the diaspora to actively take part in the reconciliation process. Here, education could be an entry point for such association as diaspora assistance could be sought to develop education facilities in the war affected regions. Such facilities will eventually provide the platform for promoting reconciliation amongst younger generations. One such existing relationship in this regard are the orphanages and the educational facilities run by Selvarasa Pathmanathan alias KP, who was a senior member of the LTTE operating internationally with other diaspora groups in support of the separatist cause. The eventual detention and the release of KP by Sri Lanka authorities paved the way for the individual to establish orphanages and other educational institutions in the conflict affected regions in the island and make a positive contribution to reconciliation efforts of the government (WION News, 2017).

Apart from this, the culture of impunity that exists within Sri Lanka for wrongdoings that occurred before, during and after the conclusion of
the conflict has made it a challenging task to carry out reconciliation initiatives. Numerous actors both within and outside Sri Lanka has constantly highlighted the negative impact such impunity that exists within the island has created. The lack of prosecution of perpetrators and controversial laws that limit state responsibility to prosecute acts by agents that violate basic rights and freedoms of Sri Lankans has affected the pace of reconciliation immensely. Such impunity has also affected the post-war memorisation process. The island deals with hundreds of missing persons from all communities who have been unaccounted for with a majority of such disappearances attributed to various organs of the state. Appropriate retribution to these individuals and their families are impassable due to the culture of impunity and the existence of laws that makes enforcement officers practically unaccountable for their actions. It would be impractical to establish a shared narrative of events when factors that contributed to the violence and injustices still exist within the island.

To conclude, this paper has looked at the positive role that education could play in post-conflict societies such as Sri Lanka in bringing about social change and transitional justice. Here, the establishment and the dissemination of a shared narrative in to the past violence that has occurred was established as the main component in how education could be a catalyst for reconciliation. Under the Sri Lankan context, this has become more necessary than ever due to the nature of how the conflict was fought by both sides, the abrupt military conclusion to the conflict along with the fractured peace that exists in the island and the continuing polarisation amongst the communities that are present. Thus stressing the need for an increased role for education in harmonising differences. Such form of education geared towards promoting reconciliation should be aimed at the younger generations of the country who will rise to be the policymakers and become architects of change in the future. History has shown how the Sri Lankan youth have become the driving force for change in the country, ranging from youth rebellions to student activism. Hence it is vital that such passion for change is channelled towards the right
causes through education. Here, the hatred that caused the conflict could only be changed by educating the minds of the youth and the general Sri Lankan public of how such divisions could only be destructive.

State action in this regard has seemingly been positive but lacks the efficiency and the presence of certain inherent flaws such as the culture of impunity mentioned above casts serious doubts on the intentions of the successive governments to initiate such change. Politicians of the country see ethnic division as a key factor in gaining and accumulating political power. The prevalence of ethno politics in the island post-independence exists to this day at some degree. Such prevailing issues could only change by changing the mind-set of the younger generations. Hence, it is imperative that the country’s educational mechanism is moulded to tackle such adversities to the society. Sri Lanka, in the last few years have made promising resolve in this regard. The will of the government to establish bodies for reconciliation and transitional justice initiatives has become a welcoming step. But it should be mindful that such bodies are established primarily under the will of the people and not as potential avenues to create further divisions in the society. Here equity will be key as acts committed by all parties should be appropriately addressed. The initiation of a truth and reconciliation commission in the foreseeable future also brings much hope. It would not only be a key driving force behind establishing a shared narrative but also act as a platform from which the victims could share their grievances from and initiative a healing process.

It is under this context that this paper has discussed the plausibility of establishing a shared narrative to promote reconciliation and the role that education could play towards this end. Though the challenges are many due to the unique environment such initiatives would operate under in Sri Lanka, this paper has laid out why it is essential to take into consideration the establishment of a shared narrative to prevent the country from drifting back to any form of violence. Sri Lanka’s four Eelam wars occurred after brief intermissions during which various conflict prevention methods were sought. A host of actors, mediators and advisers
from the world over were involved in such initiatives. However it was the resolve of the government that helped conclude the conflict and get rid of the spoilers for lasting peace in terms of the Tamil Tigers. Hence it is also the duty of the government to add value to such war victory by helping the sustainment of peace and reconciliation whilst rectifying the previous mistakes made.

It would be interesting to monitor which path Sri Lanka chooses for its future and what effect it would have on the younger generations of the country. The impact that education will have in aiding reconciliation and the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission eventually leading to the formulation of a shared narrative makes one optimistic about the sustainment of peace in the island. It would be important to revisit the findings of this paper in the future to truly assess what progress Sri Lanka has made in this regard.

Bibliography


Post War Sri Lanka and Priority Issues
Jehan Perera

Sri Lanka underwent two major transformations in the past decade. The first was the end of its three decade long ethnic war in 2009 involving Tamil separatism. The second was the change of government that took place in 2015 in which a powerful and popular government leadership which was increasingly authoritarian was electorally defeated. However, daunting challenges continue to face the country. The first is the issue of dealing with the fallout of the end of the war. There is strong international pressure and a Tamil demand for accountability for war-time excesses which is politically unpopular with the ethnic Sinhalese majority. The second is the need for political reform to address the roots of the separatist conflict which calls for the sharing of power between the ethnic communities. On both these issues, the government faces the challenge of meeting ethnic minority aspirations while taking the ethnic majority along with it. Addressing the issues of transitional justice during the period of the war, and also addressing the root causes of conflict through constitutional reform are the priority issues to ensure reconciliation in Sri Lanka. The challenge in Sri Lanka was and remains to find a system of governance that ensures that the view and interests of the ethnic and religious minorities are made to count in the national decision making processes. This is a problem of power sharing between the ethnic majority and the minorities in which they can co-exist, cooperate and be partners within a single state without the members of one group being able to unilaterally impose their wishes on the members of the other groups.

Introduction

How a nation interacts with its past creates the foundation upon which its future is built. Sri Lanka’s thirty-year civil war was characterised by grave human rights violations that have been left unaddressed. It has led to demands both from within the country and internationally for
an investigation into war crimes. Transitional justice mechanisms can help form new bonds between people, and between citizens and their government. Transitional justice can be effective tool for reconciliation, political stability and reform. There is a need to identify a viable mechanism that will enable Sri Lankans to come to terms with their past on a mutually accepted basis and to advance the cause of reconciliation. Without a deep understanding of how Sri Lankans view truth, punishment and reconciliation, an effective truth and reconciliation mechanism to build sustainable peace will not be possible. Transitional justice can only be effective and contribute to enduring peace if all perspectives of society are incorporated into the design and implementation of processes.

Sri Lanka underwent two major transformations in the past decade. The first was the end of its three decade long ethnic war in 2009 involving Tamil separatism. The second was the change of government that took place in 2015 in which a powerful and popular government leadership which was increasingly authoritarian was electorally defeated. However, daunting challenges continue to face the country. The first is the issue of dealing with the fallout of the end of the war. There is strong international pressure and a Tamil demand for accountability for war-time excesses which is politically unpopular with the ethnic Sinhalese majority. The second is the need for political reform to address the roots of the separatist conflict which calls for the sharing of power between the ethnic communities. On both these issues, the government faces the challenge of meeting ethnic minority aspirations while taking the ethnic majority along with it. Addressing the issues of transitional justice during the period of the war, and also addressing the root causes of conflict through constitutional reform are the priority issues to ensure reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka has a plural society of several different ethnic communities, the two largest being Sinhalese and Tamil which have characteristics of nations with the Muslim community taking third place. The centralised state inherited by the newly independent country in 1948 effectively transferred political power into the hands of the Sinhalese majority who
comprise about three fourths of the population. The inability of the political elites belonging to the different ethnic communities to share power equitably among themselves led to a series of broken agreements and to acute mistrust between the communities. The difficulty of protecting minority interests in a unitary system of government in which majority-minority relations are strained is exemplified by Sri Lanka’s modern political history. As the Tamils from the north in particular were rarely represented in the higher rungs of the government, they were unable to sway government decisions to take their concerns into account. The inability of Tamil politicians to obtain adequate redress to their grievances eventually led to the buildup of separatist sentiment, militancy and war.

Continuing Conflict

The three decade long civil war in Sri Lanka ended in 2009. It ended bloodily on the military battlefield. This was an unexpected end to the war and made the political and military leadership of the government that won the war, especially former President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his colleagues into war heroes to one section of the population and to war criminals for another section. Most military experts and academic analysts had been of the view that there was no military solution to Sri Lanka’s war which pitted the ethnic Tamil rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) against the ethnic Sinhalese dominated Sri Lankan government. There seemed to be no peaceful way to end the war either. The war defied major attempts to negotiate a peaceful end, including two attempts made with Indian mediation (1985, 1987) and one with Norwegian facilitation backed by the Western powers (2002).

Although there was a military solution to the civil war in 2009, subsequent events have shown that the military solution by itself has not ended the ethnic conflict. Nine years after the end of the war, Sri Lanka continues to be an ethnically divided country. The political roots of the ethnic conflict which gave rise to the three decades of civil war continue to remain largely unaddressed. In addition, Sri Lanka has to cope with addressing
the aftermath of the war and the large scale human rights violations that took place during the war. The manner in which the war ended with many thousands of civilian casualties and allegations of battlefield executions of the LTTE leaders and their families has embittered the Tamil population. It has also attracted sustained international attention. This has led to four resolutions on Sri Lanka at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva since 2009.

The previous government headed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa which won the war opposed the resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council. It took the position that the allegations of human rights violations, civilian casualties and war crimes were exaggerated. Contrary to hopes that the end of the war would lead to democratic reforms to enable greater devolution of power and accountability, the post-war period became characterised by the shrinking of political space for Sri Lankan civil society, an erosion of the rule of law and increasingly centralised authoritarian rule. The government of President Rajapaksa failed to close the chapter on the war by seeking the truth regarding the past, accountability for war crimes, compensating the victims and engaging in political reform that would heal the wounds of the war, and win the hearts and minds of the Tamil people.

First Transition

In January 2015 at the presidential election and again in August of the same year at the parliamentary elections a narrow majority of Sri Lankan voters cast their votes against the incumbent government. The ethnic minorities voted en bloc against the Rajapaksa government. Sri Lanka presently has a unique Government of National Unity formed by the two largest parties, the UNP headed by Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and the SLFP headed by President Maithripala Sirisena. The government is a combination of two political parties that have been traditional rivals. The government is a power sharing one in which there is not one centre of power, but two in the form of the President and Prime Minister and the two
traditionally rival political parties they head. This makes decision making slow. On the positive side, the formation of a government of national unity between the UNP and SLFP offers the real possibility of constitutional change that can overcome the failures of the past.

The UNP-SLFP alliance, which has led to the Government of National Unity, is unique for Sri Lanka. It is also rare for any part of the world that two parties that are in opposition to each other, and have alternatively ruled the country since Independence, should form a coalition. The political conditions in Sri Lanka today are the best possible to achieve a political solution to the ethnic conflict in terms of the availability of the numbers in Parliament. The UNP-SLFP alliance ensures a 2/3 majority in Parliament. When the leaders of these two parties are in agreement, there is no possibility of defeat in Parliament. Their ability to secure a 2/3 majority is buttressed by the fact that the ethnic minority parties are all united in their support of the UNP-SLFP national unity government. The challenge is to take the majority of people along in the journey to a new political system in which the ethnic minorities feel a greater sense of empowerment and belonging.

The core element of peace building work in Sri Lanka at this current time is building consensus for the government’s transitional justice and reconciliation process. This is especially so in the Sinhalese majority south of the country which remains largely ignorant of and therefore is indifferent or hostile to these efforts. The need to create public awareness on the process and thereby build support for it is an urgent one. The lead in this work is currently being taken by civil society organisations which take unpopular but necessary messages to the people in terms of peacebuilding. Through organic formations at the community level the civil society organisations take the message of transitional justice to the wider community while actively binding community leaders in different ethnic and religious communities together.
Transitional Justice

In October 2015 the new government took the bold step of co-sponsoring the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka. The government promised to establish four transitional justice mechanisms: these would be a truth commission, a special court, an office of missing persons and an office of reparations. The resolution on promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka affirms “the importance of participation in a Sri Lankan judicial mechanism, including the Special Counsel’s office, of Commonwealth and other foreign judges, defense lawyers, and authorised prosecutors and investigators.”

The government’s decision to co-sponsor the resolution on the future its post-war accountability process means that Sri Lanka has the status of an equal partner. The fact of co-sponsorship implies that the Sri Lankan government will be party in charge of implementing the recommendations, and this would be within its sphere of control. The tilting of the balance in favour of Sri Lanka is also reinforced by the reference to a Sri Lankan judicial mechanism in the resolution. The government has announced a mechanism to deal with the past that will be based on four components. It will include a Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation, an Office of Missing Persons, a judicial mechanism with special counsel to be set up by statute and an Office of Reparations.

Sri Lanka’s foreign minister Mangala Samaraweera addressing the UNHRC in Geneva laid down the parameters of the government’s plan for post-war justice and reparation in the following words:

“The ideas that the Government has evolved for setting up independent, credible and empowered mechanisms for truth seeking, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence within the framework of the Constitution include the following:
• For truth seeking, the establishment by statute, of two mechanisms:

(i) a Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-recurrence to be evolved in consultation with the relevant authorities of South Africa. This mechanism is envisaged as having a dual structure: a ‘Compassionate Council’ composed of religious dignitaries from all major religions in the country and a structure composed of Commissioners. For many victims of human rights abuses, from whichever community, where the perpetrators are unclear for a judicial mechanism to handle, or where the practices of the state and society have resulted in discrimination, this Commission will allow them to discover the truth, understand what happened and help remedy any sense of injustice.

(ii) an Office on Missing Persons based on the principle of the families’ right to know, to be set up by Statute with expertise from the ICRC, and in line with internationally accepted standards.

• On the Right to Justice, what is being proposed is for a Judicial Mechanism with a Special Counsel to be set up by Statute. This takes into account the right of victims to a fair remedy and aims to address the problem of impunity for human rights violations suffered by all communities. There have been previous instances as well in Sri Lanka when criminal justice mechanisms of different kinds have been set up. This, therefore, is not at all an alien concept. Neither is it aimed at a particularly group of persons, but something that is essential in terms of upholding the rule of law, and creating a society that respects the rule of law.

• On the Right to Reparations, an Office for Reparations to be set up by Statute to facilitate the implementation of recommendations relating to reparations made by the proposed Commission on Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-recurrence, the Office of the Missing Persons, the LLRC and any other entity.”
However, the Tamil polity in Sri Lanka and in the Diaspora is virtually unanimous that the follow up to the report of the UN investigative team should also be an international mechanism. They completely reject a domestic or Sri Lankan mechanism. Their experience is that the latter mechanisms have never yielded a positive result. Therefore, winning the acceptance of the Tamil polity for the domestic mechanisms envisaged by the government is going to prove to be very difficult.

Some of the recommendations of the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council of October 2015 have been controversial, in particular the one to set up a judicial accountability mechanism with international participation. Both sides of the Sri Lankan ethnic divide are unhappy with this recommendation, though for opposite reasons. The decision of the UNHRC to call for a Sri Lankan judicial mechanism rather than an international one has been disappointing to those sections of the Tamil polity and civil society who chaff at the repeated failures of Sri Lankan commissions of inquiry and committees to deliver justice. Their expectation was an international investigation which would compel the Sri Lankan government to implement whatever findings were made or possibly face sanctions imposed by the international community. On the other hand, an international investigation may have generated a backlash of Sinhalese nationalism which would have been beneficial to the electorally defeated nationalists who have now been relegated to the opposition to stage a political comeback.

Any government in Sri Lanka that wishes to win the next election needs to be mindful of the Sinhalese ethnic majority for whom transitional justice means the punishment of war heroes who won the war and reunited the country. In this context, when prosecuting war crimes is made the centre piece of transitional justice, as demanded by sections of the international community and Tamil polity, it is even harder to get popular support for transitional justice. The demand for international tribunals and hybrid courts to ensure accountability strengthens the hands of Sinhalese nationalists who oppose the transitional justice process. They claim that
ascertaining the fate of missing persons and providing reparations for loss of life and property are part of a package aimed at providing hard evidence that will be used in war crimes prosecutions and for punishing of war heroes.

**Slow Progress**

The slow progress of Sri Lanka’s internationally mandated reconciliation process has now come in for adverse international commentary and criticism. In September 2017, the UN Human Rights Commissioner made known his concerns with Sri Lanka’s slow implementation of the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council to which it had committed itself two years ago in 2015. He warned that if Sri Lanka did not proceed along its promised path the international community might want to invoke the principle of universal jurisdiction. This would mean that any Sri Lanka accused of human rights violations could be arrested in foreign countries. He said, “The absence of credible action in Sri Lanka to ensure accountability for alleged violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law makes the exercise of universal jurisdiction even more necessary.”

The strong words of the UN Human Rights Commissioner have been echoed by human rights organisations both within and outside the country. The Association of Relatives of Enforced Disappeared in Kilinochchi who have been engaging in non-stop protests for many months have said that they “vehemently refuse to be deceived again” by government promises and half-hearted actions. The New York-based Human Rights Watch has said that United Nations member countries at the Human Rights Council in Geneva should press Sri Lanka to promptly meet the targets of the October 2015 resolution for transitional justice and that “Sri Lanka should put forward a time-bound and specific implementation plan on the four transitional justice mechanisms it agreed to establish as pledged in the resolution.”
Those who prioritise the implementation of the UNHRC resolution by the government as the way forward to reconciliation and justice have anticipated a strong role for the international community in Sri Lanka and the pressure they might exert on the government with regard to human rights issues. The importance of the international community is due to the fact that it is a source of pressure that the government will feel compelled to heed. The denial of visas to military personnel who were in combat units associated with the last phase of the war has been one form of pressure. However, when looking at the international community for support, it is important to make an assessment of the international context. In comparison to Myanmar and North Korea, or to Philippines where thousands of alleged drug dealers are being killed with impunity, or to South Sudan where one million people have become refugees, Sri Lanka would be a less urgent priority.

Today, in comparison to other hotspot countries, Sri Lanka has a government that is generally perceived as being responsive to human rights concerns. There is a shift in attitude and a manifest improvement over the past government. Even though the government is slow in correcting the wrongs of the past, it is doing so in a number of areas, whether it is the release of land taken over by the military, release of prisoners or provision of housing to war victims. It is also not creating new victims on a large scale as in the past. In this context, the course of action that the international community is likely to engage in dialogue rather than to confront the government.

The movement forward of the reconciliation process has been in fits and starts, in particular where issues of transitional justice that involve the victims of war are concerned. But to the government’s credit, they have never been abandoned or denied as an ideal to be aspired to. This is particularly true of the office of missing persons (OMP). The OMP has been constituted to be a permanent body with a stature not less than that of the Human Rights Commission, with a mandate to investigate any action where people went missing in any year on in any part of the country. The
OMP was initially legislated in August 2016. Thereafter there have been prolonged delays in getting it functional.

**Slow but Steady**

The desire to know the fate of persons who went missing without a trace is not unique to any one community. In the course of the three-decade long war with the Tamil militant movement the majority of victims were Tamil. But large numbers of military personnel who were mostly Sinhalese also went missing. The Presidential Commission to Investigate into Complaints regarding Missing Persons that was appointed in August 2013 by former President of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa received over 24,000 complaints relating to missing persons of which more than 5000 were from families of missing military personnel. There were several incidents during the course of the war in which the LTTE overran military camps and killed almost all they captured. In the case of the Mullaitivu army camp which fell in 1996, about a thousand soldiers were killed in two days and their bodies disposed of without record.

Another very large group of people who went missing was the tens of thousands who perished during the period of the JVP insurrection in the late 1980s. Even today there is no commonly accepted figure for casualties, although the figure of 60,000 is frequently mentioned. This is not dissimilar to the figure of 40,000 which is also frequently given in regard to those who lost their lives in the last phase of the LTTE war. Tracing what happened to the soldiers who died or to the victims of the JVP insurrection will be very difficult as the hard evidence will be lacking. As the OMP has not been given a time frame within which they need to conduct their investigations nor are they limited in their freedom to decide which incidents to investigate, they will certainly be asked to investigate the fate of these missing persons too.

The difficulties that the OMP will face in attempting to track down missing persons from the security forces and from the JVP period is an indication of the problems they will face when it comes to tracing the fate of those
who went missing in the last phase of the war. The disposal of the bodies of
the victims will mean it is going to be very difficult to find out what actually
happened to them individually. A similar situation would exist in the cases
of the JVP insurgents or suspects, some of whom were cremated on tyres
on the main roads. The discovery of mass graves in Mannar in the North of
the country and in Matale in the South of the country and a hotbed of JVP
activity would suggest that many of the victims were cremated or buried
in mass graves.

However, these investigations have been proceeding very slowly due to
both lack of forensic evidence gathering technologies and resistance
from vested interests. Studies done in other parts of the world have shown
that the process of tracing people and identifying the identity of human
remains after many years is an extremely difficult task. In Kosovo where
over 30,000 people went missing even a well-staffed and well equipped
missing persons investigatory system is able to process only 100 cases
a year. With Kosovo being in the middle of Europe it has access to both
financial resources and expertise from neighbouring European countries.
But the slow rate of tracing is an indication of the complex nature of
ascertaining what happened in the past.

There are several challenges that the OMP will be subjected to that need
to be considered. The first will be to manage the high expectations of the
families of the missing persons. Many if not most of them continue to hope
against hope that their loved ones continue to be alive and are being held
in some place of detention, most likely by the security forces. Whenever
government authorities tell them that there are no such places they get
highly agitated and accuse those in government of being deceitful. Both
President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe have each said
that their government is not holding anyone in places of secret detention.

After the setting up of the OMP the expectation will be rife that it will
swiftly locate the missing persons. But as the situation in Kosovo indicates
the pace of finding out what happened to those who went missing is
extremely time consuming. In Kosovo, out of 30,000 missing persons only 100 cases are closed on average each year. Such a slow pace will not be acceptable in Sri Lanka. The families of the missing are likely to believe that the OMP too is duping them. On the other hand, if the OMP discloses to the families that their loved one is either dead or they are unable to trace what happened to him, this truth will be difficult for the families to bear. It would be necessary that the OMP should function as part of a package of reforms that include the provision of psychological counseling and economic assistance for development purposes.

The task of educating the general population about these matters, and managing the expectations of victims, is not only the task of government. It is also the responsibility of religious leaders, their clergy and civil society. It is easy for those who are not ready to bear responsibility to raise the expectations of the people. It is important that those with deep psychological wounds be cared for and unrealistic expectations be managed.

**Political Root**

Apart from addressing the challenge of transitional justice, the government also needs to move swiftly to regain the trust and confidence of the Tamil people by addressing the political roots of the conflict. The Tamil people are feeling particularly let down and very much abandoned and left out by the government that they helped to bring to power by voting for them at the last national elections. There is therefore a need to address the political root of the conflict that gave rise to the Tamil bid for separation and the resulting war. While there is no immediate danger of another cycle of inter-ethnic violence, there is a possibility of renewed militancy in the longer term.

Given the history of the ethnic conflict, and the urgency in finding a solution to it, a special effort is required in this regard. It would be a wasted opportunity if the Government of National Unity is unable to work out a workable solution to the ethnic conflict as well as to issues of day-
to-day concern to the ethnic minorities, especially to the people of the North and East, such as the return of land from military control, and the finding of missing persons. The leaderships of the ethnic minority parties which represents the majority of Tamil people of the North and East, have gone out of their way to be trustful and accommodative of the government and its concerns. The failure of the government to deliver on its promises to them is pushing them into a disadvantageous position with regard to retaining the support of their electorates.

The Tamil parties have been openly lobbying the international community to get them to pressurise the government to deliver on its promises. They are being pushed to this position because their collaboration with the government is not yielding the results they expected. The government’s slow pace in tackling the problems of war affected people is severely impacting on the confidence that the Tamil people have in the government. It appears that the government’s reluctance stems for concerns by some section of the polity who are afraid of the truths of the past emerging.

The Tamil struggle for a separate state arose out of a sense of their political powerlessness to prevent discriminatory and injurious acts of the state against them. Tamil leaders saw this coming even prior to Sri Lanka obtaining its independence from British colonial rule in 1948. They saw that the Tamils who formed about 20 percent of the population (including the more recent immigrant Tamils from India who work on the tea plantations) would be outnumbered by the Sinhalese who formed more than 70 percent of the population. With democracy being based on the one person one vote formula they could foresee that they would be relegated to being a permanent minority in a polity in which the permanent majority would be Sinhalese.

One of the main political demands of Tamils in the run up to Independence was to have the Sinhalese political representation in Parliament restricted to 50 percent leaving the rest to the minorities. However, this was not acceptable to the British who instead introduced legal protections in
the constitution against the practice of discrimination. The transfer of political power to the Sinhalese majority with Independence proved the Tamil fears to be well founded. The Sinhalese majority in Parliament found ways to disregard the constitutional protections against discrimination. Landmark decisions that were discriminatory and injurious to Tamils were the official language policy that made Sinhala the sole official language and the imposition of quotas for university entrance that sharply reduced the Tamil intake.

The Sinhalese had their own justifications for what happened in the years after Independence. They felt they had borne the brunt of suppression by the British. They believed that the British had followed discriminatory divide and rule policies that favoured the Tamils during the colonial era. At the time of Independence, the Tamils had virtual parity with the Sinhalese in terms of higher level government jobs and in the professions and academia. But the correction of historical injustices to the Sinhalese came at the expense of discrimination against the Tamils.

Federal Solution

The main problem in Sri Lanka from a democratic perspective is a political system that has concentrated political power in a single institution that is invariably dominated by the majority Sinhalese, leading to a virtual tyranny of a permanent majority. Any solution would need to satisfy the aspirations of the Tamil people that they have articulated for over the past sixty years and with it those of the Muslims. This would be on the lines of a federal power sharing solution. A federal system could also help to bring about an economic solution, as it will transfer power and economic resources away from Colombo to the regions.

As has been pointed out by scholars in the field, political stability in pluralistic societies is difficult to maintain without internal power-sharing mechanisms or systems of governance which are responsive to the aspirations of ethnic minorities. The monopoly of political power by representatives of the ethnic Sinhalese majority amounting to over 75
percent of the country’s population has been a major contributory factor to the internal war that pitted the government against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

If Sri Lanka had been provided with a federal constitution at the time of independence from the British in 1948, the Sinhalese and Tamil leaders might have been able to politically bargain with each other from their power bases at the centre and region respectively. Instead Sri Lanka was provided with a unitary form of government that vested all power at the centre and therefore in the hands of the Sinhalese. But while the Sinhalese are a majority in the country taken as a whole, the Tamils are a majority in the north and Muslims are a majority in parts of the east of the country. Several serious efforts made by government leaders to work out a solution with the Tamil and Muslim political leaderships failed owing to the inability of the government leadership to obtain the backing of their own party let alone the opposition.

The British-inspired constitution under which Sri Lanka obtained its independence in 1948 was based on the Westminster parliamentary system and a centralized form of government. It was discarded in 1972 and replaced with the first Republican constitution. The architects of this constitution were driven by a vision of capturing the commanding heights of the economy for the state, so as to enable equitable and state-driven social welfare measures coupled with economic development. In response to an ethnic Tamil demand for a federal state in the north and east of the country, there was also specific reference in this constitution to a unitary state, which entrenched power in the central government, and to giving Buddhism the foremost place.

The second republican constitution of 1978 added to these features of centralized power, a very powerful executive presidency. It was specifically intended by its framers to make the Presidency free from the “whims and fancies of Parliament” as stated by its main architect, J R Jayewardene who became the country’s first executive president. The Executive
Presidency in Sri Lanka is a hybrid of the US and French presidencies. It makes the President the head of state, head of government, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and gives the President the power to appoint as Prime Minister the person whom he believes commands the confidence of Parliament, appoint Cabinet Ministers, preside over Cabinet meetings and dissolve Parliament at any time after one year of Parliament’s term. In addition, the President is given legal immunity from any form of legal action while in office.

13th Amendment

The 13th Amendment to the constitution came into effect in 1987 an outcome of the Indo Lanka Peace Accord of 1987, in terms of which India tried to mediate and resolve the country’s ethnic war. It was primarily intended to be the solution to the ethnic conflict and sought to devolve decision making powers to the elected provincial authorities. The system of provincial councils was modeled on the semi-federal system found in India.

According to the Constitution of Sri Lanka, sovereignty lies with the people and the people exercise it through elected bodies, namely, [1] the Parliament and [2] the Provincial Councils and directly through [3] a referendum. A part of the legislative power previously exercised by the Parliament was devolved in 1987 to the second-tier of government by creating Provincial Councils. This amendment has many positive features. It gave at least some democratic content to the constitution that breeds authoritarian tendencies and is an attempt to introduce a subsidiary principle to make decision making process closer to the people. Most importantly, it was a result on consensus politics and its outline was drafted by a third party, namely India, in consultation with political forces that stand for a middle ground.

The 13th Amendment sets out three lists of subjects and functions – the Reserved List, the Provincial Council List and the Concurrent List. The Reserved List contains powers that are exclusively reserved to the Central
Government. Similarly, the Provincial Councils can pass statutes on matters specified in Provincial Council List and when a statute is so passed the pre 1987 law passed by the Parliament on that subject becomes inoperative in the province, if the statute states in its long title that the statute is inconsistent with such law. However, the legislative power of the Provincial Council in regard to a subject that is in the Provincial Council list is not exclusive. In other words, while the Reserve List contains exclusive powers of the Centre, the Provincial Council List contains powers of the Provincial Council but are not their exclusive powers. The Constitution only requires that a Parliamentary bill on a subject in the Provincial Council List must be referred to all the Provincial Councils for the expression of their views, if all agree the bill can be passed with a simple majority. If one or more of the Provincial Councils do not agree, it can be passed with a simple majority but is only applicable to those Provincial Councils that agreed.

With regard to the subjects in the Concurrent List both the Parliament and the Provincial Councils can legislate on them but only in consultation with each other. Here the word used is in ‘consultation with’ and not with the ‘concurrence of’. In the event of inconsistency, the Parliamentary law will prevail. It needs to be noted that the Reserve List makes provisions for the Parliament to set out the national policy on all subjects and functions. This is a provision that has been consistently abused by successive governments. It provides that the Parliament can lay down National Policy by a simple majority which means the Provincial Councils cannot pass any legislation that contravenes the national policy on the subject. In practice, the central government wields control over the provincial councils by means of limiting its sources of independent revenue and underfunding them.

From the time they were established by the 13th Amendment in 1987, the Provincial Councils have been an arena of contested power. Sinhalese nationalist politicians are acutely aware that the provincial councils were not a voluntary creation of the Sri Lankan polity or due to an internal recognition by the ethnic majority of the need for such provincial
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autonomy. On the contrary, the system was set up as an outcome of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord which was in the nature of an unequal treaty signed by the governments of India and Sri Lanka. The Indian promise was to disarm the LTTE and end the ethnic insurgency, while the Sri Lankan promise was to implement the devolution of powers on the Indian model. But neither side was able to keep its side of the bargain.

Due to the nature of its origins, the Provincial Council system has never been fully empowered by successive governments. The resource base of the provincial councils has never been strong, and in fact, during the period of the present government, even the limited taxing power they enjoy has been further reduced. The devolution of power to the Tamil-majority areas feeds into the insecurities of the Sinhalese majority. This is a fertile political ground for the government to sow the wind, in order to reap the whirlwind of Sinhalese nationalism. The desire of the Sinhalese majority to protect the unity of the country will override all other considerations, even those of economics.

There is a strong nationalist sentiment that has grown stronger with the government’s military victory over the LTTE that whatever ethnic conflict there may have been, has been resolved with the elimination of the LTTE and its associated terrorism. It is believed that rapid economic development of the country, including the North and East, would productively engage the energies of people and reduce the impetus towards ethnic-based politics. However, such an analysis is not in keeping with international experience. Ethnic-based grievances and desire for self-determination exists in both rich and poor countries which economic development by itself cannot dispel. Tibet in China, Kashmir in India and Chechnya in Russia give ample testimony to the resolve of aggrieved ethnic minorities to seek some form of regional self-government above all other values.

One of the goals of the devolution of power is to give people the power to make decisions concerning their own lives. The closer that people are to those who make decisions regarding their lives the more impact are they
likely to have on those decisions. However, in Sri Lanka the concept of the devolution of power is not promoted simply for reasons of economic efficiency or for the sake of greater people’s participation in governance. The primary motivation of the devolution of power has been the demand of the ethnic minorities, spearheaded by the Tamil people of the North and East to have some measure of self-rule as a distinct community.

The problem with the type of district or sub-provincial level decentralisation that the government appears to be contemplating is that this form of devolution does not address the issue of inter-ethnic power sharing. The government of a country needs to reflect the social, economic, ethnic and religious composition of society or it runs the risk of being seen as an alien government by those who are not represented within the system of government. The centralisation of power that is taking place today is in fundamental contradiction to the devolution of power that has been the quest of the Tamil community for the past five decades in this country. At this time, when there is the possibility of a new beginning, it is important to remember the past and international experience. The withdrawal of well established provincial autonomy arrangements in both Sudan and Serbia led to the partition of both those countries.

The greater purpose of the government in Sri Lanka must be to ensure that all sections of the population, including the ethnic minorities, feel a sense of economic empowerment and political belonging to a Sri Lanka that is united not only in geographic terms but also united in heart. It is to be hoped that the purpose of the government is a greater one than to win elections and stay in power. It must also be noted that the centralisation of power that took place in 1972, and again in 1978, did not bring about the desired economic development. On the contrary, the centralisation of political power, and failure to devolve power to the ethnic minorities, accentuated the ethnic conflict. Political power in democratic societies is meant to be shared.
Continuing Challenge

During their election campaign the present set of government leaders promised a new constitution. The challenge in Sri Lanka was and remains to find a system of governance that ensures that the view and interests of the ethnic and religious minorities are made to count in the national decision-making processes. This is a problem of power sharing between the ethnic majority and the minorities. As the Tamils are concentrated in the North and East of the country, a federal solution would be the logical one. The difficulty of protecting minority interests in a unitary system of centralised government in which majority-minority relations are strained is exemplified by Sri Lanka’s modern political history.

Indeed, after their brief advocacy of 50:50 power sharing in Parliament, the Tamil leadership opted for a federal solution. It will enable the Tamil majority in the North and East to have decision making powers and enjoy a measure of self-rule in those parts in which they are a majority. However, the federal option has been opposed by Sinhalese from its inception. They fear that federalism would be the first step to separation. Today Sinhalese opponents of a federal solution point to the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as examples of federal states that disintegrated on the basis of their federal units. They fear the same will happen in Sri Lanka.

There are also counter examples. The withdrawal of autonomy arrangements for ethnic minorities in both Sudan and Serbia led to the partition of both those countries. The greater purpose of the government in Sri Lanka must be to ensure that all sections of the population, including the ethnic minorities, feel a sense of economic empowerment and political belonging to a Sri Lanka that is united not only in geographic terms but also united in heart. Addressing the issues of transitional justice during the period of the war, and also addressing the root causes of conflict through constitutional reform are the priority issues to ensure reconciliation in Sri Lanka.
The challenge to Sri Lanka today is to find a suitable structure of governance in which two or more peoples can co-exist, cooperate and be partners within a single state without the members of one group being able to unilaterally impose their wishes on the members of the other groups. The process of political change must begin with reinstating the original constitutional provisions that safeguard minority rights. Furthermore, the 13th Amendment, which devolves power to provincial councils in a semi-federal manner (and thus gives the Tamils greater control over the North and East) should be fully implemented. This constitutional amendment was the outcome of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of 1987. If the original provisions for minority rights are legitimised, and if these amendments are fully implemented, it would provide security to minority groups and encourage a greater degree of trust.
Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is an aspect of sustainable peacebuilding that is often overlooked. This paper examines a process of education – specifically known as relationship education – and the role it can play in post-conflict Sri Lanka, exploring key questions, including; what is the relationship between gender inequality and conflict? How are the two related and how does one impact the other? What is the need to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights in post-conflict situations and how does this impact reconciliation and peace-building? Why is gender a necessary component of peace-building? An argument is made for the need to include relationship education within the mainstream education syllabus, beginning at the most fundamental levels; articulating the role relationship education can play in building healthy, functioning, and peaceful societies.

Introduction

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

Educational reform has long been lauded and hailed as the key to changing the world. Alongside the campaigns, the laws, the activism on a fundamental level it can hardly be denied that without change to what people are taught in classrooms, all other efforts will struggle to gain permanent footing. The UN’s Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) of providing universal primary education to all, and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (United Nations, 2015) - highlight
the recognition internationally and within the development sector of understanding the role education can play.

Education in Sri Lanka has a long history that dates back two millennia. The Constitution of Sri Lanka provides free education as a fundamental right. Sri Lanka’s population had an adult literacy rate of 96.3% in 2015, which is above average by world and regional standards. After independence, the number of schools and the literacy rate of the people substantially increased. According the statistics available there are approximately 9,830 public schools serving close to 4,030,000 students, all around the island (Keerthisinghe, 2012).

The system is not without its issues, for decades concerns over, effectiveness of teaching, archaic nature of the syllabus material, over focus on competition and examinations and inability to respond to a changing world have all been raised, and repeatedly (Business Times, 2011). ‘There is an unnecessary rat race in the society and sometimes we witness suicide cases among young children as an outcome’, argues one senior lecturer from the Open University of Sri Lanka. Most parents want their son or daughter to become ‘dream stars’ and they are striving hard and sacrifice the most important time of their childhood.

This paper aims to examine a particular process of education – specifically known as relationship education – and the role it can play in post-conflict Sri Lanka. We will begin by the importance of education as a developmental factor, and why it retains such prominence and importance in any conversation regarding development. We will then examine the need to shift thinking from looking at education as a process, rather than a goal as has been done in the recent past.

Having established the framework, this paper will look at the relationship between gender inequality and conflict. How are the two related and how does one impact the other? What is the need to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights in post-conflict situations and how does
this impact reconciliation and peace-building? Why is gender a necessary component of peace-building?

Finally, we will make an argument for the need to include relationship education within the mainstream education syllabus, beginning at the most fundamental levels. We will aim to articulate the role relationship education can play in building healthy, functioning, and peaceful societies.

**The Importance of Education**

As we explore the dimensions of the education-reconciliation nexus, it is necessary for us to fully understand the importance of the role of education. Why is so much focus and importance given to this aspect of development at all stages? What is it about education as a process and as a goal that commands such necessity for change and evolution? Without fully being able to understand this, it is difficult to make any argument for a change or inclusion into education.

Concern Worldwide makes a convincing holistic argument on the importance of education when explaining why it plays a key role in their work. They state, 'long-term economic, social and personal gains from education are proven – for individuals, families, communities and the development of a nation.' Improvement and investment in education has been linked to improvements of many other indicators of development – social, political, and economic. It has even been linked to health. Concern Worldwide says that in their experience education has improved the state of infant mortality as well as reduced people’s vulnerability to HIV [Concern International, 2017].

When we look at development, peace, and education – education can play a major role in reducing vulnerability and poverty. UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Global Education Monitoring Report, 420 million people could be lifted out of poverty with a secondary education, thus reducing the number of poor worldwide by more than half [UNESCO, 2017]. According to UNESCO, 171 million people could be lifted out of poverty - a 12% drop
in global poverty - if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills. UNESCO also found that one extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by up to 10%, and each additional year of schooling raises average annual gross domestic product by 0.37% (UNESCO, 2011).

Poverty, health, and development ensure a stable political and social environment free from conflict. The importance of education in relation to peace and peacebuilding can be equally vital. There is evidence to the view that when equitably available, of good quality, relevant and conflict sensitive, education can help promote peace and provide safe environments (Mwaniki, 2017). According to a University of Maryland School of Public Policy survey, uneducated women are more likely to support militancy and terrorism, and educated women are less likely than their educated male peers to support this way of life (Afzal, 2012). Confucius said it as far back as 500 B.C.: “Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace.”

In this light, there is also a large amount of advocacy for peace education to be implemented. It has been described as a series of ‘teaching encounters’ that draw from people: their desire for peace, nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimise injustice and inequality (Harris & Synott, 2002). James Page says peace education should be thought of as ‘encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; as informing the student on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others’ (Page, 2008).
The importance of education in achieving equality – socially, economically, between the sexes and more is also a key driver in its importance. Research has repeatedly shown that education for girls has the potential to develop and drive vulnerable communities forward, and thus reduce the potential for all types of conflict within these communities. Education is a key factor associated with men’s attitudes toward women – men with less education – particularly those who have not completed secondary school, have more rigid attitudes and are more likely to be violent towards their family (Concern Worldwide, 2018).

A study on girls’ education and early marriage in West and Central African countries showed that educating girls and ending child marriage is essential for girls and young women to have agency, not only as wives and mothers, but also beyond those roles. It is also essential to enable countries to reach their full development potential. Low educational attainment and child marriage both affect girls’ life trajectories in profound ways. Girls marrying or dropping out of school early are more likely to experience poor health, have children at younger ages and more children over their lifetime, and earn less in adulthood (Wodon, Male, Onagurwa, & Yedan, 2017). Education enables girls and women to reach their full potential - in parity with men and boys - in their homes, communities, workplace, and institutions of influence. One additional school year can increase a woman’s earnings by up to 20%, (Psacharopoulos & Anthony Patrinos, 2002) and it has been shown that some countries lose more than $1 billion a year by failing to educate girls at the same level as boys (Plan International, 2015).

One of the things that make education so vital is the process that it plays in knowledge gain. In today’s connected world, information can be obtained with little to no effort, however ‘information cannot be converted into knowledge without education’, and it is the process of education that can teach us to critically analyse, debate, and interpret information given in the necessary context (Doumbia, 2013). It is this process that places education among the top drivers of development, and creates people who
can solve their own issues and develop solutions rather than regurgitate what is already available. The process of critical thinking and the ability to understand what is being absorbed is key to both personal and other evolution.

**Education as a Process Rather than as a Goal**

The word education is broad and can mean many things. Mariam-Webster’s dictionary defines education as

a) the action or process of educating or of being educated; also; a stage of such a process

b) the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process. When education as a goal is discussed – it is often in the light of it being an action or process that we do so. The MDG on education looked specifically at primary education and the conversation around its success used processes and actions to measure and understand its success. The U.S. Sectary of Education in 2013 quoted that “around the globe, an estimated 61 million primary-aged children are out of school”\(^1\) and the SDG on education notes the success made in achieving ‘access to education at all levels and increasing enrolment rates in schools particularly for women and girls. The focus on numbers, rather than on the system and the process is evident and the primary priority.

Why does education as a process matter? Evidence shows as discussed in the previous section that achieving quantitative goals of education (including number of those enrolled and completing certain stage of education, amount of money spent etc.) does have an impact. This argument however disregards the qualitative aspect of education – what is being taught. It cannot be ignored that while the first step is to have people enter the education system, the quality of the system and its content then play an equally vital role. Education is a double-edged sword,

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\(^1\) [https://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/education-the-most-powerful-weapon/](https://blog.usaid.gov/2013/04/education-the-most-powerful-weapon/)
it can be used for detrimental purposes as much as for development. For example, in Sri Lanka there is critique about the competitive exam-orientated nature that is bred in Sri Lankan schools [The Daily FT, 2012] and the entitlement of university graduates [Samath, 2016]. While demand and enrollment for education is high in Sri Lanka, these critics highlight that the process itself can be problematic.

An example of how failure to look at the process can be problematic can be found in a study from Plan International and International Centre for Research on Women on the safety of schools in Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam. The research aimed to assess the prevalence, nature, response and reporting of various forms of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in, around and on the way to school. The high prevalence of violence in schools and at home (including emotional violence) makes students feel unsafe and increases the likelihood of their perpetration of violence. Research findings point to the need for focusing on gender equality in education and the need for a multi-level approach addressing barriers at the individual, community, school, and policy levels if we are to tackle SRGBV in a sustainable way [Plan International & ICRW, 2015].

An example of the value of the education process can be seen by examining the education system implemented in Finland which has been shown to be one of the most successful in the world. It is now the highest in Europe on the PISA (Program for International Student Assessments), an international test for 15-year-olds in language, math, and science literacy in the recently released 2015 results [OECD, 2016]. In Finland, the focus was given to the content of the curriculum taught and the quality of the teaching as part of the process of education. The focus on instruction and the development of professional practice in Finland’s approach to organising the education system has led, according to all reports, to an increased prevalence of effective teaching methods in schools [Sahberg, 2007]. Sahlberg goes on to say, ‘Finnish education policies are a result
of four decades of systematic, mostly intentional, development that has created a culture of diversity, trust, and respect within Finnish society in general, and within its education system…. Education sector development has been grounded on equal opportunities for all, equitable distribution of resources rather than competition, intensive early interventions for prevention, and building gradual trust among education practitioners, especially teachers.’ Before Finnish kids learn their times tables, they learn simply how to be kids — how to play with one another, how to mend emotional wounds, and the focus on this process of education has yielded results [Weller, 2017].

The discussion around education as a process can especially be seen when we look at the issues surrounding access to education for girls. Studies show that among the barrier faced, poor and hostile school environments and the devaluation of the education of women hamper their access to quality education [DFID, 2005]. If within the education system itself the need, advantages, and value of educating girls was highlighted for males and decision makers, we could see a major improvement in how girls access education. Studies already show that girls are more likely to have access to education where both or one of the parents are educated, as they realise and argue that the goal of getting the decision makers to school may have been achieved, but the process has failures.

Another key example is the issue of the lack of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit in Sri Lanka, which has been cited as a direct result of the process of education implemented. Employability of Sri Lanka graduates has been limited as there is often a gap between the knowledge of students and the skills that are sought after by employers. While students are gaining more knowledge than ever, employers also value ‘soft’ skills such as communications, critical thinking, and problem solving which has traditionally been lacking in the curriculum [World Bank, 2014]. Research on the National Innovation System [NIS] in Sri Lanka has shown that the NIS of Sri Lanka is greatly compromised right from the very early stages of education. Low number of science-based
schools and exam-oriented curriculum have failed to induce innovative thinking among Sri Lankan children (Govindaraj, 2016). This failing has been cited as one of key reasons that the Sri Lankan economy is unable to go forward with entrepreneurship, arguing that the education system is theoretical, not providing the grounding and self-confidence required for self-employment and other challenging opportunities (Mirza, 2017). Even in the start-up ecosystem the drive of creating innovative products and solutions is said to be limited, with entrepreneurs preferring to provide more safe services lacking in a creative thought process (Moorthy, 2017).

Content and process is a main determinant of education quality. The knowledge, skills and attitudes imparted by learning areas/subjects, cross-cutting approaches and extra-curricular activities is a main source of systematic and comprehensive learning. This process is vital to ensure that education goes beyond numbers, and looks at what is being taught as it is ultimately the process of education that will influence societal changes.

Gender Inequality, SRHR and Conflict

To understand why gender must be addressed in education – particularly in post-war Sri Lanka the relationship between gender inequality and conflict must be explored. How are the two related and how does one impact the other? What is the need to discuss sexual and reproductive health and rights in post-conflict situations and how does this impact reconciliation and peace-building? Why is gender a necessary component of peace-building?

The link between conflict and the conversation around gender equality (particularly SRHR) is not a new one. Those working in the field of gender have long recognised the interlinkages between the two, beginning with looking at women and gender minorities as a marginalized group that has their rights and autonomy disproportionately affected in conflict. Studies show that within conflict situations, women see their sexual and reproductive health and rights affected through a variety of facets
(Kottegoda, 2007). This includes but is not limited to – SRHR from a rights-based perspective, how gender roles are viewed in the context of ethno-religious conflict situations, power relations, how lack of comprehensive sexual and relationship education can contribute to conflict situations, and the impact of the notion of masculinity emphasised by war and conflict.

Access to CSE for young people is grounded in internationally recognised human rights, which require governments to guarantee the overall protection of health, well-being, and dignity, as per the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and specifically to guarantee the provision of unbiased, scientifically accurate sexuality education. These rights are protected by internationally ratified treaties, and lack of access to SRH education remains a barrier to complying with the obligations to ensure the rights to life, health, non-discrimination and information, a view that has been supported by the Statements of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee, and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UNESCO, 2015). Access by affected communities to their rights is a crucial element of the peacebuilding and reconciliation process, and SRHR are component of that. In conflict societies, women and gender minorities are one of the marginalised groups that have their rights affected (such as SRHR) and for sustainable peacebuilding to take place this must be given consideration. The denial or limitation of rights to any group affects the process of peacebuilding and can increase the potential of conflict.

Gender discrimination and women’s low status are at the root of women’s limited autonomy and of the denial of their rights to health and bodily integrity: when women suffer poor mental and physical health and limited decision-making power this, in turn, impacts negatively on their children’s survival, healthy growth and development (Plan International, 2015). This undeniably influences long-term efforts for peacebuilding and conflict, with overall development being affected and creating instability.
In Sri Lanka, post-war instability and clashes have been shown to be linked to rigid gender roles and a lack of CSE. The procreating ability of women has identified them historically with the ‘nation’. This is evident in independence movements and nationalist movements in South Asia. Feminists such as Kumkum Sangari (1990), and Floya Antias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1992) have shown how the State deployed women’s bodies to foster a national identity among its people, and to maintain the State’s position as a patriarchal father figure. The danger that these scholars warn is the impact that such sentiments could have on the rights of women and girls in general and their sexual and reproductive rights. In Sri Lanka, the key features of a frame that defines how women’s SRHR in the context of the country’s popular nationalist ideals, include the familiar idea of the heterosexual nuclear family as being the foundation or primary building block of Sri Lanka’s nationhood. Within this are clear notions of what women’s roles and men’s roles are, and what it means to be a ‘good’ wife and ‘a good’ mother. Therefore, women’s bodily integrity, autonomy and agency are secondary to the collective good of the family, and by extension, the state (Kodikara 2013).

Conversations online and the attacks on women have revealed a binary representation of women in the online space – one was of the overly romanticised image of the non-English speaking rural woman and the other English-speaking women in urban spaces, associated with loose morals. Both strands of arguments were couched in terms of expectations that women conform to their expected gender roles and did not allow any space for non-conformity (Ibrahim & Daniels, 2016).

Violence also becomes normalised in conflict and post-conflict societies, with notions of masculinity and violence becoming interlinked. This has a large impact on how women are viewed and the rise of gender-based violence. A study on the watching of pornography in 2016 showed that a large proportion (as young as 13) watched BDSM, Rape, Revenge, and Gangbang porn. The viewing and enjoyment of violence against women
seemed to have been normalised to the extent that it was enjoyable and pleasurable [bakamoono.lk, 2016]. Studies looking at how women were attacked in the online space for speaking up against Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism found that aspersions cast on a woman’s sexuality were used to dismiss their arguments and discourage them from participating. Women who did attempt to engage online or participated in protests were often subject to dismissal and even sexually explicit threats. ‘The ease with which sexually explicit threats are made online to women who either engage in a dialogue or about women who have participated in protest was deeply disturbing’, the study noted, going on to say, ‘the violence and depravity of the language used was often startling, as was how links, images and posts went viral’ [Ibrahim & Daniels, 2016].

The need to apply a gender perspective to all efforts to prevent conflict and build peace is increasingly recognised. Taking a ‘gender perspective’ is often assumed to mean highlighting the roles, needs and rights of women and girls – vital to addressing persistent gender inequalities in access to power, influence, resources, and security. However, truly taking a ‘gender perspective’ also requires critical examination of the roles and experiences of men and boys in conflict prevention and peacebuilding [Wright, 2014]. Researchers report men who feel stress over their perceived failure to live up to gender norms are at heightened risk of committing violent acts [Bozkurta, Tartanoglugb, &Dawesc, 2015], and they are especially vulnerable to this in conflict and post-conflict societies. Much of the narrative around war is centered around rigid gender roles that see men as the protectors of society in their role as soldiers and fighters. Men as combatants are closely tied to their masculine identity as well as other identities, such as religious, national, tribal, etc. Men may feel that if they are not fighting, they are betraying those identities. The social construction, whether formed by leaders, society, or other factors, has created a strong link between being a combatant and being a man, which is often enduring and difficult to break down [CPRF, 2013]
Power relations are also taught through gender inequality which increases the potential for conflict (Plan International, 2015), and a very clear example is the smear campaign launched against participants in a candlelight vigil in 2013 that pitted them against Sinhala-Buddhist extremist groups. Participants were extensively photographed and, in the days that followed the women in particular were attacked on social media. Personal photos and details were stolen from their Facebook accounts and used to launch a smear campaign. Captions under the pictures contained abuse and threats with strong sexual overtones that called into question the moral standing of the women participants (Ibrahim & Daniels, 2016).

This and other instances we catalogued, seemed to underscore that women’s bodies and rights often became one of the main sites on which ethno-religious battles are fought. Especially in the period of post-war Sri Lanka saw extensive attacks on the island’s minority Muslim population. Research found that the clothing of women was seen as a signifier of a community’s identity, her reproductive ability was priced for perpetuating next generation of a community and nation, and she was honoured for her role as a mother and nurturer. The role of women was therefore being conceptualised as upholding or shaping ethno-religious identity. If women stepped out of these narrowly defined categories, either in act or word, they were subject to vicious attack and threats in the online space (Ibrahim & Daniels, 2016). The notion of attempts by ‘outside forces’ to interfere in changing the ethno-religious composition of Sri Lanka’s population is another theme that is evident in the media discourse on SRHR. A newspaper article alleges that drugs to induce abortion were being brought into the country from Pakistan (Muslim country) with the intention of inducing Sinhala women to limit their procreative roles. The focus of the article appears intended to further contribute to the ethno-religious nationalist sentiment that was being articulated with fervor in the country during this period (Women and Media Collective, 2016).

It was also seen in the period of 2012 to 2014, how the lack of CSE in Sri Lanka was exploited and helped use the existing portrayal of women
as child-bearers to further fuel fire and hate. Multiple posts online were found that expressed concern that the Muslim population was growing due to high reproductive rates, while the Muslim community was accused of simultaneously conspiring to restrict the fertility of Sinhalese women. In the latter case, rumours proliferated that a well-known Muslim-owned clothing store was selling women’s undergarments tainted with chemicals that caused infertility. In addition, toffees distributed at these places of business were especially designed to attack Sinhalese DNA and trigger miscarriages (Ibrahim & Daniels, 2016).

It is heavily argued that that the discourse of ethno-religious nationalism in Sri Lanka, by its very nature, is unable to move towards recognising and endorsing women’s sexuality and women’s sexual rights through policy interventions, in mainstream national Sinhala newspapers and in social media (Women and Media Collective, 2016). A comprehensive response should seek to address the causes of legitimate grievances through peaceful means whilst also working to change factors – including gender identities, roles, and power relations – which might cause that sense of grievance to turn violent (Wright, 2014).

**Relationship Education, SRHR and Equality**

“Education has for its object the formation of character” says Herbert Spence, and it is evident that within the current context this goal has been forgotten. The existing education system as we discussed before has had concerns raised over the effectiveness of teaching, archaic nature of the syllabus material, over focus on competition and examinations and inability to respond to a changing world (Business Times, 2011). Globally, a question is being raised in the role of education to form character and focus on more intangible development goals of children.

In an Op-Ed for the Los Angeles Time, His Holiness the Dalia Lama points out, ‘At present our educational systems are oriented mainly toward material values and training one’s understanding. But reality teaches us that we do not come to reason through understanding alone. We should
place greater emphasis on inner values’. He goes on to articulate the role that formal education must play in inculcating these values in a systematic approach that ensures all children gain an understanding of the vital and salient aspects of what must be taught and that this is not left to chance [Dalai Lama, 2013]. What His Holiness talks about in terms of the goals needed to be achieved via education has also been used as the argument for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) – referred to in some instances as sex and relationship education. Barnardo’s chief executive, Javed Khan, has said: ‘Compulsory, age-appropriate sex and relationship education for all children will mean they grow up understanding consent and healthy relationships and respecting themselves and each other’ [Rohrs, 2017] which will have clear long-term impacts on gender equality and SRHR.

This conversation of a fundamental shift needed has also reach Sri Lanka. Activist Jayanthi pointed out, ‘Maths and literacy and the sciences are important subjects, but we also need to teach our children how to be human beings. Emotions like empathy and compassion, alongside skills such as peaceful conflict resolution and self-regulation: life skills’ [Ryder, 2017]. The Grassrooted Trust has spent the last three years focusing their long-term advocacy on the need for age-appropriate relationship education in schools, arguing ‘that education based on science and fact, in an open and supportive environment, will help our young people to be more sensible in their dealing with each other and the world around them. Give them the opportunity we never had. Give them Relationship Education’ [Billimoria, 2016]. In 2016, The then Chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority Natasha Balendran was reported to have discussed possibilities of introducing sex and relationship education into school curriculum from Grade One [Jayamanne, 2016].

As was discussed previously, robust SRHR and access to comprehensive sexuality education can and is a fundamental need in conflict and post-conflict societies. Not only is it a human right but it is also a core aspect of sustainable peace-building and reconciliation. Currently
studies show that the reproductive health policies currently in place lack a rights-based approach, and need to be strengthened through the development of inclusive SRH policies that ensure availability of services without discrimination on the grounds of sex, gender, age, religion, race, marital status, sexual orientation, and other factors. There is a need to explore the concept of ‘family’ and ‘eligible couple/family’ which despite being defined to include ‘a family with a pregnant or cohabiting woman irrespective of marital status and age and single women (widow, divorced, separated)’ (FHB 2014, 11) most often remains confined to women living or associated with marriage/heterosexual relationships (Women and Media Collective, 2016). These policies and the overall approach is clearly symptomatic of the SRHR approach at the level of education which reinforces a more patriarchal and gender stereotyped approach to the area. For example, segments such as female-headed households (for example, post 2004 Tsunami and post-war widows), gender diverse groups, single women, sex workers and other groups such as adolescents do not fall within the traditional societal definition of a ‘family’ and hence tend to be discouraged from accessing reproductive health related services. Data gathering systems on SRHR for evidence-based policy and programming that include such marginalised groups are also required to collect, organise and analyse SRH related data. Such systems need to target areas where there are considerable data gaps related to gender-based violence, SRH of men, sexual dysfunctions and SRH of those beyond the reproductive age group (Women and Media Collective, 2016).

Several studies conducted by the UNICEF have shown that knowledge of sexuality is even lower among teenagers and young adults. The largest issue is the lack of open conversation regarding these topics. Young people do not feel comfortable approaching adults to discuss any concerns they might have. Many Sri Lankan parents never bring up the topic of sex and reproduction with their children, as speaking of it is considered taboo (Vidanapathirana, Wijegoonewardene, Senanayake, & Fernando, 2017). The Country Profile on Universal Access to Sexual & Reproductive
Health further outlined these issues noting that despite a syllabus of sex education existing, ‘Teachers are reluctant to discuss these topics in the classroom due to cultural inhibitions’ and ‘attempts to introduce concepts on this subject [reproductive health] have been resisted by certain school principals, teachers, administrators and parents. Objections are on grounds of cultural sensitivity. They contend that the magnitude of the problem is not that high and in any case discussion of issues on sexuality may exacerbate promiscuous behavior…’

Unfortunately, this is very much not the case as evidence shows, issues resulting from a lack of comprehensive sex and relationship education has surfaced. A key example of this is the cyber exploitation, violence, harassment, and bullying seen among [but not limited to] children and adolescents. ‘Young people need to be taught about the dangers of meeting people online, the risks of dating apps like Tinder, the consequences of ‘sexting’ and the difficult, and potentially, life-ruining situations it can put you in’ argue researchers, and the rampant consumption of hardcore pornography has influenced young men to believe it to be the norm due to their own exposure to it at progressively younger ages (Rohrs, 2017). Sri Lanka has not been shielded from this – a study showed that children access pornography as young as 13, and we have been ranked in several years as the number one country for googling the word ‘sex’ [bakamoono.lk, 2016]. The Grassrooted Trust notes, ‘the recent fallout over the sharing of naked pictures by young people; the misplaced and betrayed trust, the blackmail, the extortion, the violence, the lack of negotiation skills i.e. learning to say no, the utter dependence on often transient teenage relationships i.e. I will love you forever, the shame, the emotional trauma, the cold-blooded exploitation by young school boy perpetrators – these are all indicative of our broken system’ (Billimoria, 2016). As activists emphasised to the Sri Lankan education minster in a statement following issues of rampant false facts on HIV in the media, ‘Let’s also stop pretending that classroom approaches to HIV prevention will exacerbate promiscuity. Our children and young people have access to uninterrupted
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streams of information online (the internet), and from their peers. We need to balance out this noise with a sensible, scientific approach in the classroom’. It is also important to understand that sex and relationship education means that the focus will be on aspects of respect and consent, as a means of protecting yourself and your body. They would be gaining understanding of sex, relationships and everything that goes along with both. Sexuality education provides opportunities to explore one’s own values and attitudes and to build decision-making, communication and risk reduction skills about many aspects of sexuality (UNESCO 2009). Sexuality here does not refer only to sex and sexual behaviour, but rather a wide gamut of issues relating to the body, relationships, puberty and development, gender identity and sexual health amongst others that are of concern to adolescents and young people.

Sex and relationship education also discuss the concept of gender – through which gender roles, stereotypes, concept of masculinity etc. can also be dismantled and rebuilt. This is key to long-term sustainable peace-building in conflict and post-conflict societies. Looking at gender and masculinity in every facet of conflict prevention and resolution will assist in developing the societal change previously mentioned. For instance, couples involved in decision-making in their household or community, rather than only the men or only the women, allows for better financial management and also decrease sexual based violence. The economic implications are enormous. To re-conceptualise men’s role in economic terms may open more positive and healthier opportunities within their family by engaging with their spouses on financial matters or devoting more time to their children. Finally, discussing the male role in society and specifically in conflict settings helps break down traditional identities of masculinity (CPRF, 2013).

Patriarchal masculinities have been shown by researchers to be a key driver of conflict, and addressing this through sex and relationship education is crucial in peacebuilding. It not only impacts men but women
as well – forcing them into rigid roles that cause the potential for conflict when broken. For example, between 2012 and 2014 in Sri Lanka we saw the BBS organisation fostering ideas that denied any recognition of a woman’s right to her own body, but rather advocated for [Sinhala] women to produce more children to build the [Sinhala] nation. They see the role of a woman as a mother who should be a fertile woman within the institution of marriage, and do not discuss women’s right to education, employment, or their status in the family [Women and Media Collective, 2016]. In the case of men, we could argue that as a result in some cases political and military leaders may be responsible for promoting violent notions of masculinity, as above that then drive conflict. Working to change structures and institutions that perpetuate patriarchal masculinities is likely to be key. This step is crucial – both to achieve sustainability of impacts and to address the structural factors which can reinforce patriarchal gender norms: gender norms relate not only to ideas and beliefs but also, for example, to education systems, laws around employment, marriage child custody, gendered marketing and media messages, and military, religious and cultural institutions [Wright, 2014].

The studies done within Sri Lanka on masculinity showed alarming statistics that point to deeply concerning attitudes of men regarding women, gender-based violence and health. One study showed that

- 79.1% of men in Sri Lanka think that some women ask to be raped by the way they dress and behave.
- 85.9% of men never talk to their children about sex and sex education.
- One in five ever-partnered men reported committing sexual violence against their intimate partner in their lifetime.
- Only 4 percent of men and women had ever been tested for HIV [De Mel, Pieris, & Gomez, 2013].
These rigid notions of gender also have a huge impact on gender minorities and those who fall outside of the traditional notions of gender. Studies show that in Sri Lanka ideas about the way men and women should look and act are deeply entrenched. Those who challenge gender norms—including many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people—may face a range of abuses from state officials and private individuals that compromise the quality and safety of their daily lives, and their ability to access services that are central to their realizing basic human rights. This in turn can have serious social and health implications, including inhibiting access to HIV prevention and treatment: Sri Lankan health agencies have identified transgender people and MSM as key populations in addressing the HIV epidemic. (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

The evidence showing the positive effects of implementing an effective CSE curriculum in schools is rampant. Studies done has found that CSE and relationship education not only changed attitudes and reduced violence against women, intimate partner violence, harmful notions of masculinity and rigid gender roles it also was shown to be an important part of quality education. (Holden, Bell, & Schauerhammer, 2015) All this builds a healthy and functioning society that is less likely to fall into conflict. Programming that supports young girls and boys to develop to their full potential while also working to transform unequal gendered power relations, challenge ‘traditional’ gender socialisation processes, and improve the social position of girls and women offers a key opportunity to break this unjust, inter-generational cycle of gender discrimination, and to advance children’s rights and equality for girls [Plan International, 2015].

It has been found that CSE leads to improved sexual and reproductive health, resulting in the reduction of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), HIV, and unintended pregnancy. It not only promotes gender equality and equitable social norms, but has a positive impact on safer sexual behaviours, delaying sexual debut and increasing condom use
Peacebuilding and Reconciliation in the context of Education in the Post-conflict Sri Lanka (UNESCO, 2015). CSE has been recognised as a key component of a holistic education which then in turn builds sustainable peace as sexual health, gender equality and human rights are interrelated (UNESCO, 2016). Recent evidence indicates that such education not only plays an important role in preventing negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes, but also offers a platform to discuss gender issues and human rights, and promote respectful, non-violent relationships (UN Trust Fund and Instituto Promundo, 2012; UNFPA, 2007).

**Conclusion**

SRHR movement in Sri Lanka has been pushing forward with civil society, educators, activists, and other stakeholders rising to meet the need in various ways. Those working in the space of SRHR acknowledge that the existing curriculum for health and physical education is an excellent starting point that simply lacks adequately trained teachers and effective implementation.

In 2014, St. Thomas’s College Mount Lavinia implemented the ‘Sound Mind, Sound Body’ curriculum from Kindergarten upwards. It is described by the accompanying website as follows, ‘The Sound Mind Sound Body Programme is an accurate, comprehensive, age appropriate approach to relationship education. The programme includes discussions around communication, personal hygiene, gender, relationships, bullying and violence, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections. Each week lessons, work books and other supporting resources will be loaded on to this site so that parents can help their children more fully participate in the programme. Parents will also be able to follow the objectives of each lesson and communicate directly with the teachers of the programme’. The website provides a look at the lessons offered as well as numerous accompanying resources that were used to develop the curriculum. A similar program we are told is currently being rolled out at Methodist College as well.

The then Chairperson of the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA), Dr. Natasha Balendra, was actively trying to introduce age appropriate
reproductive health education into the school curriculum in 2016, willingly speaking openly about it to media (Jayamanne, 2016). In June 2016, The Grassrooted Trust responded to the need for relationship education by launching a trilingual website called ‘bakamoono.lk’ that offered a wide range of information, input, and resources on a wide range of SRHR related topics. The information is regularly revised and updated, and the website also offers running commentary and creative content on pertinent and topical issues relating to SRHR.

In 2017, the Think Equal initiative plans to implement programmes in Sri Lanka [as one of the pilot countries]. Think Equal is a new UN Human Rights Office endorsed start-up initiative, led by Leslee Udwin, offering a curriculum to be introduced into schools around the world that will start teaching children a fundamental value system based on empathy, compassion, and equality. The initiative aims to provide children with a more holistic education that will begin in the first year of a child’s entry into the schooling system and end in the last. Its most profound contribution to education will likely be the Early Years Curriculum (the “EYC”). Targeted at children in the 3 to 7 years age category, the EYC will focus on values of fairness, equal status, confidence to express one’s voice, courtesy, empathy, and consideration. As the student grows older, the subject will evolve in its complexity, introducing concepts of human rights, democracy and electoral systems and fact-based studies to familiarise students with humankind’s past mistakes. Learning will be about fortifying and empowering children to utilise their potential fully as they become responsible, moral, empathetic, and equal adults (Wickramasinghe, 2016). The programmes planned to be implemented in all of Sri Lanka’s 19,000 preschools and over 10,000 national schools (Sunday Times, 2017).

Also available for use is the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education published by UNESCO. Conceived to help education, health and other relevant authorities develop and implement sexuality education programmes and materials, the publication recognises the need to adapt
sexuality education to the diverse of contexts in which it is taught. But the Guidance also reaffirms the central relationship between sexuality education and human rights, notably gender equality, in all contexts. The Technical Guidance clarifies the definition and content of comprehensive sexuality education, outlining key concepts, topics and learning objectives which should guide the development of locally-adapted curricula for learners aged 5 – 18+. These include:

- Relationships;
- Values, rights, culture, and sexuality;
- Understanding gender;
- Violence and staying safe;
- Skills for health and well-being;
- The human body and development;
- Sexuality and sexual behaviour; and
- Sexual and reproductive health.

The Technical Guidance also includes recommendations for all stages of CSE programme development, from planning and delivery, to monitoring, evaluation and scale up.

It is vital that any implementation offers a stand-alone curriculum as to present opportunities for specialised teacher training pathways, and the use of non-formal teaching methodologies that aim to build learners’ critical thinking skills. The pedagogical approaches promoted through sexuality education – such as learner-centered methodologies, development of skills and values, group learning and peer engagement – are increasingly being recognised as transformative approaches that impact on learning and education more widely. As a standalone subject, it is also significantly easier to monitor, which is crucial in terms of evaluating the effectiveness of programming, and revising curricula where it is not delivering the desired learning outcomes [UNESCO, 2015]
It is evident and undeniable that gender norms and regressive attitudes are not simply a matter of attitudes and beliefs held by individuals, but are produced and perpetuated by political, economic, cultural, and social structures, including education systems (Wright, 2014). Challenging and reforming this structure is likely to be a long-term endeavour, and a crucial one. As UNSECO states in its rational for CSE, “We have a choice to make: leave children to find their own way through the clouds of partial information, misinformation, and outright exploitation that they will find from media, the Internet, peers and the unscrupulous, or instead face up to the challenge of providing clear, well informed, and scientifically-grounded sexuality education based in the universal values of respect and human rights”.

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Emerging Mission Challenges and Opportunities for Sri Lanka: Transitional Justice and Mission as a Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation?

Roy Fernando

Sri Lanka is a country in transition. The country is taking forward a number of reform processes, including setting up of the institutional framework and policies required for its peacebuilding and transitional justice (TJ) process. The fundamental message that emerges from this political commitment is reconciliation which is debated as one of the paradigms to deal with the ‘unjust past’ to build ‘human rights culture’ in a society which is emerging from conflict to reconstruct a peaceful society. This article looks at the use of ‘reconciliation’ as missionary paradigm in the post-war reconstruction of Sri Lanka. It then turns to how reconciliation and healing are being understood today, and how they might provide both a model of, and a model for, mission. This paper argues that reconciliation can function as an integrating metaphor (or model) for Christian mission. The mission of God is for transformed relationships in all dimensions – between humans and God, between humans, and between humans and creation. Reconciliation is all about setting things right. Used metaphorically in the theology of mission it beautifully covers and draws together a wide range of ideas which, it is argued, are simply facets of the one mission of God for reconciliation. It argues mission as reconciliation should continually seek to correspond to the specifics of a given context. In short, God’s mission as praxis for healing and reconciliation means serving, healing, and reconciling a wounded and broken humanity of Sri Lanka.

Introduction

“We do not want to return the evil that perpetrators committed to the nation. We want to demonstrate
humaneness towards them, so that they in turn may restore their own humanity”

Sri Lanka is in the process of transition and change. Periods of transition are often times of uncertainty and conflict. One of the challenges in such times is to reframe our basic assumptions in order to manage conflict and the process of reconciliation. The foundation for this transition was laid in 2015 when the Government of Sri Lanka [GoSL] co-sponsored Resolution 30/1 at the United Nations Human Rights Council titled ‘Promoting Reconciliation, Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka’. The resolution contains commitment on the part of the GoSL to establish a Commission for Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Non-Recurrence, an Office of Missing Persons for Truth Seeking, a Judicial Mechanism with Special Council, and an Office for Reparations. The country has reached a point in its development and is torn between the dilemma of dealing with the unhealed past or journeying beyond towards path of deeper understanding, interdependence and unity. The fundamental message that emerges from this political commitment to ‘Transitional Justice’ (hereinafter referred to as TJ) mechanism, ‘Justice’ or ‘Justice in time of

1 Citied in [Ntsebeza, 2000a]. In her testimony about her son Christopher Piet’s killing, Cynthia Ngewu extended her forgiveness to the police officer who was responsible for her son’s death by these words, therefore, the perpetrator will become human.
2 The resolution contains commitment “to undertake a comprehensive approach to dealing with the past, incorporating the full range of judicial and non-judicial measures”. See Promoting reconciliation, accountability and human rights in Sri Lanka, A/HRC/RES/30/1, 14 October 2015, para. 4.
4 TJ, generally, occurs in the context of a political transition, most commonly characterised by regime change from oppressive rule to democratic rule or by a transition from violence and armed conflict to peace, stability and rule of law. In making these transitions, societies must often confront the painful legacy of the past in order to achieve a holistic sense of justice for all citizens, to establish civic trust, to reconcile people and communities, and to prevent future abuses. The major approaches to TJ include the following: (i) Truth-telling initiatives or other efforts to determine the exact nature of abuses, (ii) Reconciliation that seek rehabilitative and symbolic reparations with the focus on reforming public institutions, (iii) Prosecutions intended to address human rights abuses committed during the period of conflict. Application of TJ necessarily demands an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach. The effort of promoting TJ strategies, as a means to achieve peace, therefore, requires role of religion and religious leaders as one of the contributing institutions to social integration and harmony. Justice, truth, reconciliation and peace form a part of the basic teaching of Christianity.
transition’, is reconciliation\(^5\) which is debated as one of the paradigms to deal with the ‘unjust past’ to build ‘human rights culture’ in societies which are emerging from conflict to reconstruct a peaceful society.

Accordingly, reconciliation seeks to restore the ‘broken’, destructive relationship into a ‘state of right’\(^6\) and constructive relationships through the “acknowledgement of the suffering of victims, the confession and transformation of perpetrators, public apologies, acts off forgiveness, public memorials, the healing of a wide array of wounds, and overcoming of hatred and enmity” (Philpott, 2010, p. 102). “True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth” (Totu, 1999, p. 20). Reconciliation as truth and justice, therefore, is central to any transformative TJ process.

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\(^5\) The notion of reconciliation, which is spoken of as ‘religious-redemptive-narrative’ [Wilson, 2001] in TJ discourse, is debated extensively in the academic literature on ‘social reconstruction’ (Stover & Weinstein, 2004, pp. 13-15) and TJ mechanism (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Assefa, 2005; Kriesberg, 2004; Bar-On, 2007; Kritz, 2009). Due to its ambiguity and context specificity, the term can take a different contours and controversies depending on the nature of the conflict and transition. It is difficult to form a standard definition of the term of reconciliation in TJ context “especially because the word has been recklessly used many times to attempt the justification of blatant impunity” (Mendez, 2001; 15(1), p.28). While some have argued that reconciliation should be considered as a process “through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future” (Bloomfield, David; Barnes, Teresa; Huyse, Luc, 2003), others have pointed out that “reconciliation processes will not necessarily lead to forgiveness, as this is considered to be a power held only by those victimised and cannot be claimed by others” (Martha, 1998, p. 17). Daniel Philpott argues that “in its core ideas, reconciliation differs from the paradigm from which most human rights activists and international lawyers look at the past, one that may be called the liberal human rights paradigm.” He notes that the “Liberal human rights voices are skeptical” that “goals of religious reconciliation like healing, overcoming enmity and forgiveness are achievable or even morally appropriate in politics, for they violate individual autonomy, disrespect liberalism’s plurality of values and undermine central democratic virtues of argument and deliberation” (See. Philpott, Fall 2007; 61,1, pp. 94-96). The skepticim is further amplified by the way the notion of reconciliation is appropriated and applied in the context of TJ in Sri Lanka. Drawing on the studies of Bell and Lindy & McGovern (Bell, 2009; Lundy & McGovern, 2008), emphasising the characteristics of TJ that is applied in Sri Lanka as ‘war by other means’ (Gowing, 2016, pp. 30-31), Gowing argues “the government’s use of the term ‘reconciliation’ lacks substance and ‘in particular may frequently serve to conceal a wide array of positions over its precise content’ (Gowing, 2016, p. 9) - content though debated, includes victims ‘right for truth’, ‘right for justice’, ‘right for reparation’, accountability and social reconstruction. He further notes that “the emergence of these can be primarily understood in terms of their political usefulness to the regime - both in obviating calls for accountability via their ‘performative function’ and in disguising the ongoing consolidation of authority over the Tamil population” (Gowing, 2016, pp. 30-31). While Gowing’s observation may be true of the way in which the concept of reconciliation has been used by the government “what is missing from these debates about transitional justice in Sri Lanka is the reconceptualisation of reconciliation as a continuous process of [re]-building relationships” (Puvath Reader, 2016). One that is based on Gospel principles and the significant role the Christian churches could play.

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\(^6\) It is stated that “in the liberal human rights paradigm, right relationship means that citizens come to respect and recognize one another’s human rights and deliberative capacities” (Philpot, Fall 2007; 61,1, p. 97).
The Christian church is an institution in which there is a strong rhetoric of reconciliation and an awareness that Christians are messengers of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18-20).\(^7\) If Christians are in any sense a reconciled people, reconciled with God and his people, they must become what they already are: a reconciled and reconciling community. To promote healing and humanizing initiatives of reconciliation is truly the \textit{martyrion} of the Church to the Gospel of reconciliation brought by Jesus Christ. The Church needs to recognise that Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation and peace has been entrusted to her (2 Cor 5:18-19).\(^8\) The Church can participate in the mediatory role of Christ in solving the conflicts. Thus, in this hour when Sri Lanka is on the path of social re-construction and rehabilitation by its commitment to TJ, reconciliation becomes an urgent paradigm of missionary evangelisation in Sri Lanka. It is apt to explore therefore the emerging mission challenges and opportunities in the context of Sri Lanka’s commitment to TJ; what role ought the Christians Churches and its leaders should play in this \textit{kairos} - a moment of truth - period in regard to reconciliation in Sri Lanka? How can the Church contribute to the restoration and restructuration of the Sri Lankan society through reconciliation?

1. The Context of Reconciliation

The tragic realities of the recent years in Sri Lanka in the context of worldwide increasing tendencies towards radical nationalism, escalating racial, ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as an amplification of various forms of intolerance and exclusion, are all pointing to an immediate need for reconciliation. More specifically, the post-war religious, political, social, and economic situation of Sri Lanka has created a specific social unrest manifested in a tense relationship between different political groups, and in slow process of reciprocal ‘engagement’ between different religious

\(^7\) “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”.

\(^8\) Ibid.
groups and ethnicity. In such a circumstance the church need to consider more seriously and immediately their task and possibilities for a real contribution to a ministry of reconciliation.

More specifically, in the post-conflict context of Sri Lanka, what cries out for reconciliation include both “open conflict” and “quieter” conditions of persistent injustice, division, and separation. To address the issues, primarily, four interrelated dimensions of historical social conflicts must be engaged:

- **The past and its trauma (Right to Know):** There is a need for reconstruction and development of the Sri Lankan society after a long period of totalitarian domination, authoritarianism and ethnic conflict and there is a need to know what truly happened in the last phase of conflict.

- **How that past is named and remembered (Right to Justice):** A growing awareness is developing about the damage and brokenness that resulted from the process of subjugation and the need for healing and restoration from these stories of brokenness, pain and humiliation.

- **How the present is described and engaged (Right to Reparation):** There is a need on the side of minorities communities to ‘re-imagine’ themselves in the context of economic and social globalisation and the development of ethnicity that had been under pressure many decades.

- **In addition, how the future is imagined (the Guarantee of non-occurrence).** There is the challenge of peaceful unity in the context of a growing global cultural context, in the midst of a diversity of cultures that have to live and work together.

Reconciliation, in this scenario, is not forgetting the past. Yet naming and remembering the past well is difficult. In response to God’s love and
justice, however, Christians are called to fearlessly seek and name the truth of what has happened, guided by repentance and forgiveness. This must involve seeking shared truth across divided lines. If militarism enters as an option of providing some with personal security while neglecting human security for all, conflicts rise to devastating levels.

Given the urgency of reconciliation on the one hand, and its importance for Christian theology and faith on the other hand, one would think that the churches would have reflected on the social implications of reconciliation for their concrete historical circumstances. This is, however, not the case. It is with sadness that we note the failure of the various Christian communities, in many different instances, to enact reconciliation in their context. Not only have they failed to act as agents of peace as they watched helplessly from a distance the tragedies taking place around them, but times they have found themselves participating activity in the conflict, even intensifying it. This reminds of Baum’s remark that even though “the Christian gospel summons the church to exercise the ministry of reconciliation in situations defined by strife and hostility... churches have rarely exercised the ministry of reconciliation; even where present, such ministry is still "a pioneering activity " [Gregory Baum and Harold Wells, 1997, pp. 184-192].

This state of affairs constrains us to reflect seriously on the inability of Christian communities to incarnate the message of reconciliation as well as to look for adequate resources that will enable them in their ministry of reconciliation. The observation as noted bring us to the understanding that the absence of reflection on the social meaning of reconciliation – “deeply disturbing absence of sustained attempts to relate the core beliefs about reconciliation to the shape of churches’ social responsibility” [Volf, The Social Meaning of Reconciliation, 16 (1999), p. 6]. Numerous ideologies of escape steer Christians away from reconciliation and must be named and rejected by the church. These include:
- **Dualistic theologies**: which are silent about social problems; preach the sufficiency of individual salvation without social transformation, or the sufficiency of social involvement without personal conversion in Christ. Further theologies of liberation have provided a paradigm for the conduct of Christian mission during the conflict. However, the theologies of liberation are not enough to meet the challenges of the post-conflict situation. Another paradigm of mission that must go hand in hand with liberation is reconciliation. Liberation and reconciliation share more similarities than discontinuities. However, the differences between the two are that the rhetoric of liberation, in its interest in regaining human agency for the poor, tends to emphasise the human role in liberation while the rhetoric of reconciliation places emphasis on God’s role in bringing about reconciliation. The liberation paradigm promotes the dream of a future which creates new agency among the poor and oppressed; while the reconciliation paradigm sees coming to terms with a conflicted and traumatic past as the key to that future;

- **Ethnocentrism and nationalism** which promote the fallacy of any ethnic, cultural or national group’s self-sufficiency, and promote loyalty to and the self-interest of one’s group as an end in itself;

- **A spirit of individualism** seen in disunity, competitiveness and splits which infect many denominations, churches, Christian institutions, and ministries. This disunity and egoism blinds our ability to discern the country’s need for reconciliation and seriously harms the church’s ministry;

- An underlying message of **cheap grace that encourages shallow resolutions**, a superficial discipleship powerless to engage social pain, and reconciliation without repentance. A biblical theology of the cross and suffering is needed to renew the church’s thinking and life.

Against these ideologies of escape, the church must formulate theological alternatives which encourage authentic reconciliation. Christians cannot
be neutral in a time of social crisis. The church must learn to speak the truth to powers. Further, the capacity to be a prophetic church is being seriously eroded by three more stances.

- A quietist stance ignores social evil, is silent when people suffer persecution, and preaches the sufficiency of individual salvation without social transformation, losing public social witness.

- An assimilationist stance misuses the Bible to support the status quo of social or political exclusion, or weds Christian interests with particular governing authorities, losing all prophetic distance.

- In addition, the church often shares in the sin of comfortable neutrality, the complacency of those who find themselves on the side of social privilege and fail to work vigorously to transform the status quo. This is at least true of those who tend to preside over the levers of theological power and influence. Thus, the theology of the church is often in support of the status quo, or asks very few critical questions, losing all prophetic voice and domesticating the gospel.

2. The Hope of Reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation is more central to the Bible than is immediately obvious. The word “reconciliation” does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures, although there are powerful stories of reconciliation, such as that of Esau and Jacob, and of Joseph and his brothers. From Genesis to Revelation, Scripture witnesses to God’s total mission “to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven” (Col 1:15-20). The fullness of reconciliation is friendship with God in Jesus Christ, witnessed to in Christ’s two-fold command to love God and neighbour (Matt 22:37-40). Christ has prepared the way for reconciliation by abolishing the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, making of the two one new humanity, establishing peace (Eph 2:11-18). Reconciliation is a sign of God’s presence in the world, of the kingdom of God drawing near. What must be understood in the Scriptures is the fact that:
Reconciliation begins in the heart of God: God, who knows us intimately and by name, begins his reconciling work by reaching out to individuals. The Scriptures are full of examples. In the Old Testament, we read the accounts of Noah and Abraham, Moses and Jonah, Ruth and Naomi, and so many more, and identify with them because they are real flesh and blood people, not some undifferentiated humanity in the mass. Repeatedly in these narratives of God’s people of faith, God takes the initiative. Similarly, the Gospels record many personal encounters with Jesus, as he reaches out to people in grace and challenge. Acts and the Epistles likewise name names. These are identified individuals, diverse in circumstances, character and story, but sharing a common encounter with the living God.

Reconciliation across ethnic and religious divides are evident in the scriptures: Jesus reached over ethnic barriers to minister to a Samaritan woman, a Syro-Phoenician woman, a Roman centurion, and many others. In this, he was simply living out the Abrahamic covenant that the very reason for the establishing of God’s people was to bless the nations (Gen. 12:2-3). Peter’s prejudices had to be overturned in his encounter with Cornelius, and the Council of Jerusalem had to make an important decision as to God’s love for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews (Acts 10–11). It was hard to live that out – and today it equally is difficult for those of different ethnic backgrounds, languages and cultures, to break down barriers and be truly united.

Reconciliation across social divides: The Apostle James is outraged that the churches to whom he writes should even consider favoritism on the grounds of wealth and outward appearance (James 2:1- 4), sure indicators of difference in social standing. One of Jesus’ most condemnatory parables is in the story of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19- 31). Paul encourages Philemon to welcome his runaway but now converted slave, Onesimus, as a brother in
Christ; and Paul himself, as a Roman citizen and Jew of high birth, can write warmly of Onesimus as his “son ... who is my heart ... a dear brother” [Philemon 10,12,16]. It is hard to believe the proud pre-conversion Saul could have put privilege and pedigree behind him in this way. But, by contrast, he can say that in Christ there is neither slave nor free [Gal.3:28].

Reconciliation across genders and within families: Church history has sadly often masked quite how radical Jesus’ treatment of women was, in a context where women had few rights if any and were at the mercy of every male whim. Jesus by contrast encourages Mary of Bethany to be taught by him on terms equal to any male disciple, instead of being limited to a domestic and subservient role. He shows the unfairness of punishing a woman taken in adultery while the man or men involved go free. He heals a woman with a gynecological problem, and refuses to endorse the practice of regarding her as unclean or that he has somehow been contaminated by her touch. He commends the faith of the woman who anoints him: she believes his insistence that he must be crucified, even though the disciples do not because their preferred agenda cannot absorb such an outcome. He entrusts to Mary that first astonishing revelation of himself following his resurrection, and sends her to announce it.

Perhaps it is St. Paul; one finds the language of reconciliation. It is he, who best captures the spirit of the Christian faith on the matter of reconciliation⁹. In his marvelous theological statement of Christian belief

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⁹ From a purely linguistic and statistical standpoint, ‘reconciliation’ terminology is rare in the NT and it is used almost entirely in the Pauline letters. The translated word ‘reconciliation’ comes from the Greek verbs καταλλάσσω and ἀποκαταλλάσσω (‘to reconcile’); and with the noun καταλλαγή (‘reconciliation’). These appear 12 times, exclusively in Paul. καταλλάσσω is derived from another word ἀλλάσσω meaning ‘to change’, ‘to renew’, ‘to be or to become other’, ‘to exchange one condition for another,’ indeed ‘to become another in the inner, deepest sense, to change our self or identity’. It was used by the Greek writers with two major senses referring to the exchanging of things, and eliminating enmity and creating friendship. What is commonly acknowledged by the biblical scholars is the fact that the word group καταλλάσσω and καταλλαγή was used in the Hellenistic literature in the interpersonal relationships, especially in the politico-military context for peace-treatise, but not in a religious context for referring to the reconciliation between God and people [Porter, 1994, p. 13].
and present moral imperatives for social engagement, he states to the church in Corinth:

There are only two verbs used outside Paul: διαλλάσσω (‘become reconciled’), in Matthew 5:24 which refers to reconciliation with one’s brother before an alter offering is made, and συναλλάσσω (‘reconcile’, in Acts 7:26), which refers to solving a dispute between two brothers. Traditional exegetical scholarship has treated Paul’s presentation of reconciliation as referring to reconciliation between people and God, and has primarily focused its attention on key καταλλάσσω/καταλλαγή passages in the Pauline corpus. This concentration on the individualistic, theological and religious aspects of reconciliation diverted scholars from discussing the social and political implications of the concept for the complex realities of everyday life. One of the main reasons invoked for this restriction was the claim that Paul was not concerned with the social, political realities of the world, but rather with solely preaching the gospel of salvation. This traditional interpretation does not give sufficient consideration to Paul’s overall Jewish framework of reference; it ignores the social dimension of beliefs and the close link between religion and politics in the ancient Mediterranean World; and it works with a reductionist understanding of Paul’s theology and does not fully appreciate the complex nature of Pauline theologising. Further, the claim goes, Paul expected the imminent end of the world and so he did not care much about what happened with the wider world. Far from an escapist mentality, Paul’s creational theology, i.e. his understanding of God’s relation to, and sovereignty over creation, over nations and over history, and the way this reality was irreversibly affected by God’s intervention in Christ, gave him a positive view of the world and of the place and role of the larger structures of society. Furthermore, the way he formulated his gospel shows that Paul was well acquainted with the religious, cultural, social, and political matrix of the Greco-Roman world with which he thoroughly engaged. There is indeed a social meaning of reconciliation in Paul, since his theology, like much of the theological discourse of the NT, was meant not simply to “offer salvation” in a narrow spiritual sense, but also to affect moral dispositions, to shape particular communities, to determine specific behaviour and a particular way of being in and for the world. Paul’s Jewish matrix provided him with a worldview which shaped fundamentally his thought and praxis. Particularly, his strong belief in a creational monotheism gave him an understanding of the world as God’s good creation in which God is present and active and in which God’s people should be actively engaged towards its eschatological transformation. Equally significant is that regarding the relation to the outside world Paul encourages a positive engagement. While Christians should maintain their different and specific identity, this should not cause them to separate or be indifferent towards the outside world, but rather to be engaged in its renewal and transformation. We have seen that the gospel Paul preached had a significant political dimension, which cannot be ignored in a proper interpretation of Paul. The cult of the emperor illustrated well this point. We have also noted that Paul’s missionary endeavours brought him up against the imperial ideology which he challenged. However, we concluded that Paul’s relation to the wider political world cannot be properly described as simply confrontational. Paul’s political terms are a clear and strong support for the suggestion that his message was not restricted to the “spiritual” dimension but addresses the entire domain of human existence. And that this larger religious, social, and political context provides an adequate framework of reference for our understanding of Paul’s social meaning of reconciliation. Paul has a more complex understanding of the concept of ‘reconciliation’ and uses a rich symbolism to describe reconciliation as a multifaceted reality that encompasses reconciliation with God and reconciliation between human beings, forming together an inseparable reality. The social meaning of reconciliation in Paul is to be understood within Paul’s comprehensive vision of reconciliation: a vision grounded in the story of Christ and Paul’s own reconciliation experience, substantiated by the Isaianic vision of cosmic peace, and given form and expression in a rich symbolism of reconciliation. In Paul’s perception the practices of reconciliation which are anchored in, and presuppose, the story of Christ as both the ground and paradigm for a reconciling way of life. Thus, by placing these practices within the larger horizon of God’s reconciliation of the world in Christ, Paul provides an unshakable foundation for both the possibility and the actuality of social reconciliation. So then, Paul’s ultimate vision of the reconciliation of all things in Christ gives assurance and hope, and an irresistible impetus to the believer’s ministry of reconciliation in all its forms and manifestations.
All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry (\textit{diakonia}) of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message (\textit{logos}) of reconciliation to us (2 Cor 5:18-19).

This statement of St. Paul in Corinth shows that Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation and peace has been entrusted to the Church and that Christians are a reconciled and reconciling community. God is clearly not the object of reconciliation but its subject. Even where the human ministry of reconciliation is concerned, the act of reconciliation is no less God’s. Paul uses the language of reconciliation differently from its standard use in contemporaneous political discourse on TJ in Sri Lanka.

First, for Paul it is God who initiates the process of reconciliation, whereas in TJ tradition perpetrators must take the initiative in ending strife, and that the offended party should show goodwill by accepting the offer of reconciliation [Marshall, 1978]^{10}. From a theological point of view, only God can bring about reconciliation. God is the primary subject of the verb initiating the vision of reconciliation and that Christ is God’s initial sent agent of reconciliation. Reconciliation is God’s gift to the world, and therefore engaging the world’s deep brokenness does not begin with us and our action, but with God and God’s gift of new creation. It is based in the very \textit{missio Dei} of God in the world. The ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to us, as ambassadors for Christ’s sake. God who reconciled the world to himself through Christ, who died and was raised, and who called [cf. \textit{ἐκλήθητε} in 1 Cor 1:10] and empowered believers to continue the reconciling mission of God. Believers are called into \textit{participatio Christi} and the missional plan of God – being taken up into the story and plan of God with the world and his people in this world. Our work for reconciliation,

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10 Marshall argues that Paul was the first person to use reconciliation in this way [Marshall, 1978]. The centrality of the victims and the importance of ‘grassroots’ or ‘from below’ approach to justice seeking in TJ mechanism is also been discussed in different transitional contexts (Arriaza & Roht-Arriaza, 2010; Isaacs, 2009; Quinn, 2009). However, reconciliation in TJ mechanism has been initiated under the slogan of ‘victor’s peace’ (Gowing, 2016, p. 5). This is very much the case of Sri Lanka.
then, is in cooperation with God’s grace. Believers are empowered by God in and through Christ to become like ambassadors with a mission for reconciling the world with God.

Secondly, in order for the Corinthian Church to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-20); this reconciliation could only happen if there were drastic changes made to the social and political life of the Church in Corinth. God begins the reconciling process with the healing of the victim. Christians believe that God looks out in a special way for the victims and the marginalised generally; this is evidenced in the classical prophets’ concern for the orphan and the widow, the prisoner and the stranger; it is mirrored in Jesus’ own ministry (cf. Luke 4:18-19). This does not ignore or exonerate the wrongdoer. Rather, it recognises that the wrongdoer sometimes does not repent. The healing of the victim is thus not totally dependent upon the wrongdoers’ remorse and apology. The healing of the victim can even create the social space in which the wrongdoer can come to repent. It is why the journey of reconciliation requires the discipline of lament. We say disciple because lament involves the ability to see and truthfully name the brokenness of the world. There is no reconciliation without memory since there can be no hope for a peace tomorrow which does not seriously engage the pain of the past. The two temptations of seeking ‘reconciliation without memory’ and of pursuing justice without communion’ are both failures to remember well—the first, by forgetting the wounds of history, the second, by forgetting the promise of resurrection and the call to forgiveness. A Christian vision of reconciliation provides resources to avoid both these temptations.

Thirdly, the standard paradigm of reconciliation completely sidestepped the issue of justice, because it was often the weaker party in the conflict that was required to send embassies seeking reconciliation and the

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11 Paul identifies three defects in the Corinthian church that led to its estrangement from God: (1) adherence to anti-Gospel social model: the church organised itself according to the patronage system, the dominant socio-economic social model of the time, which Paul believes is antithetical to the gospel; (2) Factionalism: disunity the Church; and (3) Disobedience: it distanced itself from Paul (Burn, 2010, pp. 77–82, 86–89, 99–104).
vanquished party that was required to make reparation [Bash, 1997, pp. 48-51]. Instead, Paul says that justice is established in the pursuit of reconciliation: there is a double exchange, friendship for enmity (reconciliation), and justice for sin (2 Cor 5: 18–21). Reconciliation makes of both victim and wrongdoer a “new creation” (2 Cor 5: 17). That is to say, the healing that takes place is not a return to the status quo ante, but takes all the parties involved to a new place, often a place that they could not have imagined. This is why the church is need for reconciliation, but not as merely another NGO or society. Reconciliation is not the ministry of experts; it is God’s gift to ‘anyone in Christ.’

Fourth, the release from suffering is patterned on the passion, death and resurrection of Christ. Christians believe that suffering in and of itself is destructive. It can only become redemptive for individuals and for societies if it is patterned onto a narrative larger than it is. This narrative is that of the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, the central part of the larger narrative of God’s reconciliation of the world to God’s own self. Only by being patterned onto the narrative of Christ’s suffering and death can we hope to come to know the power of the resurrection (cf. Phil 3:10-11).

Fifth and finally, reconciliation will only be complete when God has reconciled the whole universe in Christ [Eph 1:10], when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). This accounts for why we typically experience every effort at reconciliation we undertake as ultimately incomplete. We are reminded that reconciliation is not only a goal or end; it is also a process in which we are called to cooperate.

Paul brings justice and reconciliation together again in Romans 5:1-11. In Romans 5: 9-10. Paul uses justification (to make just, or to make

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12 The Greek word for reconciliation is based on the word for exchange, and it came to mean the exchange of enmity for friendship [Merkel, 2004, p. 261]. In 2 Cor 5:21 Paul therefore says that another exchange also takes place: sin is exchanged for “righteousness” or “justice” (the word is the same in Greek).

13 Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.
righteous] (v.9) and reconciliation [to turn enemies into friends] (v. 10) in parallel. There is a further linking of justice and reconciliation, for the peace that results from reconciliation, the state of being no longer enemies of God (v. 10), is brought about by justification (v.1). In Romans 5: 1-11, justification and reconciliation come together as a gift from God; that is, justice will be established in the process of reconciliation. However, it was the party who was living according to the dominant socio-economic who was being called on to repent. This suggests that ‘victims’ of violence have the right to call on the ‘violators’ to be reconciled to them through repentance. Drawing these observations together, we can see that God acts in the world as justice-maker. Human beings appropriate this justice by pursuing reconciliation, the negotiation of repentance and forgiveness, where the nature of the required repentance only becomes clear in the process of seeking reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation seeks to elevate the victim and the wrongdoer to a new place: freedom for the victim and repentance for the perpetrator.

3. Transitional Justice and Reconciliation in the Scriptures
3.1 Reconciliation as a Prophetic Call for Justice and Truth-Telling

The theme of justice pervades the book of First Isaiah (Ch. 1-39), proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah to two small nations of the people of Judah who faced constant threat of conquest and dispersion by larger nations. Isaiah’s calls for justice envisions a time when the community is both internally reconciled, and reconciled with those perpetrating these injustices. The prophet Isaiah and his call for justice serves as an exemplary model of how a community might initiate reconciliation even when the more powerful refuses to recognise the injustices it has committed (Is 1:16). Isaiah’s methodology offers both a critique of the system which perpetuates oppression, as well as a vision of a hopeful future, an annunciation of a renewed society(Is 10:20). The methodology presumes the dual nature of reconciliatory efforts: it highlights injustices of the past...

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14 Justification is “a demonstration of God’s rectifying power to accomplish justice on earth” (See. Marshall C., 2001, p.50):
while looking towards a vision of a future reconciled community, enabling the articulation of both what happened and what is needed by the affected community. The denunciation-annunciation dialectic has great potential for TJ. The first step in reconciliation would be denunciation of the legacies of conflict and war and telling the truth about its consequences. This process gives victims the right to information and reassures the nation’s commitment to justice. Then, annunciation can follow. This might be done in a way that Isaiah envisioned for his own people, by welcoming the exiles i.e. welcoming the victims, refugees, diaspora, internally displaced. Isaiah envisioned the return of the people when he says “a remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, the mighty God” (Is 10:12) and that from this remnant “a shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse … the spirit shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding (Is 11:1-2). When the exiles have retuned and the era of destruction has ceased, leaders must ensure non-recurrence of injustices, reparative measures fulfilled by the perpetrator and restoration of victims’ dignity.

3.2 Reconciliation as Courage to hear

Truth-recovery and truth-telling is crucial to TJ but such an exercise demands much from both victim and perpetrator: the courage to relate the truth and the courage to hear. Mark’s Gospel account of the hemorrhage women 5:24-32 shows the courage needed to come out with one’s truth and needs. The woman is unnamed and an outcast – much like victims of conflict, unable to speak for fear of being cast out from society or being blamed for their abuse. No one advocates for the woman and, driven by desperation, she surreptitiously appeals to Jesus by touching the hem of his clothes [Thurston, 1998, p. 19]. By doing so, she even violates religious law to claim healing without permission. By this courageous action she becomes the author of her own healing and salvation. Utter desperation breeds radical faith and transformation of action. The women in the Gospel knew that she has to break out of her silence and isolation if she wants to be healed. She had to do it for herself. The will and courage of the woman to seek healing elicited Jesus’ will and courage to hear. “Who touched me?” (Mk. 5:30-31) asked Jesus. After being denied in her victimisation
for so long, this is indeed divine intervention for justice. Jesus showed that, there is an area, where God has a radical and inflexible partiality: the area of justice. After listening to the woman, Jesus was never the same person that he was. It reminded him that the woman deserves justice, no less, in the form of healing. The Church must listen to and take seriously the victims of violence, providing them with services to heal, and becoming aware of violence in society. By listening to one, others will be empowered to speak up against violence and abuse. The Church is challenged to be more like Jesus, willing to be interrupted and smeared in the course of taking care of the marginalised; willing to be challenged and changed by the stories of these victims.

3.3 Reconciliation as Healing of Memories

Reconciliation must also heal memories. Unhealed memories are a smoldering fire ever threatening to destroy any initiatives towards reconciliation; persons who advocate communalism trap people with ghosts of previous injustices, whether real, exaggerated, or imagined. Reconciliation offers healing. Jesus’ vision was to heal human society, fragmented and broken. He healed physical and psychological illnesses, claiming this healing action as a sign of his messianic mission. When Jesus sent his disciples on mission to preach the good news of the kingdom of God, he gave them the power to heal (Lk 9:1-2). In other words, Jesus in and through His healing ministry wished to establish a more just humanity.

In dealing with painful memories, two types of conclusions are not helpful:

[a] an assumption that come from an inflated sense of guilt among the perpetrators of violence for their complicit in atrocities, or those types of attitudes that reflect an attitude of dominance;

[b] assumptions that arise from wounded memories of the victims i.e. those who suffer markedly from post-conflict complexes and live on grievances.
These assumptions are often less likely to correspond to the exact reality. They need to be sifted and re-interpreted. We need the healing of collective memories.

3.4 Reconciliation: Retributive vs Restorative Justice

Questions of who can forgive whom and under what conditions (if any) have been raised by Sri Lanka’s truth and reconciliation process. Reconciliation is a process involving both repentance and forgiveness. It has to be restorative. Restorative has some key characteristics.

First, it places victims at the center of justice, aiming to heal the harm done to then while restraining them from unlimited person revenge. Rather than tough measures against offenders, victims need more transparency in the legal process, channels for their voices to be heard, assistance in healing the wounds of crime, and, where applicable, compensation.

Second, it is community-based instead of state-based. Restorative justice recovers this communal dimension by including all affected parties: victims, offender, families, the community, police and judicial representatives.

Third, it involves the offender by placing responsibility for an offence in his/her hands. In a traditional judicial process, the offender faces judges, jury, and witness as passive recipient of punishment. In a community-based judicial setting the offender face the pain of victims and families more directly. This can prompt offenders to recognise the harm done and prepare them to become actively involved in finding ways to repair it.

Fourth, and particularly important for us, restorative justice is biblical. The biblical justice tradition seeks restoration of just relationships, a shalom justice, rather than simple punishment.
Retributive justice practices have to be toned with restorative practices. On the one hand, justice that is retributive without reconciliation is little short of tyranny. True justice seeks to correct the problem. Nonetheless, where possible, Christians must advocate for restorative justice over punitive justice in a panel system. Re-establishing a sense of justice through the restoration of the humanity and the dignity of both the offended and the offender brings harmony and peace to society. This rarely happens through punishment alone, although punishment might contribute to it. God always forgive sins when, through love and repentance, people open themselves to forgiving grace.

3.5 Reconciliation as Mediation

Any attempt at a lasting reconciliation must address all needs of the victim. Resolutions imposed by victors may not meet needs of victims, meaning an unstable peace. The church has a role to mediate; justice and justice-making are central to the Christian faith. The practice of justice and righteousness brings Shalom. Shalom means to have enough, to be complete, to be sound. It also means safety, prosperity and peace from war. Shalom intertwines the individual person’s total wellness with that of the family and nation. Shalom, encompassing the total wellness of human beings and of creation, is the fruit of practicing justice and of righteousness (Isa. 32:17; 59:8). As the altar of Gideon proclaimed, Yahweh-Shalom, “The Lord is Peace” (Judges 6:24). He is the source of peace. The challenge to Christians is to do the will of God, to be peacemakers or mediators by practicing justice and righteousness (Micah 6:8).

For Christians, justice must find its own concreteness in the actual experience of violence of the victims. Silence surrendering violence and crimes must be broken. The very act of putting into word one’s frustration and pain and anger is liberation. This lamentation becomes a light in the path of those who mediates towards justice-making. In the Bible, for example the Psalms of Lament (55) becomes an imaginative space in which one’s experience of violence can be located. Psalms 55 speaks of
what is unknown and un-experienced of the listener. It asks its readers to depart from the closely managed world of public (and private) survival, to move into the open, frightening, healing world of speech. The psalm invites victims to hear themselves too, to raise their voices. It is a text of resistance against silence. To lament and break silence is to allow justice to break in. To give up lament would be to identify God with fear and violence, and, to deny justice. To lament is to pose a trusting Challenge to a just God. This trust in God makes it possible to name the act of violence, hold the perpetrators accountable, hope to end violence and bring justice. Lamentation is a step towards claiming the power within each human being to end violence.

Lamentation also challenges listeners. The Church is often reluctant to name crimes or abuse and even denies its existence, so victims remain silent. We need a culture of rights that is respectful of individuals and groups; a culture of peace between diverse communities that is sustained by consensus not force; a sense of community that gives persons a feeling of individuality, participation and agency in the human community. Many wounds of division between communities and people can be traced to the rejection of legitimate diversity. We are aware that unity can at times be an agenda of uniformity and function as an ideology of religion and culture. The Church committed to the mission of reconciliation must resist such ideology and instead embrace reconciled diversity. Reflection on reconciled diversity may help us to know God’s ways of embracing all peoples in their rich variety. This is precisely what has been lacking in our response to collective violence in this country.

Mediation is essential to any meaningful reconciliation. To be truly remedial and reconciliatory, restorative justice must operate beyond the statutory adversarial procedure of a court or even an ethical legal perspective of the legislature: it must be comprehensive enough to embrace the multiple levels; hence the critical importance of mediation and genuine pluralism of the Church.
Conclusion: Placing Reconciliation at the Heart of Christian Mission

The alienation of divided peoples and the suffering of the afflicted cries out from our world’s brokenness, both open destructive conflicts and the more hidden. These conditions call the church to listen to the pain of the people and to God, to lament the divisions, to repent and forgive where necessary, and to be transformed as agents of healing, Christian witness, and positive change. Contexts of conflict and change create ideal opportunities for Christ’s followers to rediscover, embody and express there conciling mission of God.

Thus, the church in Sri Lanka, in the context of TJ and peacebuilding must invite the faithful to face the following emerging mission challenges:

i. To embrace biblically holistic reconciliation at the heart of the gospel and Christian life and mission in today’s Sri Lanka, and as integral to evangelism and justice. This involves intentionally embedding this vision into the mission of our churches and institutions, and understanding reconciliation as a long and costly process, requiring hope from God.

ii. To cross the difficult divisions, barriers, and borders to talk face to face with and listen to those victims of violence. Christian should be at the forefront of these boundary-crossing efforts.

iii. To preach and teach radical discipleship with Christ and costly peacemaking as normative of Christian faith. This involves presenting discipleship as a journey with God and his people, which, over time, transforms our desires and opens up radical new ways of loving God, neighbor, and enemies.

iv. To refuse neutrality or silence in relationship to destructive conditions and to engage church, civic, and political leaders as advocates without compromising our biblical convictions. It is a powerful form
of protection for national voices of truth and justice when the church outside knows of them and speaks against threats to them.

v. To intentionally shape Christians for them to be able to live the alternative and work toward shalom. Christian communities will need to learn the practices of naming the conflicts and root causes for what they are; to serve, listen, and bear witness across divisions and barriers; to comfort and bind up the afflicted; to seek and celebrate signs of hope through both small and large gestures and measures; to support peacemaking efforts in the larger community; and to bring former strangers and alienated peoples into common worship, friendship, and mission.

vi. To joyfully and publicly proclaim in our Christian preaching and life God’s victory and God’s future of reconciling “all things” in Christ. Amidst profound brokenness and pain, we must learn what it means to be bearers of hope, who faithfully bear witness to what is not seen, to the God who raised Jesus from the dead, defeating sin, evil, and the dark powers of this world for the sake of the Gospel of peace.

**Bibliography**


It is sad to see that today’s Sri Lanka, children are left without any free time to grow up carefree, noisy, joyful and with full of energy. One must note the fact that the most important person in the school is the child. The most important activity of the student is being seated in the classroom with the teacher learning. However, these two aspects of learning and pedagogy are violated most of the time in our schools. Sri Lanka is one of the few countries that implemented successfully Free (State) Education. The post-Kannangara period politics infiltrated the education sector and education system implemented in the country deteriorated after ’77. Today most of the schools have unashamedly outsourced their duty of knowledge transmission to expensive tuition. The goal of private institutions is profit. The chief goal of education is the formation of a good citizen. We can restore the lost childhood to children only by implementing Free Education. This demands a radical reform of the education system. A radical reform has four principles: i. every electorate or every divisional secretariat to have three categories of schools plus vocational training, ii. teachers to be of international standards, iii. syllabus that encourages good citizenship, iv. an allocation of 6% of national income for education. This paper argues that the two parallel systems of education are an abuse of our children and that one of the two systems must give way for holistic growth of a child.

“Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, Where knowledge (education!) is free, Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.”

[R. Tagore. Gitanjali 35]
When I look back nostalgically at my childhood and compare it with the tight school and tuition schedules of present day children who do not have any free time left during the whole day to be carefree, noisy, joyful children full of energy, I feel very sad. This sadness, I felt for the tragic loss of childhood joys of modern children, has been gnawing and irritating me for a long time because it is a highly complex problem involving every aspect of our social, economic and political life with no easy solution in sight. (My childhood came to an end when I took the O/L examination in December 1959.) Mulling over this problem and other related problems of education in our country, finally, I have decided to share it with you and discuss the possibility of restoring the joys of childhood to our children.

To begin with let us clarify some facts about our schools. Who is the central most important person in the school, without whom there is no school? The easy and simple answer is it is the child-student. Absolutely everything and everybody in the school must be for her/him; nothing, nobody not the principal or the teacher not even the Election-Commissioner or the President of the country can take precedence and put the child-student in the second place and put her/him out of the school/classroom whenever they feel like it. Everybody in the school and those serving in the Education Department and the Ministry are at the service of the students, ready always to cater to the students’ needs and only students’ needs and nobody else’s.

What is the most important activity of the student in the school? Is it the morning assembly where the principal delivers a harangue for hours on end keeping the children standing in the sun? No. It is a sheer waste of children’s energy and valuable time. Is it preparing for some games, sports, fine arts or cultural activity? No. All of them are extra-curricular activities and school hours are definitely not to be used for them. The most important activity of the student in the school is, being seated in the classroom with the teacher and learning. The most important, I’d almost say the most sacred, place in the school is the classroom where there is a teacher teaching and students learning. This is the core activity and
the very essence of the school. This is the gauge by which we measure the efficiency of a school. If during the school hours there are teachers teaching in all the classrooms then the school is 100% efficient. If only half the classrooms have teachers the efficiency of the school is not 50%. It will be much less for half of the school would be making so much noise that the other half cannot concentrate on their studies. The success of the Principal is gauged primarily by his ability to get all the teachers to be in their classrooms teaching. A famous disciplinarian, a veteran principal, once told me that the secret of a successful school is to get the teachers to come to school on time and be ready to receive the children when they file in to their classrooms after the brief morning assembly. Then the school begins to hum like a well oiled, finely tuned engine.

These two criteria, (a) the centrality of the student in the school and (b) the essential activity of functioning classrooms from the beginning till the end of the school time table, are violated most of the time in our schools. Pulling the student out of the classroom, for whatever reason, is a crime against the student and a violation of her/his right to education. These are the root causes of what is wrong with our schools.

Throw a backward glance at the history of our educational system. Sri Lanka is one of the few countries that implemented successfully Free (State) Education where the fundamental human right to education was recognised, respected and applied. In that regard it was the miracle of Asia and the envy of the world. In 1938 the education system in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) was made free following the granting of universal franchise in 1931. The late Hon. Dr C.W.W. Kannangara took the initiative in establishing free education when he was the Minister of Education. Under this initiative the government established Madhya Vidyalayas (Central Colleges) that were scattered around the island to provide education to all. We, as a country, are justifiably proud of it while in India, ‘The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act’ or ‘Right to Education Act’ [RTE] has come into effect only from April 1, 2010.
In 1942 a special committee was appointed to study the education system and among the suggestions that followed, the following still play an important role:

- Make available to all children a good education free of charge, so that education ceases to be a commodity purchasable only by the urban affluent.

- Make national languages the media of instruction in place of English so that opportunities for higher education, lucrative employment open only to a small number of the urban affluent, would become available to others as well.

- Rationalise the school system so that educational provision is adequate, efficient and economical.

- Ensure that every child is provided with instruction in the religion of her/his parents.

- Protect teachers from exploitation by managers of schools.

- Make adequate provision for adult education.

After independence, the number of schools and the literacy rate of the people substantially increased. According to the Ministry of Statistics, today there are approximately 9,830 public schools serving close to 4,030,000 students, all around the island.

The post-Kannangara period was unfavorable to education in our country. Politics infiltrated the education sector and thus began its downturn. The powers that were had no concern for free education and deliberately neglected it. Out of fear of the people they could not abolish it. So the funds allocated for education steadily diminished in every budget. And in 1977, alas! The United National Party initiated the unraveling of this great system of education by introducing the open market economy;
privatisation and deregulation of public enterprises. Poor Dr Kannangara must have hung his head in shame and despair, where ever he was, and shed tears. The neo-liberal, anti-poor, globalisation (merchandising and commercialising everything under the sun, like education, health care and even water!) which invaded Sri Lanka in 1977 with its robber barons, never gave up trying to undermine our system free education and restrict education only to the rich. Today most of the schools, especially many of the so-called ‘popular schools’ have unashamedly outsourced their bounden duty of knowledge transmission to private and expensive tuition classes.

Currently there are 66 Private Schools [registered before 1960 and not since then] of these, 33 non-fee-levying Assisted Private Schools [also known as semi-government schools] and 33 fee levying autonomous Private Schools but all of them are a mere 0.67% of the total number of schools. International Schools in Sri Lanka are mainly for the expatriate community but anyone with the ability and willingness to pay high tuition fees can join these schools. Starting in the late 1980s these schools have no regulation or control by the Ministry of Education as they come under the Board of Investment (BOI). Discipline is not the strong point in these schools. But the worst side effect of the corroding influence of post ’77 educational trend is the mushrooming of tuition classes.

Due to the highly competitive nature of exams such as Year 5, GCE O/L and GCE A/L and due to the lamentable lack of proper teaching in the regular schools, parents seek additional help at home and at group/mass classes to improve their children’s grades and performance. In recent years tuition has become a very lucrative and a well organised commercial enterprise. These tuition classes are the enemy No. 1 of our children. They have robbed our children of their childhood. The whole morning and up to 1.30 PM our children are sitting in school on a wooden plank and the whole afternoon and sometimes till late in to the night they are again sitting on another wooden plank in a congested tuition ‘maduwa’. At the end of the
day children simply do not have the energy or the time to run, laugh, shout and play which relaxed behaviour is the privilege and joy of childhood. The general lack of such relaxed behavior, I suspect, will stunt the all round physical, mental and emotional growth of our children.

Tuition is a private enterprise wholly dedicated to making profits. Therefore the eminent goals we hope for from education cannot be expected from tuition. According to the Kannangara report (1943) which was formulated after a broad public consultation, the practice of giving children extra teaching for various subjects with the help of private teachers was firmly discouraged. It mentions that whatever result that was expected from tuition will finally be denied in the long term.

The chief goal of true education is the formation of a good citizen. The chief goal of government institutions and non-government institutions is the good of society or the common good. The chief goal of private institutions is profit. Therefore the main goal of true education can be achieved only by government and non-government institutions. That is why it is not proper to hand over education to private institutions or tuition mudalalis. But in these ‘dog eat dog’ rivalries and competitions of the present system the children have lost one of the main goals of education: character formation. The selfishness of children has developed to such an extent that they do not even share their notebooks. No wonder we have medical officers who rape and kill their patients, lawyers who bend and sell the law for dirty lucre, civil servants at the highest level who prostitute their integrity to the highest bidder like any street walker and let’s not talk about the law makers of our country who are ‘royal’ robbers of the national coffers.

It has been revealed that not only the child’s virtue and intelligence but even his health deteriorates due to tuition. 71.8% of the children who sat for the year five scholarship examinations in 2015 got zero marks for the essay to be written with only three sentences. 10% - 15% of school going
children is suffering from diabetes. The reality of the children’s overall situation is worse. It is dangerous like a hidden cancer.

How can we restore the lost childhood of today’s children is the most crucial but difficult problem to solve. The solution, I feel, is in the thorough implementation of the Kannangara vision of Free Education. If the leaders of our country had sincerely and with concern continuously implemented Free Education that Dr Kannangara initiated, giving it adequate finances, by now these benefits would be accrued to the credit of our country according to Mr T.M. Premawardana, the secretary of the Sri Lanka Professional Educationists’ Association, whose ideas I have liberally taken from his writings.

- Every school would have equally trustworthy and respected principals and teachers.
- Teachers would be helping students to acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to be good citizens for whom ‘humaneness’ is top priority.
- All teachers would be bi-linguists. They would be able to teach either in Sinhala and English or Tamil and English.
- All students who have passed grade 9 would be able to speak, write and read in two languages making our society bi-lingual.
- All small children would have their primary education in a school within walking distance and they would be independent schools under a principal and a staff of teachers.
- Every district secretarial division would have either one or more fully equipped Central Colleges not second to the Royal or St Thomas’ College as some were those days even better.
- There would be no competition to admit children to schools.
• The education system would have developed not only academically but also in technical studies and in professional training to reach university levels.

• The children of poor families who pass the scholarship examination would receive an attractive bursary of board, lodging and all the facilities up to university level. Today they receive a paltry amount, less than twenty rupees for a day.

• An eleven year old child would have only 45 minutes of home work for a day. A child between 17-18 years would not have more than two hours of home work for a day.

• There would not be a business of tuition classes. The creators of free education have shown the ill effects of tuition and extra teaching by private tutors have been categorically rejected by them.

• It would not be possible for selfishness and frustration to develop so much in so many children.

• It would not have been possible for non communicable diseases like diabetes, depression and obesity to increase as in the present.

• Parents would not have to pay anything more than the SDS membership fee and the facilities fees.

• Children of farmers’ and workers’ families would be educated and reach a high quality of life like in the developed countries.

• Up country Tamils would be socially equals with other communities of the country.

• Our mothers would not ever go to Middle East to work as domestic maids. Sri Lankans would go abroad to work only as professionals.
Like in the old times our society would treat teachers and doctors as gods. There would be no need for teachers to become tuition masters and doctors to practice privately.

When our country became independent we were second in education only to Japan and our country would have been truly the knowledge hub of South Asia.

Race, caste and religious divisions would have vanished.

By now Sri Lanka would have won a few Noble prizes. A number of Asian countries who were behind us at the time of independence have won Noble prizes.

Therefore the immediate responsibility of both the President and the PM is to implement a radical reform of education to stop the deterioration of free education and turn it around. That was the change the people aspired to on the 8th January. People gave them a mandate to bring about that change. They are bound by their election manifesto “Compassionate Government; A Stable Country” and this is what it says about education:

“Viewed relative to the speed of economic development and energy consumption Sri Lanka is on par with developed countries with respect to education. This is the result of our culture. Since free education was consolidated and expanded during the post independence era people’s interest in education is exemplary. All parents are committed to getting a sound education for their children. Unfortunately free education is being curtailed, causing the withering away of people’s aspirations. Though a quantitative growth is witnessed in physical resources, a qualitative degeneration in education is visible. Rural schools are being closed due to lack of facilities. This is a serious situation. I propose to launch a systematic programme to change this situation.”
Notions of justice and equality have disappeared from the education system due to the unpleasant competition engendered by the rapid intensification of educational anomalies. The education problem has worsened to the level of a national issue. Hence I propose that a radical education reform suitable to the country should be implemented.”

Three years have passed but still they do not have any plan or programme to reform education.

According to Mr T.M. Premawardana a radical reform of education is like a vehicle with four wheels. It can go forward only if all the four wheels turn. The four wheels are the following four primary principles:

A. Every electorate or every divisional secretariat to have three categories of schools plus a vocational training school. (The three categories of schools are mentioned in the election manifesto.)

B. Teaching to be a respected profession of international standards.

C. A school syllabus that encourages good citizenship.

D. An allocation of 6% of national income for free education.

It is because of the Kannangara reconstitution of education which contained the core of these four principles in it that we inherited free education. Abandoning these principles or distorting them was the cause of education’s deterioration.

The foundation of national education is the school education. Parallel to the deterioration of school education the university education too deteriorated. If you want to revitalise and renovate higher education including university education then top priority must be given to restore school education to its original quality.
As an example of the first principle let us turn to the heart of free education, the Central School (CS). CSs were erected one in every old electoral district. They were developed as a challenge to the Royal and St Thomas’ Colleges. Therefore there was no island wide competition among children to enter the Royal-Visaka schools. The foundation for vocational training was given in the CS itself. Later by introducing national schools and allowing the CSs to deteriorate the competition for popular schools became intense.

For an example of the second principle let us recall that CWW Kannangara himself sat at the panel that interviewed candidates for appointment as teachers. They were that careful in choosing good and able teachers of quality. The teacher training colleges that were begun those days were so good and they formed teachers of such high quality that the profession of teaching was much respected. Why did the government servants, those days, go on transfer to distant parts of the island with their families? That is because like in the towns also in the rural areas there were good teachers of high quality. Today those who are not suitable for any other profession are recruited as teachers. It is not the fault of the teachers but of the principle.

To clarify the third principle let us take the story of ‘The bear and the two friends’ which was in the school texts those days. If you ask anybody who went to school those days what s/he learned from that story they would answer thus; do not trust a friend who abandons you when you are in trouble. Those days the school syllabi encouraged good citizenship. What do the children learn from that story today? Have a look at the way the same story ends in the current school texts. “The friend on the tree climbed down. He told the friend on the ground; both of us escaped the bear because we acted with presence of mind. And the friends happily continued their journey.” (Translated) The new title of this story is also revealing, “Excellent ruse” (Translated). Even the song by S. Mahinda Thero – Monawada muththe mokada karanne... - the noble meaning of which is ‘Duty’ has been so diluted as to lose all its meaning; it is pathetic. If these
syllabi are continued to be used we cannot expect a civilized country to live here in future.

The syllabi are not only the standard school texts but also subject explanation, teachers’ handbooks, educational helps, model examination papers, school examinations and many other matters. Examine carefully all these things. It is not good citizenship that is encouraged but rather economic profit, personal benefit, in short, selfishness. The concern of a fox towards the chickens has been substituted in the place of the human concern of men towards other men. Therefore people brought up in the current education system look at human beings as things to be used as one likes for one’s benefit.

To understand the fourth principle let us recall the attitude of CWW Kannangara and other progressive politicians of those days towards the allocation of funds for education. They ascertained that money allocated for education is an investment for the future. Therefore educational allocations should not be compared with funds allocated for other subjects.

The two parallel systems of education, school and tuition are a torture and an abuse of our children. They are certainly ruining their childhood. One of the two systems must give way. Only Free Education as envisaged by Kannangara, strictly implemented, can save our children from redundant and unnecessary tuition and parents have peace of mind knowing children are safely at home rather than running from one tuition class to another in unknown alleys and back streets of the town. It is Free Education that will safeguard social justice and social equality. We tried to get free education as a fundamental right in to the draft of the new constitution, but the politicians have adulterated it with loopholes for the private sector to creep in. Therefore the struggle for the fundamental right of free education at all three levels, primary, secondary and tertiary remains. And we need the independent commission that will protect education from the politician; we need the national education policies that will streamline
the implementation of the Kannangara vision; we need men and women in the education sector who love this country and its children; we need a government that sees the problem clearly, understands its gravity and has the courage to implement the solution, come what may.
Loyola Campus, an initiative of the Sri Lanka Jesuits under the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, took a bold step in recognizing the need to serve the war-affected youth of the country. This intervention, in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service (South Asia) and Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JCEHM), which is now known as Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL), was a crucial role in creating a culture of peace and healing that is inclusive and just.

The initiative hopes to create new learning spaces where the generation of young men and women who are committed to understanding socio-economic, religious, and cultural horizons and who are able to think beyond the limits of their own time can participate. Loyola Campus, the Jesuit form generation of young women and men, who burn with the zeal for a reconciled humanity.

First, it was in 2014 during the Apostolic Discernment that the Jesuit Provincial of Sri Lanka took a bold step in recognizing the need to serve the war-affected youth of the country. This intervention, in 2014, directed the Province to work in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service - South Asia and Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JCEHM), which is now known as Jesuit Worldwide Learning (JWL). The collaboration between Loyola Campus and Jesuit Universities and Jesuit High Schools in Sri Lanka aims to form a generation of young men and women who are actively aware of the conditions of the time, who are able to think beyond the limits of their own time, and who are committed to understanding socio-economic, religious, and cultural horizons.

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