

SRI LANKA

Mr.Hetti Pathirage Nimal Lakshman

**Deputy Director of Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development,
Education and Cultural Affairs.**

General:

Population:	19 million - children 5.5
Religious:	Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity
Races:	Sinhalese (73%), Tamils (18%), Muslims (7%), Burghers,
Official Languages:	Sinhala, Tamil (English - Link Language)
Currency	Rupees and Cents
UN Exchange Rate:	US \$ 1 = Rs.95
Fiscal Year:	Calendar Year
Per capita GNP (US \$):	652 (1994), 709 (1995), 850 (2002)
Population;	1994 - 17 (Million) 1997 - 18 (Million) 2002 - 19 [(Million), Estimated]
Land:	Land area: 65,610sq. k.m. Land use: Cultivated: 25,589 k.m. 39% Of Which irrigated: 5249sq. k.m. 08% Forest and woodland: 16318sq. k.m. 25% Other Land: 23703sq. k.m. 36% Total: 65,610sq. k.m. 100%

Health (5.7 of total expenditure)

Infant Mortality rate:	26
Life expectancy at Birth:	70.7 Years Male, 75.4 Years Female
Access to safe water (Pipe borne water)	
Urban	- 48.5%
Rural	- 51.1%
Estates	- 65.6%
Overall	- 17.7%
Access to sanitation Overall	- 50%
Population per Doctor:	14.6 (Doctors per 100000 population)
Population per hospital:	280 (beds per 100000 population)

Education (32% of total Expenditure)

Net School enrolment

Primary: 84.4%

Secondary: 82%

Combined Primary and Secondary enrolment: 88%

Adult literacy rate

Male - 93%

Female - 84%

Total - 91%

Schools: 11000

Universities: 14

2.0 Expansion of the field of Special Education in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the first educational programme for the impaired children was started in 1912, starting with the school for the Deaf and Blind at Ratmalana

The second school for the Deaf and the Blind was established at Kaithady in Jaffna and these were followed by the establishment of several other schools such as the one for the Deaf at Ragama and another for the Deaf and the Blind at Mahawewa in 1935.

The idea of these schools were cherished and educational opportunities for the impaired children were provided later.

The Department of Social Services has taken necessary actions to give charitable support to these institution.

In 1939, the government gave the opportunity to these schools to join the government and get courtesy from the state. However, in 1948 the government stopped all assistance to schools those which did not join to the government.

It was decided in 1944 that the salaries of 75% of the teachers in assisted schools are to be paid by the government.

In addition, under the recommendation of the National Education Commission the free education was started for the children between the ages of 06 - 14yrs.

In, 1968, the Integrated Special Education Programme was established by the Ministry of Education and 17 Blind students were located to be placed in government schools. Introduction and expansion of integrated education programmes in regular schools all over in the country is

a long lasting achievement in education in Sri Lanka. It is important to note that before the establishment of integrated programmes, eight (8) teachers were trained at Vidyodaya University with an incentive allowance of 10% of the basic salary

The Teachers College continued the teacher training programme from 1970 so as to meet teacher requirements for children with visual impairment.

In 1971 the teacher training programme for the Hearing Impaired children was started at the same Teachers' College.

In 1984, a Post Graduate Diploma course for the education of children with intellectual disabilities was started and the above course was inaugurated in 1985 at the Teachers' College, Maharagama as a teacher training programme.

The Special Education unit at the Ministry of Education was started in 1971. 17 years later, in 1988 National Institute of Education took steps to establish a section in Special Education at the institute.

By the year 1989 Ministry of Education took action to promote 21 supervisors to staff officer level, with the intention of increasing the quality of Special Education.

3.0 The current situation of the field of Special education

The integration programme which was started in 1970, is still functioning all over the country and teacher training programme in three major areas are too conducting at the Maharagama Teachers' College, to provide required trained teachers for the above programme.

However, recently, in 2002, the new three year Special Education Course was started at The College of Education in Hapitigama and 30 teachers could be trained in each batch.

The Special Education section at the Ministry of Education which was a separate department earlier, has amalgamated with the Department of Non-Formal Education today. Same situation exists at the National Institute of Education today. The Special Education that functioned as a separate department many years ago, has joined hands with Department of Primary Education.

According to the educational statistics there are nearly 1350 Special Education trained teachers working in the system today and parallel about 450 teachers are working in assisted special schools in the country. Thus over 15000 children with Special Education Needs get direct Special Education Services from the above teachers.

4.0 Inclusive Education

The inclusion of pupils ? With Special Educational Needs in the classrooms of regular schools is apart of a large. World Wide movement which calls for the inclusion of all people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Sri Lanka as a country which signed the Universal Conventions which include the concept of inclusion is getting ready to implement the inclusive education to the fullest in the Educational System.

The first national conference on Inclusive Education is planned to be held in mid December 2003. The main aim of the conference is to actively contribute to the policy and practice development resulting in increased and improved Inclusive Education for all in Sri Lanka.

5.0 Special Education, Technology and ICT

In a technology based society, it is important for the children to learn to use technology in order, to play a complete role in that society. This applies to information and communication technology (ICT) too. The ability to participate in the cyber community gives an individual the skills to enter the world of digital information supply and acquire daily living requirements, entertainment and much more.

However, educational authorities for children with SEN have a key role to play in this process. They must organize the education they provide in such a way that integration into society and regular education opportunities, and meaningful activity in the form of work or other occupation is possible. ICT in education must be geared to integrate children with SEN into society.

6.0 Special Education Policy and ICT Education

As, I mentioned earlier Sri Lanka is getting ready for the preparation of policies for Special Education. When developing an ICT policy in Special Education we consider the following important areas.

- National Educational Reforms and objectives.
- ICT skills expertised teachers.
- Available programmes for children with SEN.
- Available equipment.

These areas must be properly balanced if ICT is to be successfully integrated in to education. This means all the areas must be given equal attention. Or else the least developed aspect too, will contribute to determine the level attained.

7.0 Limitation of ICT Education the Children with SEN

In recent years, ICT has done a great deal in integrating students into regular education, and

also in Sri Lanka with the help of government and as well as private section.

However, when planning education and use of ICT in Special Education, it is crucial to ensure that ample ICT equipments to be used not only in schools, but also in homes. Sometimes also in follow on education and in the individuals subsequent job. Thus various following factors may effect on decision making.

- Available financial resources.
- The strategies governing the education of children with SEN.
- The Deployment of ICT in other forms of education.
- Opportunities for using ICT at their homes.
- The form in which services are provided to children with SEN and disabled people in the country.

8.0 Training of Teachers for the utilization of ICT

The need for rigorous programmes of initial and ongoing professional and personal development were highlighted throughout different researches. Teachers may need to acquire skills in managing every area in education including ICT too. This must consider the demand of the ICT education and visits of different sources where teachers can improve their ICT knowledge.

All teachers should occur the ICT skills for promoting following skills of the children with SEN.

- Ability to attend the same courses as other people, in the same way and at the same time.
- The ability to be considered for the same jobs as other people and to be afforded the same opportunities for promotion.
- The ability to make use of the same opportunities for communication as other people, such as e-mail and other electronic communication.

9.0 Suggestions to use Information Communication Technology for Development of teachers of the field of Special Education.

- 8.1 Adequate ICT knowledge should be given to all teachers of the field of Special Education.
- 8.2 Modern ICT equipment should be provided to all Special Education Units.
- 8.3 ICT methodologies should be introduced to the all new teacher training courses in the field of Special Education.
- 8.4 International training opportunities of ICT should be offered to the teachers of the field of Special Education.
- 8.5 Research opportunities regarding ICT should be expanded in order to involve all teachers of the field of Special Education.
- 8.6 Same ICT training programme of the regular teachers should be allowed to follow the Special Education teachers in expanding the Inclusive Education concept.