

SRI LANKA

Special Education in Sri Lanka

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The Education service is administrated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education of Central Government and Provincial Councils. Every child of Sri Lankan is entitled to free education up to the graduation. There is a separate section for special education in central Ministry and Provincial councils. NGOs also have taken a prominent place in giving education for children with disabilities.

Sri Lanka has a long and proud history in supporting people with disabilities. It is recorded that as far back as the 3rd century BC Buddhist emperor Asoka organized care institutions for people with disabilities and under the rule of king Buddhadasa a century later this practice was once again revived.

During the colonial period, missionaries started institutions for children with disabilities. Most of these institutions operated as charities and looked after rather than educated children with disabilities. The first school for students with disabilities was established in 1912 and catered for children with deafness and blindness. Since then more than 25 special schools for children with disabilities have come into being across the country.

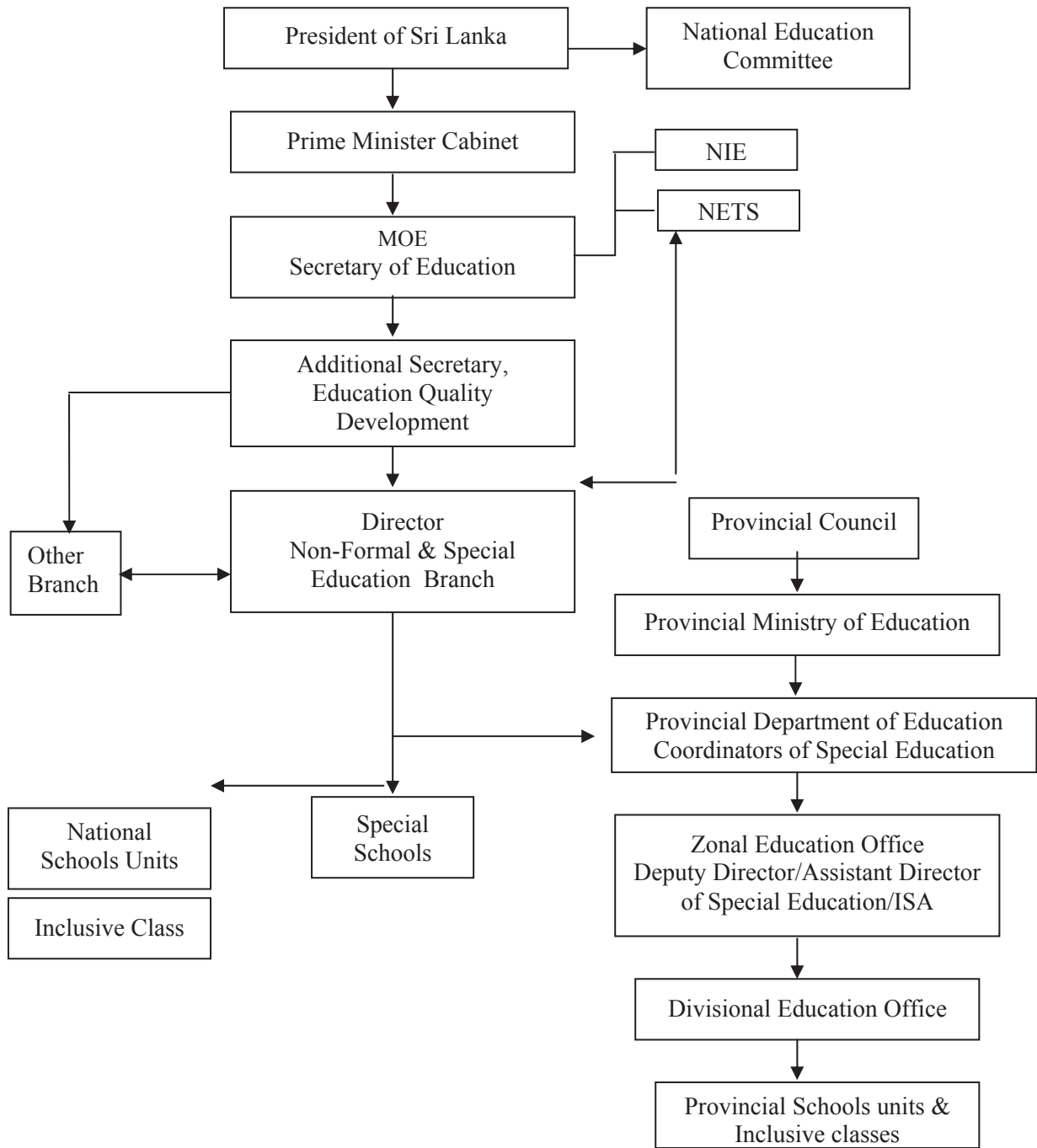
In 1939 under Education Ordinance No. 39 Assisted Special School were allowed to enter Free Education system. Under the Ordinance 30(1) in 1944 75% of the salaries of teachers in school for the disabled was given by the govt. as a grant. In 1948 Code of Regulation for Assisted School (English) was revised and Education of Children 6-14 was made compulsory in 1961 children who are not profoundly disabled may be admitted to school.

From 1969 students with disabilities have been integrated into regular schools through special classes and more recently through enrolment in regular classes. Early services focused on students with blindness or visual impairment. In 1972 an integrated program for students with intellectually disabilities began.

In 2006 there are 25 assisted special schools in Sri Lanka that are governed by boards of management. These are non-government schools that are assisted by government grants in aid to fund teacher salaries, school text books, uniforms and special teaching aids.

There are about 950 special classes in regular Government schools. In addition, Private Schools also implemented educational Programmes for children with special education needs.

Present Structure of Special Education



Education of Autistic Children in Sri Lanka

Autism has a prevalence of 1 in 500 children which is one of the highest in different types of disabled children. This prevalence is thought to be increasing all over the world. Sri Lanka has educational and health resources to meet the needs of these children who are unique and have special difficulties in communication and relating to others.

In Sri Lanka there was no special attention on Autistic children prior to the 1980 decade.

The teacher training programme on children with intellectual disabilities conducted with support from SIDA in 1985, drew the attention of teachers on Autistic children. In the special Education Units in which those teachers served, there had been few autistic children but no teaching methodologies specific to autistic children had been used.

At the B.Ed. Degree Course conducted by the National Institute of Education in 1996, Consultants from Sweden provided further knowledge about teaching of autistic children. Although these teachers received the theoretical knowledge, as there was no opportunity to obtain practical experience of teaching such children, only marginal service was rendered to those children.

A systematic programme for teaching of autistic children was launched by 2005 due to the interest created by the Association of Autistic Children's Parents and medical practitioners.

As a results of this, in 2005 Ministry of Education started Autism child development centre in collaboration with, the Department of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine of University of Colombo, Disability Unit of Kelaniya University, Department of Psychiatry&, Faculty of Health Sciences of University of Sri Jayawardanapura, Department of School Health Family Health Bureau and Autism and Aspergerous Association .

The autism child development centre was set up to fill a major gap in the health and educational services for children with autism. The centre provides a model classroom setting for 10-15 children who are diagnosed to have different levels from moderate to severe autism. In addition it is the only Resource Centre currently available in Sri Lanka.

This center is situated in the Teachers College Maharagama. At present this classroom accommodates 15 children and conduct on-going training for teachers island wide to Enhance their capacity. The ACDC will be the leader in facilitating the setting up of regional autism resource centers in 9 Provinces in Sri Lanka.

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health is attempting to improve the availability and accessibility of education and health resources to children with autism throughout the country.

National Level Programmes

These programmes are conducted through ACDC.

- Conduct National Level Programme for Professionals in special education.
- Conduct Awareness programme for Parents
- Provide educational facilities for children with Autism
- Facilitate the children with autism in regular classes
- Conduct training and awareness programmes for education officers and In Service Advisors in Primary education
- Material Development for children with Autism



Provincial Level Programme

- Every province has started pilot educational programmes in selected schools.
- Provide educational facilities for children with Autism at provincial level
- Conduct teacher training and parental awareness programmes

Monitoring

These Programmes are evaluated by officers from Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Departments.

Current Issues

- Lack of resource persons Such as educational psychologists
- Scarcity of trained teachers
- Scarcity of infrastructure facilities
- Most of the autism children live in isolation, so it is very difficult to provide relevant services.
- Lack of the awareness of the community making it difficult to provide facilities

Future Perspectives

- Identification of all children with Autism
- Implement Autism Education Centers in all provinces where necessary.
- Capacity building of Special education Professionals in the field of Autism.
- Implement Pre –Vocational training Programmes
- Build linkage to Develop Autism Child Develop Centre with foreign Autism Resource centre



<Questions and Answers after Country Report>

Q1: Can you tell me how many students for 1 teacher?

A1: 1 teacher for 5 students.

Q2: About ADCD. Are ADCD in INCLUSIVE class or special class? Some children in the national center, offer modification he transfer to regular class?

A2: After training the children transfer to special class, from special class again transfer to regular class, according to the achievement.

Q3: How many resource centers do you have?

A3: national center and 9 provincial resource center.

Q4: How the process of learning of autism who went to resource center before went to special class

A4: The children come to first to special units and then also have special teacher, after to the center, the children sent to special class.

Q5: How long the children learning in autism center?

A5: Many years.

Q6: About private school. How many private schools in your country and also the program?

A6: There are 25 special schools and more than 150 international schools. There are about 50 private schools and 9500 government schools. About the program: training teacher and awareness program for parents, also pay 100% teacher salary for special school and free textbook, free meals, and uniforms. Private school and international schools don't get such provision.

Q7: What is the ratio of teachers to students?

A7: The ratio of teachers to students is 1 to 5.

Q8: I'd like to know about the ACDC.

A8: The ACDC is treated as National Center where it provides behavioral modification for children with severe autism. First, some children having special needs has been drawn from regular class, they have learned special class. After that, special program has provided to children with autism at the ACDC in order to acclimatize them at the regular classes.

Q9: Is there a center like ACDC at all the states?

A9: We have nine states and nine centers. The national center, like ACDC, is only one.

Q10: Is there any problem if children return to regular class after receiving instruction at ADCD, for example, academic skills and social relationship?

A10: Yes. Some students are bound to delay some skills 1 or 2 years.

Q11: How many private schools having special program in your country?

A11: We have 25 assisted schools for special education, where they provide teacher training and educational materials.