

FREE EDUCATION POLICY AND ITS IMMERGING CHALLENGES IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

Education system plays a crucial role in any country towards achieving a sustainable development and strengthening social wellbeing and is often called as the back born of the society. The purpose of this paper is to explore the salient features and its evolution of free education system in Sri Lanka and its immerging challenges for policy makers. This paper also aims at suggesting alternative strategies to overcome the challenges that are immersed from the changing global market context by pooling of views and ideas of academics and other experts in the field of education. We expect that the alternative strategies suggested to overcome the emerging issues in the free education system would add value to policy makers to objectively develop future strategies and policies relating to the education system of the country. We explore the existing literature relating to education systems and experts' views and authors' own experience as academics. We find that Sri Lankan education system requires an urgent reform or revision from a holistic approach to address some key issues in the areas of policy making level, implementation level, supervisory and regulatory level. We recommend the government to increase the budget allocation for education to a level which could initially push the process forward as the current allocation is trivial. We further see a significant disparity between rural and urban popular schools in many aspects. Issues pertaining to content and revision of school curricular timely manner to best fit the changing world, teacher centered mechanic learning environment, poor participation of stakeholders in teaching leaning process, hierarchical and conflicting administrative structure, lack of opportunities for talented and high performing students who do not have enough economic means to enter into higher education process, competencies and professional development of teachers are identified as key problematic areas.

Keywords; Education policy, Education system, Free Education, School Education, Teaching and Learning