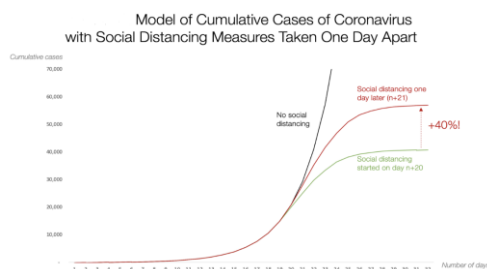


Message from Professor Munasinghe, Founder Chairman, MIND Group

Greetings! First, I hope and pray that everyone in our MIND family and their loved ones are safe and well.

1. I take this opportunity to stress the importance of adhering to safety procedures given to us by the health experts to protect ourselves and our nation from COVID-19. A crisis of this nature is not only a health issue, but also has economic and sustainability implications. Our individual efforts to stop spreading the virus will reduce the immediate health impacts. It will also help us get our economy back on track sooner, without letting economically vulnerable groups fall too deep into poverty. Understanding the key “lives versus economy” tradeoff is important. For example, 9 million die of hunger annually worldwide (mainly children in poorer countries), whereas current deaths from Covid19 are around 65 thousand (mainly elderly in richer countries) – poorly thought out policies that badly affect already starving families may kill more than Covid19, making it a “lives versus lives” policy dilemma.

2. Our individual efforts now will help to flatten the curve – basic guidelines like **washing hands and keeping the social distancing**. Not everyone can do everything. But we must try our absolute best as a community. Enhancing social distancing, even for one day, can make a large difference.



3. If measures are relaxed too early (to reduce economic impact), infections may peak again at a later stage. Therefore, it is important for us to maintain our new social behaviours when the current curfews are lifted, and we slowly get back to normal life. Until a vaccination is readily available, social distancing and washing our hands and other precautions must be continued.

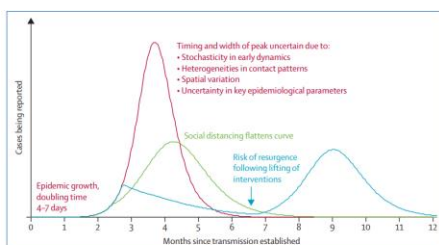


Figure: Illustrative simulations of a transmission model of COVID-19
A baseline simulation with case isolation only (red); a simulation with social distancing in place throughout the epidemic, flattening the curve (green); and a simulation with more effective social distancing in place for a limited period only, typically followed by a resurgence epidemic when social distancing is halted (blue). These are not quantitative predictions but robust qualitative illustrations for a range of model choices.

4. Lastly, let us take this isolation time to reflect on what is keeping our societies going- it is the community itself. Whether it is at local or global level, COVID -19 has shown us how closely linked our societies are and the success of every individual depends on the success of the whole society, and vice versa. Success of individuals in a society comes from strong social institutions we develop together that lay the foundation for sustainable development, including good healthcare for all, education systems, law and order, justice and fairness, and our commitment to progress of science, research and development.

5. Let us all ACT NOW to protect our society from COVID-19, and rebuild our nation sustainably as well.

6. Within the MIND Group, we were among the first in Sri Lanka to implement work at home procedures (starting from 13th March). In spite of the sharp business downturn and drop in our income since the lockdown period, ALL our staff are assured of their jobs, and our existing scholarships are protected.

MIND Scholarship application
start date will be delayed this year.
We will inform you of the new date
as soon as possible

Education Sector in Sri Lanka: Critical Issues and Way Forward



Stages (Sub-sectors) of Education in Sri Lanka

1. Early childhood care and education (ECCE)
birth to five years of age

2. General education (school education)
13 years from age 5 to 18. Currently, education is compulsory for children from 5 to 16 years

3. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)
after the compulsory 13 years

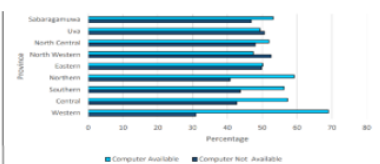
4. Tertiary and university education
after secondary education

It is vital that there are interconnected practices among these subsectors for effective policymaking, planning and implementation.

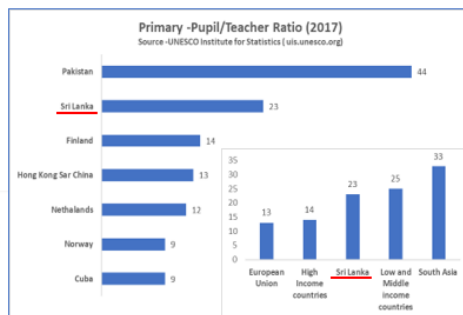
Critical Issues

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	General (School) Education	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)	Tertiary and University Education
<p>1. ECCE generally ignores the age group of 0 to 3 - only covers children aged 3-5 years.</p> <p>2. ECCE is not equally extended to all, despite there being over 17,000 ECCE centres with over 29,000 teachers.</p> <p>3. Quality of ECCE services are low due to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national policy and regulatory framework are not equally followed by service providers. ECCE is largely financed by the private sector without adherence to quality standards in many cases. Lack of a national policy and strategic plan detailing systematic service delivery and quality assurance mechanisms for ECCE provision. <p>4. Participation in pre-primary education is low compared to most middle- and high-income countries:</p> <p>NER = net enrollment rate Source: WB 2017, Sri Lanka Education Sector</p> <p>5. Poor children are largely ignored in pre-primary education.</p> <p>6. Statistics on ECCE are not being updated so it is difficult to gauge the current state.</p> <p>7. Research from around the world indicates that investment in ECCE brings high cumulative returns and is one of the most cost-effective ways to promote economic growth and social equity. In Sri Lanka investments in ECCE are comparatively low.</p> <p>Source: WB 2014, Lay the Foundations for Early Childhood Education in Sri Lanka</p>	<p>1. Overall lack of public funding resulting in a lack of equal provision and access to quality education across the country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inequities in delivery of services and facilities Teachers of unequal standards and training Insufficient focus on children with special needs including the lack of the required legislation Unequal facilities for higher order education spaces such as science and mathematics laboratories, aesthetics studios and sports facilities. <p>Source: World Bank Education Statistics Data, 2013/13 or nearest year available. Note: Bubble size corresponds to public spending as a share of GDP. Source: WB 2017, Sri Lanka Education Sector</p> <p>2. Ineffective curriculum - the courses of study do not prepare students with broad range of skills for employment or for further studies</p> <p>3. Inadequate focus on promoting research and development.</p> <p>4. The survival rate (SR) statistics of children at school are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12% of children do not complete secondary education up to grade 11 (SR to grade 11 is 88%) SR for girls (90%) and for boys (86%) <p>The reasons for dropping out are due to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty Transport problems Health issues Early marriages, Irrelevance of the courses of study to the world of work Too much focus on academic attainment Lack of recognition, encouragement and support for vocational training and education <p>5. Inadequate attention is given to civic education in the school curriculum. E.g. justice, multi-ethnic and multi-religious harmony, values and ethics.</p> <p>6. Weak accountability framework in the system.</p> <p>7. Ad-hoc policy and decision-making with short-term objectives.</p> <p>8. Absence of a proper mechanism to identify and meet the needs of gifted and talented students.</p>	<p>1. Lack of high quality and labour market relevance of the TVET programmes offered in the country due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak linkages between suppliers of training End users and market demands. Outdated curricula with questionable quality Poor attention to work habits & attitudes Poor competency in English language <p>2. Minimal labour market benefits from TVET.</p> <p>3. Prospective employees are inadequately prepared for placement in emerging enterprises.</p> <p>4. Prevalence of skill shortages in the country leading to lowered productivity of the formal and informal business sectors.</p> <p>5. Challenges to attract foreign direct investment due to the inability of the country to produce skilled & qualified workers.</p> <p>6. Inadequate partnership arrangements between government and private sector, to prepare TVET graduates for employment.</p> <p>“According to the World Bank Enterprise Survey, in Sri Lanka the proportion of firms that identify a shortage of adequate skills as a major or severe constraint is higher than in other middle-income and developing countries.</p> <p>The drive for industrial growth is especially blocked by the shortage of technically skilled workers—many of whom migrate overseas for jobs”</p> <p>Source: WB 2017, Sri Lanka Education Sector</p>	<p>1. Demand and supply mismatch - the country is unable to cope with the demand for higher education through public sector universities, leading to a loss of higher education opportunities for qualified students.</p> <p>2. Inefficient Research & Development (R&D) sector due to insufficient focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate training on R&D. Creating an environment conducive to new knowledge generation, discovery and innovation. <p>3. Mismatch with labour market demand due to uneven response of universities to design and offer courses related to labour market needs. This leads to the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unemployment of educated youth Low employer satisfaction and confidence in the quality of new graduates <p>*Note: Most universities are state owned but there are also many private higher education institutions.</p>

Computers availability for Students in Schools in Sri Lanka (2017)
(Source: Ministry of Education, School Census, 2017)



Proportion of Schools with Access to Computers for Pedagogical Purposes
(Most recent year available)
Source: UNESCO.org
SDG data



Way Forward

- ❖ Improve communication between respective authorities in the sub-sectors
- ❖ Establish linkages between the sub-sectors (school education, technical and vocational education, tertiary and higher education) and relevant sectors
- ❖ Develop a systematic mechanism for resourcing education.
- ❖ Increase significantly the proportion of public investment in education.

Creating Ambassadors of Sustainable Development

In November 2019, an extremely talented and creative batch of MIND scholars graduated, and a new batch came in, who are now proud ambassadors of sustainable development!

New Batch of 2019



Graduated Batch of 2018/19



U/Colombo - Faculty of Arts	Ms. Saranie Anyaa Wijesinghe Mr. Isuru Dhananjaya Mendis	U/Colombo - Faculty of Arts	Ms. Chiranthi Thavisha Senanayake Ms. Usha Ruchirani Perera Mr. Shakthi Vibodha De Silva Mr. Kanishka Gananath Werawella
U/Colombo - Faculty of Science	Ms. Doniesha Lakshi Perera Ms. Gayesha Thilini	U/Colombo - Faculty of Law	Ms. Samangi Himasha Abeyrathne
U/Colombo - School of Computing	Ms. Hashini Piyumika Samaraweera Ms. W.M.B.M. Manorathna Ms. Charini Prasadini Peiris Ms. Dinithi Nisansa Wickramaratne Ms. Rashmi Shehana	U/Moratuwa	Ms. Harshani Edirisinghe Mr. Sachindra Chamode Nanayakkara Wijayasekera
U/Sri Jayewardenepura	Ms. Yashodhara Upekshani Ananda	U/Ruhuna	Mr. Guruge Viraj Sameera
		U/Sri Jayewardenepura	Mr. Sanira Rimal Waas Mr. Kevin Anthony Jansz Mr. Asel Devjith Hettiarachchi

Information Note

Prof. Munasinghe is leading an international expert panel that is preparing a report entitled: *"Sustainable Living after Covid19 – Lessons Learned"*. Your ideas are welcomed.

Featuring a MIND Scholar –

Pabasari Arundathi Koliyabandara, Researcher at University of SJP

Pabasari Arundathi Koliyabandara, a MIND scholar, graduated in the year 2014/2015. She obtained a first class majoring in Environmental Sciences from University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and is now in the last stages of her PhD in Environmental Chemistry. Currently she is working as a scientific researcher at University of Sri Jayewardenepura, and her areas of specification include Environmental and Analytical Chemistry, Environmental



Management, Waste management and Hydrology. She has been researching crucial issues related to industrial environmental pollution (including mass scale industries - apparel, paper and paint); environmental changes occurring in waterbodies and ground surrounding open dumpsites (e.g. Karadiyana open dumpsite, Colombo); and government waste management projects related to leachate, waste management and hydrology.

She is also a trainer of trainers for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP), educator on Environmental Management, and writer on science popularisation. She has had both Sinhala and English language articles published in national newspapers in Sri Lanka and social media platforms. Her website and social media page promote scientific knowledge among locals (<https://www.facebook.com/ScienceForLifeSL> & www.scienceforlifesi.com). Apart from that, she is also a freelance TV presenter on TV Derana and National Lotteries Board; and a visiting lecturer on public speaking at Whyteleafe Performing Arts Academy.

Further, she recently worked as a resource person for developing an online platform for safe chemicals management by UNIDO (<http://learnatncpc.org/>). She is a member of professional associations such as SLAAS (Sri Lanka Association of Advancement of Science), and American Geo Physical Union (AGU) which has helped to create professional relationships with leading experts in the field.