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**Towards Reforming Teacher Education  
Concerns and Priorities**

*By*

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**J.E. Jayasuriya Memorial Foundation**

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# **Towards Reforming Teacher Education: Concerns and Priorities**

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I am thankful to Prof. J E Jayasuriya Foundation for the invitation extended to me to deliver the Prof. J. E. Jayasuriya Memorial Oration 2019. I was not fortunate to be a student of Professor J. E Jayasuriya. However I recollect how I took to a liking towards Mathematics by using the series of graded texts written by Prof. Jayasuriya.

My mother, Mrs. Sunila Nanayakkara who is a founding committee member of the Foundation had been a student of Prof. Jayasuriya. His name was familiar to me from my childhood as he was a role model in her life and therefore she mentioned his influence on her profession as a teacher. I saw Prof. Jayasuriya only once. It was when he delivered the first C. W. W. Kannagara Memorial Oration organized by the Research Division, National Institute of Education in 1988. Although a novice to the field of Education at that time, I was also accommodated in organizing committee under the guidance of Dr. G. B Gunawardena, then the Director, Research Division, NIE.

Being involved with my mother when she became a joint secretary of the J E Jayasuriya Foundation, I was able to gather a better understanding on the significance of this eminent Education Scientist who is commemorated annually. Later as a joint secretary to the Foundation for several years I was able to play an active role in commemorating the invaluable personality to the field of Education. Today, being the Dean of the Faculty of Education, University of Colombo I represent the next generation of academics in Education.

Teacher Education is my motivation. I have spent more than two decades as a teacher educator. The journey is becoming more and more challenging with the emerging issues and attempting to find suitable answers in the complexity of the scenarios. We have reached 2019 and we have

almost exhausted nearly two decades of the 21st century. Teacher Education has been transforming throughout the world to cater to the emerging needs of quality education. It is obvious that one of the critical success factors for the development of our country is through developing teacher education. Unless capable and committed are teachers in service, the education system cannot become a suitable and a potential instrument of national development.

Starting from preschool to secondary education, the most important factor is the teacher. Well-trained teachers are essential for quality education. Teachers play a critical role in preparing and encouraging the students for education and life. In 1916 John Dewey, the great liberal education reformer, wrote: “If we teach today’s students as we taught yesterday’s, we rob them of tomorrow”. Teacher quality and educating high-quality teachers have emerged as a fundamental problem to be solved in Education.

The need of a generation of teachers who aim to develop learners instead of teaching them, who help their pupils to become independent (learning to learn), who provide students with motivation and interest for life-long learning and urge them to become autonomous learners, is essential in the education for the future.

I will not present an extensive review of the present teacher education system in Sri Lanka, but attempt to point out the generic directions considering the present status and to share concerns and priorities in reforming teacher education.

Teacher education is an educational intervention. The focus of teacher preparation was shifted from ‘training’ to ‘education’ to make a positive influence on the quality of curriculum transaction in classrooms. Teachers cannot be technicians who merely follow the instructional guides. The need to empower the teachers to meet the challenges of any teaching-learning context is a major persisting gap in teacher development.

The paradigm change in learning has created a need to strengthen teacher education to a greater extent. First, learning is based on a strengths model of student abilities, interest, and culture in contrast to the traditional deficiency model of the student. Second, learning is an active process in contrast to a passive process of information transfer and reception. Third, learning is a collaborative process rather than an individual/solitary process.

Teacher education is based on the theory that “Teachers are made, not born”, in contrary to the assumption, “Teachers are born, not made”. Teacher Education is ever-evolving and dynamic. In order to prepare teachers who are competent to face the challenges of the dynamic society, teacher education has to keep abreast of recent developments and trends.

Teacher education not only ensures that teachers are – and remain competent, but it also allows to assure that they stay motivated across time.

A program of education, research and training is needed to empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. Teacher education is a continuous process and a life-long experience that goes from their initial education to their retirement.

Teacher education is often divided into these stages

- *initial teacher training / education* - a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher;
- *induction* - the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school;
- *continuing professional development (CPD)* - an in-service process for practicing teachers.

The three phases are considered as parts of a career long continuous process. In Sri Lanka we emphasise two stages, the initial and the continuing. The initial education that teachers receive constitutes a solid base of the knowledge and the skills that they will need for their task, and continuing training allows them to update and to adapt to the changes of the teaching environment.

### **Initial teacher Education models and trends**

Initial teacher education represents the entry level qualification prior to entering the service or the profession of teaching. The policies, programs and the way it is organised plays a key role in determining both the quality and the quantity of teachers who have undergone initial teacher education. Sri Lankan state system of initial teacher education comprises of programs provided

by Departments and Faculties of Education in Universities, National Colleges of Education and National Institute of Education. While the National Colleges of Education offer a Teaching Diploma, Universities and NIE offer Bachelor of Education programs.

Prof. Jayasuriya was instrumental in developing the most innovative pre- service teacher education program, the Bachelor of Education. The BEd program prepared in accordance to the framework by University of Colombo is still a unique program of teacher education and has a high reputation both locally and internationally. The model which involves the collaboration of two faculties is unique in the higher education system of teacher education. This model fulfills the secondary school teacher education, in which the disciplinary expertise, the professional theory component, the practice of teaching and research are in a well-balanced composition. The core features of this BEd program has been adapted by all other BEd programs and we need to pay tribute to Prof. J E Jayasuriya for this innovation of all times.

Expansion of Non-state educational institutions and programs during the past few years has been a trend. At present Bachelor of Education programs are being planned with subject specializations by these institutions, eg. BEd in ICT, BEd in Early Childhood Education, BEd in Science, BEd in English, BEd in Biology etc... It is unclear how Bachelor of Education Programs can be effectively offered by institutions without having an internal fulltime cadre of teacher educators not only for instruction but also as role models for students to develop their self-image through association and observation. Although some of these institutions possess the strength to deliver the disciplinary knowhow it is observed these institutions are not yet ready to impart core elements of the discipline of 'Education' in the teacher education curricula. The term 'Education' is adopted with its general meaning by the system of Education. Partly we are to be blamed for not upholding the discipline of 'Education' as all other scientists of other disciplines do. Thus the term is misunderstood and misused by considering its superficial meaning.

Initial Teacher education can be organized as Concurrent models or Consecutive models. In concurrent models the academic subjects are studied alongside educational and professional studies throughout the duration of the course. This allows for a more integrated learning experience, since pedagogical and subject-matter (content knowledge) training take place at the same time.

In the consecutive models the specialized courses in pedagogy are accessible only after having completed an academic degree in a discipline taught in school. In an educational system, both consecutive and concurrent models can coexist. Attempts are being made by the UGC Standing Committee on Education to expand the introduction of consecutive models of teacher education by collaborations between Faculties of Science, Faculties of Management and Finance with Departments and Faculties of Education to meet the demands for teachers in the system.

It is possible collate some general guidelines on what is desirable to be included in initial teacher education : a strong subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical skills, the capacity to be able to work with a wide range of students/colleagues/administrators, development of research skills and a capacity for continuing developing knowledge and skills. When the right balance of the different elements is found, it contributes to a better teaching performance.

The best teacher-preparation programs emphasize subject-matter mastery and provision of many opportunities for student teachers to spend time in real classrooms under the supervision of an experienced mentor. Just as professionals in medicine, architecture, and law have opportunities to learn through examining case studies, learning best practices, and participating in internships, exemplary teacher-preparation programs allow teacher candidates the time to apply their learning of theory in the context of teaching in a real classroom.

It has been signaled that the role of practical field-experience in teacher education has to be reevaluated. Practicum during initial teacher education allows to familiarize aspirant teachers to classrooms, to prevent 'reality-shocks' at the beginning of their teaching career, to link pedagogical theory with practical problems and to construct a sound professional identity. The world trend is to increase duration of the practice in schools with a proper mentoring arrangement. No matter how good pre-service training for teachers is, it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers.

### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) modalities and issues**

Continuous teacher education is commonly referred to as in-service teacher education and there are different models of in-service teacher education. Even if teachers receive a quality initial teacher education, they need to be trained during their entire professional career. Continuing training is a great tool to develop the skills needed to reach higher student outcomes.

CPD activities can be very heterogeneous: dissemination conferences, workshops (preparation to new subject-matter content), school-based activities (study groups, courses), personal teacher development (individual activities outside of schools). The most commonly-used approach is the one-time workshop, but research shows that this form of continuing training is ineffective and inefficient. Despite of the great potential of continuing training, there seems to be a general discontent among teachers: it is said to be too fragmented, lacking in intensity, and unrelated to teaching practices.

All teachers benefit from professional support, but it is especially important for beginning teachers, A new teacher receives little or no clinical supervision by outstanding teachers. Work is organised in physically isolated classrooms. Support for beginning teachers is often uneven and inadequate. Even if well prepared, new teachers often are assigned to the most challenging schools and classes with little supervision and support. More attention must be paid to providing them with early and adequate support, especially if they are assigned to demanding school environments. Mentoring and coaching from veteran colleagues is critical to the successful development of a new teacher. Induction programs that help beginning teachers adjust to the school can take many forms, including observing expert teachers, reflecting on their own teaching, participating in discussions with other teachers, teaching a lighter workload, or meeting with an experienced mentor teacher to gain additional insights. These programs can help teachers stay at the school longer and teach more effectively.

For all teachers school-based support programs are more useful because they focus on the teaching and learning process in the context of the school and it gives opportunities for teachers participate actively by practicing new methods and techniques. School-based experiences are critical for even veteran teachers to have ongoing and regular opportunities to learn from each other. The best professional development is ongoing, experiential, collaborative, and connected to and derived from working with students and understanding their culture. These continuing training programs are effective when they have a certain length, are based on school's needs and allow interaction among teachers (peer-to-peer, mentoring).

Postgraduate education courses last one year (full-time) and lead to a postgraduate diploma qualification. Post Graduate Diploma in Education commonly known as the PGDE in Sri Lanka, is the professional teaching qualification for graduates. PGDE prepares graduates to teach across

the entire school grade span. PGDE is a compulsory professional qualification to become a professional graduate teacher. Under the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF), the PGDE is placed at the SLQF level 8 which is only 5 credits less than the Masters degree by coursework.

It is noteworthy that under the postgraduate qualification types in SLQF, there two categories of study programs. The extension post graduate diploma programs which builds on an area in which the candidates already have expertise gained at undergraduate level. The conversion post graduate diploma programs are intended to those with little or no prior knowledge of the subject. When considering these two categories, the graduates with SLQF level 5 qualifications should complete the PGDE at SLQF level 8.

The issue is that there are arguments emerging indicating that a graduate who completed the Bachelor degree at SLQF 5 need not obtain the SLQF Level 8 Post Graduate Diploma qualification and could straightaway obtain the Masters qualification at level 9 in progressing towards becoming a professionally qualified educator. In order to prevent this practice, in applying the SLQF framework there should be firm emphasis on the need to complete PGDE highlighting the need of the conversion category of postgraduate education.

Ongoing professional development keeps teachers up-to-date on new research on how children learn, emerging technology tools for the classroom, new curriculum resources, and more. Although Teaching and research carried out in Sri Lanka, the link between teaching and research is not clearly visible. The objective to produce teachers with a research orientation in their work, who are capable of independent problem solving and have the capacity to utilize the most recent research in the fields of education are not clearly visible. Teacher education programs especially the programs conducted in Universities provide the student with capabilities for acting independently as a teacher, instructor and educator. How far they are encouraged by the authorities is a question. It is pathetic to know that there are barriers imposed by some of the officials in granting study leave to teachers to follow higher research degrees using their personal funds.

Inspite of these issues the Ministry of Education Sri Lanka has made effort to popularize and encourage research among teachers, teacher educators and officers though several measures such as training programs in action research, certificate courses on research methodology through faculties of education in universities, giving research grants, provide publication opportunities,



encouraging holding research conferences, and introducing a research day in schools etc. Teacher education programs in Sri Lanka encourage teachers to conduct action research which is a highly commendable practice.

### **Teacher educator role and issues of professionalism**

Teacher educators are those who train, support and develop new and existing teachers, play an important role but they often have to learn on the job receiving limited training and support themselves. Teacher educators broadly are those who are professionally involved and engaged in the initial and on-going education of teachers. Teacher educators need to facilitate the development of teachers as critical thinkers who are both problem solvers and reflective practitioners.

Teacher education is dependent upon the quality of teacher educators. The quality of pedagogical inputs in teacher education programs and their effective utilization for the purpose of preparing prospective teachers depend largely on the professional competence of teacher educators and the ways in which it is utilized for strengthening the teacher education program. Teacher education, thus, has to first deal with the preparation of effective teacher educators.

It is necessary consider ‘What are the appointment and induction arrangements for initial teacher educators?’ ‘What makes for a ‘good teacher educator’. ‘Who are the trainers during induction?’ The teacher educator profession spans a range of professionals, as well as different backgrounds, qualifications and work/institutional contexts: They are:supervisors of practice in schools linked to initial teacher education institutions; trained and experienced teachers supervising practice in other schools; tutors (counsellors, coordinators, mentors, guides etc.) supervising prospective teachers during the school internships; higher education academic staff, who teach education. As they may differ significantly from one another - even within the same country - in several aspects, including: level of qualification (Bachelor, Master, PhD), (subject) area specialization, work experience (as school teachers, as lecturers ...), work environments (school, higher education, private provider of continuing professional development, state agency etc.), contractual arrangements and salary, institutional constraints, etc. As a consequence, teacher educators can have varying levels of commitment to teacher education. For example, teacher

educators in a University faculty of education may devote their whole working time to student teachers, and research on teaching or learning. The 'traditional' model of experienced teachers leaving school and entering the higher education sector to become teacher educators. At present this trend has begun to change.

At its highest level teacher educators may also be defined specifically as "those who hold tenure-line positions in teacher preparation in higher education institutions, teach beginning and advanced students in teacher education, and conduct research or engage in scholarly studies related to teacher education" . In Sri Lanka University level teacher education programs and teacher educators are subjected to periodical quality assurance process by the UGC. Are the other teacher educators serving at NIE, National Colleges of Education and Regional Centres subjected to quality assurance procedures? Are the programs of these institutions reviewed? Are the teacher education curricula of these institutions revised periodically?

A major change across many countries has been in the location of teacher education and a change in those holding responsibility for it as it shifted from teacher training in colleges to university-level teacher education. In Finland the training of subject teachers has been conducted at the university level since the early 19th century and the training of class teachers (primary) was transferred over to be carried out by universities in the early 1970s while the training of kindergarten teachers in universities began in 1995.

Although teacher educators are crucial players for maintaining - and improving - the high quality of the teaching workforce and have a significant impact upon the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, they are often neglected in policy-making benefit fully from the knowledge and experience of this key profession. Teacher educators are a virtually unresearched aspect of teacher education. The important role played by teacher educators is not given due importance and hence, their professional education is under-studied and under-supported.

Lifelong learning is important for sustaining the high quality performance of teacher educators. Further, teacher educators as role models need to show that they are lifelong learners in order to promote similar attitudes in their students. Therefore, the lifelong learning of teacher educators is essential in enabling them to be proactive, in raising their awareness of new challenges in society

and schools, as well as in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers responding to these challenges. Since there is no initial training for teacher educators and only limited induction for some, opportunities for teacher educators to reflect and to develop their professional qualities throughout their careers are extremely important.

Being teacher educators we can only play a part of professional development of teachers. Policy makers and Education Administrators who play the decision making role have been distant from teacher educators and hence there are mismatches in ideologies which have created major issues in teacher education.

### **Priorities for Reform**

#### ***STEM in Teacher education***

STEM education has been one of the key matters discussed in the education world. STEM education, which does not have a globally recognized definition, is generally described by participants as "integrating science, technology, engineering and mathematics." Many countries that aspire to have an advanced economy and technology aim to build a society that is advanced at Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and have sustainable development in these fields, and this has been one of the main educational strategies of those countries. There are different opinions about how to integrate the STEM fields such as interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary, There is still need for the research trying to assert which approach is more effective.

However, curricular design of STEM teacher education can be launched by the Universities through inter-faculty collaborations. Ministry of Education and Faculties of Science and Education should determine the qualifications of teachers who will implement the STEM education. In addition to this, they should ensure that their undergraduate programs are developed in such a way that teachers will acquire these qualifications during the initial teacher training models.

### *Digital technologies and classrooms of the future*

The 'Knowledge Economy' is being eclipsed by something new -- the 'Creativity Economy'. Students have to learn skills and competencies needed for the 21st century, which is now a creative economy and the education systems need to be transformed. Education practices in many 21st century learning environments still prepare students for the past, and not for present realities.

Education 4.0 is an educational system that supports students to make innovations resulting from knowledge production. Education 4.0 leapfrogs from the current Education 2.0 framework.

Education 1.0: Centuries of experience with memorization

Education 2.0: Internet-enabled learning

Education 3.0: Consuming & Producing knowledge

Education 4.0: Empowering education to produce innovation

The skills needed for innovation go beyond knowledge and mastery of one's domain. Innovators need to think critically, to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar problems, and to be able to come up with new ideas and make connections. Innovation is also aided by behavioural and social skills that help people pursue their critical thinking and creative skills and put their ideas into action.

Technology is transforming our lives in a disruptive way, given its rate of development and increasing prevalence and accessibility we are being forced by digital technologies to adapt to new ways of living. Technology has revolutionized every industry and each component of our culture and society. It is therefore important that teachers be prepared not only to use today's technology but should be able to handle systematically and analytically about what technology is going to become and evolve afterwards. Today's technology need to be integrated from the tomorrow's technology to achieve the best synergy in quality pedagogy. Educators must be well be prepared to work on with such future development.

Technology is revolutionizing the teacher education in all parts of the world. Teachers often expressed their lack of confidence in their digital technology skills and this implicitly affect their attitudes towards the use of digital technology in their teaching.

Technological aid should not be seen as a separate tool in learning rather it should be taken as an integral part in effective pedagogical process. It is therefore pertinent that Universities and other institutions should prepare teachers for future generation students. They need to be given opportunities to teach in modern classrooms because that would give them a sense of practical experience related to the teaching theories to handle the responsibility of quality teaching. The use of technology in teaching requires the integrated knowledge among technology, pedagogy, and subject content,

Computers will not replace schools. Schools will persist. But the generic process of education (student learning) will be drastically changed by technology. Sri Lankan schools are in the process of getting equipped with SMART classroom technologies. However, it is less clear how teachers will acquire the skills of integrating technology without a systematic process of integration to the teacher education programs. Meaningful and authentic use of technology for quality teaching and meaningful learning is an essential component of a 21st century education. Teacher education programs have been slow to transform and adopt programs that are essential for new teachers to be equipped with skills for 21st century teaching.

Several researchers conclude that using technology in the classroom has proven to be a distraction element of care rather than becoming a supportive element. Could the ICT tools be used to improve attention and learning in class? Advancements in technology should continue to enhance collaborative learning, along with improving dynamic group presentations, in 21st-century school settings. How do we maximise the opportunities that digital technologies present for learning, and what are the limits? How do we provide students with advanced skills that are well beyond our own competencies? are questions for which we need to find answers.

### **Focus of teacher education towards a sustainable future**

The international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG4, is ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong

learning opportunities for all'. The focus on teachers and teacher education are as one of the three targets indicating the means of achieving quality education.

The statement of SDG4 emphasizes that a large body of evidence demonstrates that teachers are key to attain quality education. As teacher education performs a central role in the improvement of educational systems there is a dire need for a transformation in teacher education. Even though it is the belief that critical presence of teachers is irreplaceable, there will be many changes to a teacher's job and to Educational best practice.

It is noteworthy that the nations are cautioned to avoid adding more content to already overloaded curricula. United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) provides professional development modules for student teachers, teachers, curriculum developers, education policy makers, and authors of educational materials. The modules present an introduction to the global realities, imperatives for sustainable development and educational issues that form the rationale of Education for a Sustainable Future, how Sustainable Development can be integrated into all areas of the curriculum, an interdisciplinary emphasis for using teaching and learning strategies that can help students achieve the wide range of knowledge, skill and values objectives of Education for Sustainable Development.

Where some may argue that indirect application of some of these ESD principles is sufficient in order to claim that ESD is being addressed, it cannot be accepted as an appropriate practice.

### **Blended professional development programs**

Many formal Professional Development (PD) activities utilize face-to-face instruction delivered at specific times and inherently possess time-based and geographic-related difficulties. For teachers who are working, often in areas quite remote from them, who want to continue their studies to extend support for students with diverse learning needs are heavily challenged through this model. On the other extreme the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) programs are getting more popular due to the convenience to follow being in the local context.

A blended learning approach is especially regarded as an important method because it reduces some limitations typical of online learning, such as separation, isolation and estrangement among

members, limited feedback and lack of responsibility among students. Completely face-to-face model of implementation of teacher education courses need to be redesigned so as to provide an interactive, instructor-guided Web-enhanced course along with student-centered face-to-face instruction to be implemented as a blended course,

Blended approaches are new, high quality alternate pathways that lead into teacher education programs, Blended learning use multiple methods to deliver learning, combining face-to-face interactions with online activities. World across teacher preparation programs introduce blended courses (a combination of online and face-to-face learning) for their students because of their availability and convenience. The use of an online mode for working with teachers could gain popularity due to its ability to be accessible 24 hours a day and seven days a week from any geographical environment that has web access. Many teacher training institutions employ blended learning in their courses with varying degrees of teacher collaboration within them.

Blended learning environments require instructors to engage in new activities such as integrating online and face-to-face activities and redesigning course structure. The roles of instructor are divided into four areas: pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical. Pedagogical roles include designing educational practice, giving feedback, and providing opportunities for students to build and share knowledge and skills through interactive discussion. Social roles are to build social rapport, establish a learning community, and support interactions among students and instructors. Managerial roles are to manage the classroom, coordinate tasks, and supervise online discussion. Technical roles are to show students how to use technology and to support their learning with technologies.

Many researchers have reported that blended learning is more effective than fully face-to-face or open and distance learning (ODL) in terms of students' satisfaction. The flexibility with regard to time and location, ease of using resources, increase of interactions and effectiveness of interaction between students and instructors. Although some educators object to developing blended courses highlighting the need for fully face-to-face social interaction for teacher education courses, there are successful practices across the world where teachers have developed autonomy and become self directed learners through blended learning. In order to

succeed with the blended teaching approach, educators need to provide goal-driven, constructive, and student-centered methods for designing classes and to create learning communities.

### *Developmental profiles for teacher educators*

The professionalism of teacher educators must evolve to keep pace with the twenty first century global complexity. Teacher educator quality has been taken for granted and many weaknesses in teacher education stem from weaknesses of knowledge and skills of teacher educators. Initiatives related to the professional development of individual teacher educators is a priority. The teacher educators do not always get the support and challenge they need, in terms of their education and professional development. By stimulating and supporting the development of explicit frameworks and policies, national and regional education authorities can assist teacher educators to be as effective as possible.

All teacher educators, whatever their career entry stage or profile, need to take part in a suitable program of induction. Thereafter, and throughout their careers, teacher educators, guided by their individual sense of responsibility for their own continuous professional learning, should have access to high-quality opportunities for continuing professional development. International immersion experiences are recommended for professional development of teacher educators to gain a sense of international mind-sets and self-efficacy.

The concept of collective intelligence states that when people work together, they form a type of intelligence that simply cannot exist on the individual level. Collective intelligence (CI) is an emerging field that already has a significant impact in many areas and it will have great implications for education, not only from the side of new methodologies but also as a challenge for education, which is currently more focused on the individual than in the collective.

Across the world development of learning communities is on the increase. To learn from each other and for the development a collective understanding, it is useful for members of the profession to meet and discuss aspects of their profession, beyond institutional borders. This can take place both in formal structures, such as professional associations, and in informal contexts - networks and communities. The development of a professional identity cannot be imposed through policy measures but ought to be developed from within the professional community.



A developmental profile for teacher educators to provide an overview of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher educator is needed in order to be able to function effectively. It can be developed by the contribution of groups of teacher educators, teachers and policy makers. However, the development profile does not intend to provide the ultimate and definitive statement of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher educator or group of teacher educators should possess. It is crucially important that the profile can accommodate this diversity. Beginning teacher educators can use this overview as a means of establishing their initial situation at the start of their learning process.

### ***Quality Assurance of professional development programs in Higher Education***

External Quality Assurance is an important feature in the Higher Education system. The unit of assessment is a program offered by an institution. External Quality Assurance by peer review, commissioned by the national quality assurance system has now gained worldwide acceptance as an effective method to ensure quality and standards of education. All initial teacher education programs offered by universities in Sri Lanka are being reviewed by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation of the University Grants Commission. Program review evaluates the effectiveness of Faculty's processes for managing and assuring quality of study program, student learning experience and standards of awards within a program of study. Parallel initial teacher education programs offered by other institutions also need to go through this best practice.

### ***Soft skills in teacher development***

Soft skills have become a subject of increasing interest. Soft skills are considered to be one of the critical skills in determining the success of professional practice while shaping a person's personality. Hard skills are those skills that are specific to a particular career field or job while soft skills are those skills and personal traits which may be useful for performing any job, no matter the field of any human endeavors.

Soft skills development is very important in the teacher preparation. Teachers are expected to acquire and develop academic knowledge, technical skills of teaching and also soft skills which in other words called as human skills and life skills.

Three models are recognized in the development of soft skills. One is the stand-alone subject model. This model uses the approach of training and providing opportunities to students to develop soft skills through specific courses that are carefully planned for this purpose. The second model is the embedded model. This model uses the approach of embedding the soft skills in the teaching and learning activities across the curriculum. It does not require the student to take special courses as in the stand-alone subject model. The combined stand-alone and embedded model is the other model. This allows the faculty to introduce special courses if necessary and also to integrate elements as needed to the running program. The embedded model is reported as the most effective for soft skills development. By incorporating soft skills into the already existing curricula with minimum changes would facilitate students to develop their soft skills throughout their normal program. The development of soft skills through the embedded model requires teacher expertise to use a variety of student-centred teaching strategies which result in active learning.

Development of Soft skills or socio emotional skills was emphasized through the UDG (University Development Grants) by the Higher Education for the Twenty First Century (HETC) project. The seven soft skills ie. Communicative skills, Thinking skills and Problem solving skills, Team work, Life-long learning and Information Management, Entrepreneurship skills, Ethics, moral and professionalism, Leadership skills were embedded to the BEd curriculum in the form of student-centred teaching learning strategies by the Faculty of Education University of Colombo which is being successfully implemented and evaluated. Such best practices can be replicated by other programs.

### *Paradigm shift towards inclusion of diversity*

The paradigm shift towards inclusion continues to evolve. While initially the focus was on addressing the needs of students with disabilities by facilitating their education in mainstream schools, more recently this has been broadened to focus on supporting all students, including those with disabilities but also those who may be marginalized in any way. Teacher preparation for inclusion needs to be reconsidered with the inclusion from a perspective of diversity rather than disability.

### ***Bilingual education for English language learning***

English is the link language of Sri Lanka and the majority belonging to different ethnic groups and representing different provinces in the country convincingly support the need for children to be proficient in English.

Bilingual education can be defined in the Sri Lankan context using English as the medium of instruction in a few selected subjects in the secondary level through a methodology of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), without disturbing the position of the first language (L1) as some subjects in the curriculum will continue to be taught either in Sinhala or Tamil. It is a pity to let the bilingual education which was introduced as a measure to improve English language proficiency gradually tend to fade from the system although there are many lessons learned on the bilingual education approach such as successful practices of Content and Language Integrated Learning.

### ***Partnerships in professional development action research***

One area of reform that appears consistent across literature involves the nature of university and school partnerships. However, one issue stemming from partnership models that include both schools and universities is that universities tend to promote a clear understanding of theory as the basis for what teachers do, whereas schools tend to emphasize the demonstration of practical skills in their own right, creating what has been identified as a knowing/doing gap.

Teacher education faculties could take the leadership in developing collaborations with schools and other teacher education institutions to conduct collaborative action research in order to develop innovations and scale-up the innovations developed through research. An exemplary multi-site action research was launched by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC) of the Faculty of Education with the sponsorship from GIZ to make teachers and teacher educators research on diagnosis of learning difficulties and implement remedial teaching. All teacher colleges, NCOEs, NIE and University departments and faculties of education were involved in the study. This model of collaborative action research is worthy of repetition as the outcomes were very much positive and feedback was invaluable.

### ***Self-directed professional development***

Teachers and teacher educators committed to professionalism enthusiastically participate in training to would stay abreast of advances in technology and emerging trends in education. They seek information on best practices and teaching strategies for all types of learners. In recent years, we have seen an increase in self-directed professional development (PD) of educators that includes interactive online webinars, or videos and other content that are accessed through web browsers.

Other interests of teachers and teacher educators include reading books, magazines and blogs on educational innovations. Some conduct research to continually improve their teaching methods and support the performance of their students. Additionally, many attend education conferences and belong to professional organizations to connect with others in the field. Professional associations such as Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Science and Sri Lanka Association for Advancement of Education are making a significant contribution towards teacher and teacher educator professionalism. It is necessary to reward self-directed professional development efforts of teacher and teacher educators.

### ***Authentic learning assessment and Service learning***

Academic performance is the outcome of education or the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals. This is commonly measured by examinations or continuous assessment, but there is a general agreement on how it is best tested or which aspects are most important to be tested. Most students at present study just for the sake of passing a test or an examination after which the knowledge and procedures are forgotten. Hence, the expectation of assessment of teacher education is to be more practical in approach rather than theoretical.

In several countries ‘Service learning’ is considered as one of the competencies that pre-service teachers must demonstrate by graduation. Service learning emerged on the educational settings bridging the gap between academic achievements and the merit of service or volunteerism. At its core, service learning is a learning experience that combines service in the community with structured preparation and reflection opportunities. As a pedagogy, service learning is used in primary and secondary schools and in universities to enhance traditional modes of teaching.

Service learning can develop pre-service teachers professionally, personally and academically, where they develop skills and attributes for teaching as well as commitment to teaching as a career.

Introducing service learning would reduce the emphasis on written examinations that prevent change and reforms introduced towards quality improvement of teacher education programs through authentic teacher assessments. When education becomes more involved with the ‘doing’, students would go further to practice the skills learnt and modify or improve to produce their own unique model.

### **Teacher professional ethics**

Always teaching has been a noble profession in our society. It has the potential to have a great impact in the molding of the next generation. While a great majority of teachers carry with their heads high this noble tradition and even innovate and teach beyond the classroom setting, it can also be contaminated with corruption. We have heard of teachers who sought material or sexual favor/s from students and parents in exchange for a higher academic rating. Other teachers have lost the passion to impart knowledge and are simply going through the motions of teaching, for the sake of fulfilling an obligation.

It is necessary to address the question of teachers’ conduct and accountability in order to enhance excellent academic performance of the students, and in so doing meet the challenges of the 21st century. Teaching is not a profession for ‘anyone’, that is, any person who seeks for a job outside teaching and when unable to be employed, be absorbed to teaching. Our values, attitudes and actions influence the impact of our work. These ethical principles constitute the basis of our ethical awareness. It is our responsibility to act in accordance with these values and principles. It is necessary to consider our own values and ethical guidelines as well as contemporary global ethical issues in education and educational research.

### ***Way forward***

I have attempted to highlight the concerns and priorities towards reforming teacher education. Although each teacher education institution or program may face a unique combination of challenges, they fall into some general categories of issues. I have raised and explored a few of the common issues with some suggestions to address them.

