



Government of Sri Lanka

National Policy

On

Information Technology

In

School Education

Ministry of Education

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. The overriding objective of economic and social development is to improve the quality of lives that people lead, to enhance their well-being and to provide them with opportunities and choices to become productive assets in society.
2. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) of Sri Lanka is of the view that Sri Lanka as a nation is lagging behind in the development of **Information Technology (IT)** in relation to many countries of comparable economic growth and social environment.
3. Development of the new **Information Economy** is based on the status of IT in the country and to create a larger society with IT literacy is a prerequisite. The general education system implemented through the school system is the primary vehicle through which this objective can be achieved. With this objective being achieved an **Information Society** with **E- Culture** would be established and sustained.
4. In Sri Lanka, Computer Education at school level started in 1983. Some schools (less than 10 in number) were given basic home type computers. As this initiative did not provide a direction that would have created a significant impact, Computer Resource Centers (CRCs) were introduced with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). This network of CRCs has now grown to 73 on an island wide basis. These CRCs provide computer literacy (MS Office & Introduction to programming) to students during their vacation and during the period after their G.C.E (O/L) & G.C.E (A/L).
5. However, integration of IT or computer education with the formal curriculum in school education has not taken place as yet. In this backdrop IT is not offered as a subject in the school curriculum. Nevertheless, there are some activities being done through the “activity room” concept in schools under the education reforms. Also, in the business studies syllabus for junior secondary level, there is a marginal involvement of IT.
6. In this context, there is a necessity to have an accelerated implementation program to create this new society. *“In the technological systems of tomorrow, fast, fluid, and self-regulating-machines will deal with the flow of physical materials; men with the flow of information and insight. Machines will increasingly perform the routine tasks; men the intellectual and creative tasks. Machines and men both, instead of being concentrated in gigantic factories and factory cities, will be scattered across the globe, linked together by amazingly sensitive, near-instantaneous communications. Human work will move out of the factory and mass office into the community and the home.”* (Alvin Toffler in Future Shock)

7. The National Policy on Information Technology in School Education (NAPITSE) affirms the commitment of the government towards providing the state of the art knowledge in IT to Sri Lanka's younger generation to prepare them to face the challenges in the 21st Century. As a whole, the nation will achieve computer literacy thus equalling the achievements in general literacy and numeracy. As the world develops further, the most lucrative employment opportunities will be in the IT sector. The government in implementing education reforms is committed to prepare the young generation for the eventual leap into the IT revolution, which is daily unravelling itself.
8. This policy will provide a clear vision and direction in making this a reality. This policy will be followed by an action plan as a six-year strategic plan from 2002 to 2007. This six year project period is divided into three stages:
 - Stage 1: 2002-2003
 - Stage 2: 2004-2005
 - Stage 3: 2006-2007

It will be in the form of a rolling plan undergoing periodic changes with necessary academic & professional inputs being incorporated as and when necessary.

9. The action plan will focus on,
 - **Use of IT in Education (Learning & Teaching)**
 - **Use of IT in management of the education system**

B. VISION

“A new generation of Sri Lankans empowered with Information and Communication Technology”

C. MISSION

“To facilitate the planning, implementation and sustenance of Information Technology education in schools to enhance student's learning and quality of teaching.”

D. GOALS

The NAPITSE will have the following overarching goals:

- ❑ **Envisage and foresee the future global challenges in IT education and lay the foundation for appropriate human resource development to meet such challenges.**
- ❑ **Create conditions enabling the effective use of IT as a tool in learning and teaching at all levels in the general school education.**
- ❑ **Provide “information literacy” for all school leavers.**
- ❑ **Create conditions for effective involvement of school system in lifelong education of citizens.**
- ❑ **Create an information literate population of teachers and teacher educators.**

E. OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIC THEMES

In order to reach the goals the following objectives would be achieved under four major strategic themes. The four strategic themes are:

- **Curriculum Development**
- **Human Resource Development**
- **Physical/Infrastructure Development**
- **Support Initiatives Development**

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

- **To introduce, sustain and enhance IT involvement into general education in schools and create opportunities for IT based learning and teaching.**
- **To introduce IT into pre-service and in-service teacher development and training programmes and create opportunities for system wide professional development of teachers.**

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- To provide necessary education and training to all teachers in government schools to make them competent in using IT for teaching purposes.
- To upgrade officers in the education system to handle IT related activities competently and with ease.
- To create opportunities for out of school population to utilize resources in school based IT resource centers, thus creating an environment for community learning.

Physical /Infrastructure Development

- To allocate and distribute optimal resources in an equitable manner to meet the learning needs of students and learning/teaching requirements of teachers.
- To set up an Information Technology Education Resource Centre (ITERC) at the national level, nine (9) ITERCs at provincial level and zonal level ITERCs for teacher training/development.
- To establish an IT education laboratory at the National Institute of Education (NIE) to improve curriculum development.
- To establish an ITERC at the the Centre for Professional Development of Management of Education.
- To dedicate a National College of Education (NCOE) for development of IT teachers under pre-service teacher training.
- To provide innovative means of training through activities such as mobile training laboratories.
- To set up a Multimedia Education Software & Web Development Centre

Support Initiatives Development

There would have to be support initiatives to ensure the sustenance of IT education in the school system. As IT undergoes rapid changes in terms of technology and usage, the support initiatives will ensure that such changes are incorporated in the learning process of pupils without having to wait for the curriculum changes. The following are the envisaged support initiatives:

- To establish IT school clubs
- To encourage preparation of web sites for schools.
- To encourage teachers to own personal computers.
- To design, develop and maintain a web site for the Ministry of Education & Higher Education to assist the school system in e-learning and information management.
- To convene appropriately time-framed IT education research and development conferences/colloquia.
- To facilitate the setting up of a professional body for those who are involved in IT education in schools.
- To establish a fund to support innovative approaches and creative initiatives for school IT education development.
- To initiate an award scheme to encourage educators to promote innovative IT education.
- To forge strategic partnerships with other government institutions, Sri Lankan Missions abroad, foreign missions in Sri Lanka and national and international NGOs and the private sector to extend the coverage of IT education, promote and enhance the quality of IT education in the school system.

F. CONCLUSION

In the new Millennium, nations are judged by the well being of their citizens; level of education is one of the major determinants. Computer literacy of a nation in future will be a yardstick to measure the level of education. Sri Lanka's success in achieving high levels of basic literacy and numeracy can be capitalized on by pursuing a well thought out strategy on achieving high quality IT education in the general school system.

The NAPITSE will be implemented via an action plan titled, **“National Policy on Information Technology in School Education, Action Plan, Operational Strategies.”** Success will be achieved if the Action Plan is pursued as a national movement.