

Enhancing the Role of Community for Achieving Targets of Universal Primary Education

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyse the progress of Sri Lanka, being a country that signed the millennium declaration in 2000, in attaining the primary education for all by 2015. Only secondary data is used in from both institutional and non-institutional sources for studying the problem. Based on descriptive statistics for analytical purpose, it was found that Sri Lanka is nearly achieved the primary education goal. However, this reveals that this is a result of a long-term process that started since independence. The free education act and the higher welfare expenditure on education and allied services have raised the education and human development related indicators of the country very high. The progress that has been achieved since the declaration has not been attractive and only marginal. Besides, there are regional inequalities in the educational service that has been provided so far. Differences in the quality of primary education between regions, schools, etc. are another problem. Hence, finally, this paper suggests a stakeholder participation approach to get the children involved in primary education to accelerate the progress.

Key words: Millennium development goals, primary education, literacy rate, community participation, stakeholders.

1. INTRODUCTION

Achieving universal primary education is the second millennium development goal established by the United Nations' millennium declaration at the millennium summit in 2000 (UNDG, 2003). This goal same as the other seven goals, should be met by 2015 within 15 years. In order to achieve this goal, the poor countries planned to achieve education in almost similar ways while the rich countries helped in different ways like providing aid, training, and consultancy. Now, 13 years have been passed and only two years are to be completed to reach 2015. During this period, the UN member countries worldwide launched many activities to achieve the goal of

primary education within the forms of their governing systems. Hence, it is very important to examine how far the nations have been successful in reaching the goal.

Any policy or a targeted activity is administered by the prevailing system of governance. As such, the governing system critically determines the effectiveness of achieving policy goals. The supply side of education which is directly related to governance consists of the education administrative system, the leadership method and teamwork in policy making and implementation, etc. The demand side of education which should participate in the decision making and implementation process of education is comprised of mainly children and their parents and family members who takes decisions on the education of children (Chandrakumara, 2008; Ginnelli and Monfardini, 2000; Behrman et al., 1995; Blundell et al., 1999). Clearly mentioned, supply side of education is the country's education institutions, their capacities, administrative system, etc. The demand for education is the registration of children at schools. Governance in supply administration and the also in demand management within the family is crucial in determining the effectiveness of both sides in achieving the goals. In addition, participation of all other stakeholder of primary education influences the success of achieving the targets. This paper focuses on the experience of Sri Lanka in achieving the millennium goal, universal primary education, in the context of Sri Lanka under the prevailing system of governance and proposes a set of recommendations to accelerate the progress towards the targets in 2015.

2. A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The literature related to this paper is selected from theoretical perspectives and empirical studies which are based on the benefits of education issues.

The benefits of education have been articulated since the era of the great philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. For example, the Socratic method of teaching, searching and questioning is important to get an idea about the method of teaching that should be followed even in the present era. Furthermore, Plato's ideas implied that the early education of a child should have a relation and role of a life-long learning. At the beginning of modern era, the great

scholars attempted to link the education with production, growth and development process either within a capitalist or socialist kind of framework. For example, the ideas of the pioneering economist, Smith (1776), can be quoted so as to comprehend the significance of education. He mentioned in his book, ‘An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations’, ‘*The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature as from habit, custom, and education*’ (P.10), which shows the influence of education, among other things, on the formation of behavioral type of a man.

The significance of education was reinforced with the introducing of the human capital concept by Schultz (1961). Human capital is the human beings transformed into more productive labor through education, training, etc. With this new concept, it was accepted that the economic growth can be accelerated through the use of human capital in production. Becker (1981, 1974, 1964, 1962) and many others also emphasized the role of education in the entire process of development of a country.

The ‘Basic Needs Approach (BNA)’ was a development strategy introduced by International Labour Organization (ILO) in mid 1970s as a development approach for underdeveloped countries. This approach identified education as one of the basic needs that should be provided for the poor in the attempt to help them. This is mainly due to the fact that there was a positive relationship between the level of education of people and their level of income. This approach practically followed by international organizations and nations in their foreign aid programme until early 1980s.

Capability approach pioneered by Sen also provides the theoretical basis that elucidates the significance of education. In his article, ‘Development as Capability Expansion’, he mentions,

‘...Some of the subjects thus covered deal with variables that are direct determinants of human capital (e.g., education and health), while others relate to instrumental influences that operate through economic or social processes (e.g., the promotion of agricultural and industrial productivity). (Sen, 2012:54,55).

This emphasizes that education is so important as to directly determine the human capability. The capabilities can differ to the extent of education, training, etc. one has got up to then in his lifetime. Conversion of resources into valuable beings and doings can differ between individuals depending on their capabilities. Hence, the level of income or the economic position of individuals is influenced by the education. The Human Development Approach which was mainly contributed by him also emphasizes the role of education in the development process.

In addition to theoretical facts there is empirical evidence to show the significance of education. Many researchers have shown that there is a clear relationship between education and growth and development. The importance of education can be seen in two main ways. First, individual benefits of education one can get due to education. Second, the benefits spill over on the society due to the education of individuals. Evidence is available for these two main kinds of benefits.

Psacharopoulos (1995), observing a large number of country-specific studies mentions that the overall average rate of returns to an additional year of schooling was 10 percent. Furthermore, he found that the returns were highest in the primary education. The country-wise highest returns are appropriated by low and middle income countries whilst Latin America Caribbean region and Sub-saharan Africa are in the front among them. It is not only Psacharopoulos, most of the other researchers also have found that highest returns to education were appropriated by low-income countries.

Almost all the researchers have failed to include the externalities of education in their estimates. However, they are in a consensus that social returns to education are one of the crucial determinants of development. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2002, 2004) reveals based on the evidence of 93 countries that social returns are always lower than private returns when it was averaged among the countries. Furthermore, the highest returns for primary and secondary levels of education have been recorded for low-income countries. Moreover, social returns to education were highest for primary education whereas it is lowest for higher education.

Some researchers point out that investment in primary education can be justified on the basis of human rights, democracy and political stability arguments. Hallak (1999) shows that the curriculum revisions in Israel attempted to reduce the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians while textbooks in History and Geography were re-written in South Africa to stimulate and promote post-apartheid values. On the basis of the human rights argument, the UN basic declaration on human rights (1948) provides basis that children everywhere in the world should have the access to primary education (Boissiere, 2004). Furthermore, some researchers show that primary education has a positive and significant impact on the political stability. According to McMohan (1994), widespread access to primary education is one of the sources which produce working capital and middle classes and leads a country for economic growth (McMohan, 1994 as cited in Boissiere, 2004). As such, it is unambiguous that primary education help strengthen social cohesion, democracy, political stability and harmonization. However, beyond the primary education there are possibilities to develop some forces that damage this socially friendly background.

Although there is a large body of empirical literature with regard to returns to education, this paper does not take all those studies into account. However, the above selected review of literature clearly reveals two important things. First, education is an essential and crucial determinant of the development and poverty alleviation. Second, both private and social returns are higher for primary education compared to the returns to secondary and higher education.

3. THE CURRENT WORK

Literature shows that education generates valuable private and social returns as well. Besides, access to education for all is a human right. Especially, primary education becomes a basic need of any society. In addition, primary education is a compulsory prerequisite for secondary education which in turn leads to higher education. Moreover, underdeveloped countries, being capital scarce, have to depend on human resource to a greater extent. This is why the United Nations selected 'universal primary education' as the second goal of the millennium declaration.

Target 2A that comes under Goal 2 of MDGs of UN declaration mentions that children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Under this goal, it is intended mainly to uplift the three indicators given below:

- 1) Registration in primary education: whether the children are registered in schools for primary education when their age is correct for that.
- 2) Completion of primary education: how far the children registered at Grade 1 have been successfully completed the primary education from Grade 1 to Grade 05 without dropping out on the way.
- 3) To eliminate gender disparity in primary education: children everywhere will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and girls and boys will have equal access to all level of education.

Sri Lanka has pledged to meet the above three targets within fifteen years from the status quo in 2000 to 2015. Hence, this paper is an attempt to solve the following research problem:

The Research problem: Being a signatory to MDGs, Sri Lanka also has pledged to meet the universal primary education goal. Although Sri Lanka was not low in the status of primary education, the progress achieved since 1990 to date has not been satisfactory to reach the targets by 2015. The country averages of primary education indicators in Sri Lanka remain very high. However, regional variations are also noticeable. As such, this study attempts to solve the problem, how the progress of primary education can be accelerated so as to reach the primary education goal within few years. It is expected to achieve the following objectives by solving this problem.

- 1) to identify whether Sri Lanka can achieve the primary education goal of the millennium declaration by 2015. The role of stakeholder communities is also to be taken into consideration in this connection.
- 2) To examine how far Sri Lanka has been able to achieve the primary education targets of MDGs.
- 3) To identify the role of stakeholder communities in accelerating the press of achieving educational targets.

4.METHODOLOGY

In any economy, development goals, theories, policies and data have an inter-relationship. Development goals are mostly derived from the development theory. The strongest theory that emphasizes the role of education in development is the ‘human capital theory’ introduced by Shultz (1961). It shows that education transforms human beings into valuable human capital. Development policies are derived from the development theory. Development data is the result of the all these things. All these concepts have reversal relationships with each other. Figure – 1 is helpful in understanding this situation.

The study is solely dependent on secondary data obtained from institutional sources such as Census and Statistics Department of Sri Lanka (CDSL) and Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) and non-institutional sources such as individual researchers. Especially, the mid-term review executed by the CDSL (2008) was mainly used for evaluating mid-term progress in the indicators of the primary education goal.

The indicators to measure and monitor the performance of millennium development goals are common for all UN member countries. The following are the main indicators used for measuring the performance achieved in primary education (UN, 2003):

- 1) Student registrations at primary education as a percentage of total student population of that age.
- 2) The percentage of students completed the primary education out of the total number of students who registered at grade - 1.
- 3) Literacy rate of 15 to 24 year olds (This was taken since the literacy rate of this age range olds is mainly because of their primary education).
- 4) Gender, girls and boys, disparity in the performance.

5. LIMITATIONS

The study was mainly constrained by the availability of data. Especially, baseline data was not available relatedly to each and every performance indicator. Furthermore, some data were not given in a way that it can be used for showing the differences between regions, gender, etc. Despite these limitations, the study attempted to maximize the validity of the conclusions. However, due to unavailability of data for the Northern Province, that area could not be taken into consideration.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1. PERFORMANCE ACHIEVED FROM 2000 TO 2013

Registration in Primary Education:

Sri Lanka, being a country that introduced and implemented a free-education policy for all children since 1948 and spent a high budget expenditure for education until recently. The performance achieved in the three main indicators of primary education in Sri Lanka is first taken into consideration. The very basic indicator, student registration at grade 1, has been behaved in the way shown in Table – 1.

Table – 1: Net enrolment ratio in primary education

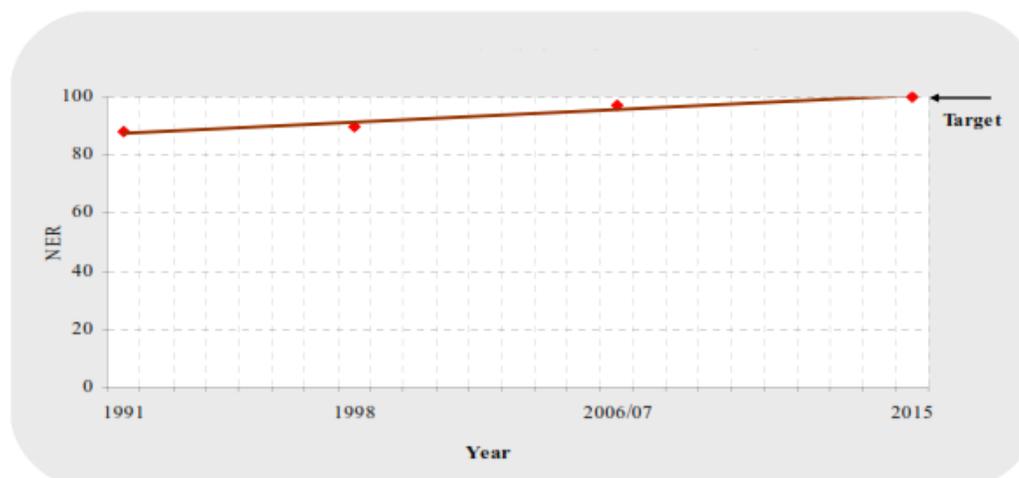
Country/province/ District/Sector	Reference year				
	1991		2006/7		
	Pre-declaration		Six years after declaration (2006/7)	Gap to be achieved 2006/7 - 2015	Rank
Sri Lanka (Average)	88.0	96.4 (in 2002)	97.5	2.5	
Western			96.9	3.1	14
Colombo			97.3	2.7	11
Gampaha			97.6	2.4	9
Kalutara			94.7	5.3	18
Central			98.0	2.0	6
Kandy			98.8	1.2	5
Matale			97.3	2.7	11

Nuwara-eliya			96.8	3.2	15
Southern			97.7	2.3	8
Galle			99.3	0.7	2
Matara			93.2	6.8	19
Hambantota			100.0	0	1
Northern			-	-	-
Eastern			99.0	1.0	4
Batticaloa			98.8	1.2	5
Ampara			99.1	0.9	3
Trincomalee			-	-	-
North Western			97.8	2.2	7
Kurunegala			99.1	0.9	3
Puttalam			95.5	4.5	17
North Central			96.1	3.9	16
Anuradhapura			94.8	5.2	17
Polonnaruwa			99.1	0.9	3
Uva			97.4	2.6	10
Badulla			97.6	2.4	9
Monaragala			97.1	2.9	13
Sabaragamuwa			97.2	2.8	12
Rathnapura			97.4	2.6	10
Kegalle			96.9	3.1	14
Sector					
Urban			97.4	2.6	
Rural			97.6	2.4	
Estate			94.6	5.4	

According to the trend line shown in Figure – 1, it shows that the primary education target can be easily achieved by 2015.

Figure – 1: Net enrolment ratio in primary education

The time trend



Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

Table – 1 shows that even before the UN declaration on millennium goals and targets, Sri Lanka not low in primary registration ratio. Figure – 1 shows the trend line of the primary registration ratio. The following comments can be made based on Table -1 and Figure -1 on primary enrolment ratio:

- The country average in 1991 has been 88.0 percent which implies that it would have been more than that at the year of declaration in 2000. Free education policy implemented since the beginning of independence along with the higher welfare expenditure that includes education and other complementary services such as transport, food can be considered as the reasons behind this this situation. In addition, the compulsory primary education policy enforced and executed by the government must have been a cause to increase the primary registration ratio.
- Hambantota shows the best performance by reaching the target level of 100 percent in primary registration ratio even before nine (9) years prior to 2015. In addition, Galleand Kurunegala districts are very close to reach the target.
- However, the registration itself does not mean at all that all who registered get the primary education as expected. Even if the registration increases due to compulsory education rule, the point that whether they really reach the level expected by primary education is another thing.
- According to the trend line, the target can be easily achieved by 2015. However, it seems that passing the final gap - even if it is a very small gap equal to 12 percentage points – takes a very long time. Hence, a special effort should be made in achieving the target.

Completion of Primary Education:

The secondly important criterion, proportion of children reached grade 5 out of all the children who registered at grade 5, is given in Table – 2.

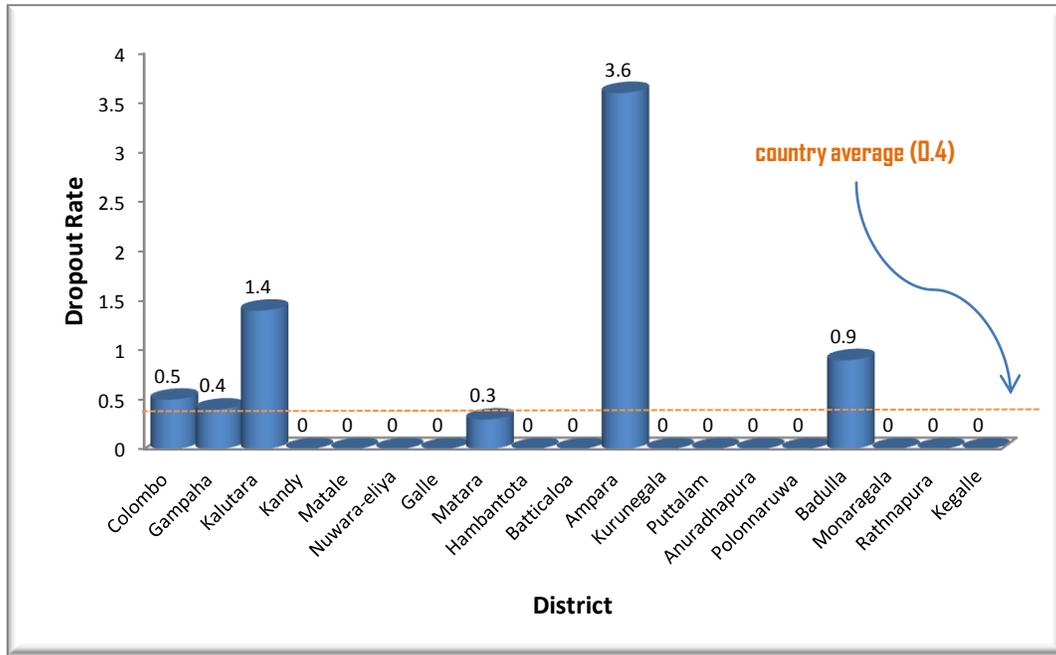
Table – 2: Proportion of pupils started at Grade 1 who reached grade 5

Country/province/ District/Sector	Percentage	Dropout rate = Gap to be achieved 2006/7 – 2015
(1)	(2)	(3)
Sri Lanka (Average)	99.6	0.4
Western	99.3	0.7
Colombo	99.5	0.5
Gampaha	99.6	0.4
Kalutara	98.6	1.4
Central	100.00	0
Kandy	100.0	0
Matale	100.0	0
Nuwara-eliya	100.0	0
Southern	99.9	0.1
Galle	100.0	0
Matara	99.7	0.3
Hambantota	100.0	0
Northern	-	-
Eastern	98.2	1.8
Batticaloa	100.0	0
Ampara	96.4	3.6
Trincomalee	-	-
North Western	100.0	0
Kurunegala	100.0	0
Puttalam	100.0	0
North Central	100.0	0
Anuradhapura	100.0	0
Polonnaruwa	100.0	0
Uva	99.4	0.6
Badulla	99.1	0.9
Monaragala	100.0	0
Sabaragamuwa	100.0	0
Rathnapura	100.0	0
Kegalle	100.0	0
Sector		
Urban	99.2	0.8
Rural	99.7	0.3
Estate	98.9	1.1

Source: Column (1) & (2): Census Department of Sri Lanka, 2009.

Column (3): Author constructed based on column (2).

Figure – 2: Dropout rate (Target to be achieved by district)



Source: Author constructed based on Department of Census, 2009.

The following interpretations can be made with regard to Table – 2 and Figure – 2.

- Thirteen districts out of 19 have reached the target by 2007 well before eight years. However, Ampara shows the highest dropout rate notwithstanding the very high primary registration rate. The higher registration rate in this rural district with a high poverty rate seems to be a reason for the highest dropout rate. The other outstanding areas are Badulla and Kalutara districts.
- Despite the highest infrastructure and school facilities in the Western Province, all three districts, Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts still have not reached the level of other 13 districts where the dropout rate is zero. In the case of Colombo, the population who are living in slums and shanties can be thought of to be one main reason which is responsible for this situation. The number of underserved settlements has been estimated

to be near 1500 within the city limits of Colombo (DFID / UNDP / UN-HABITAT / UMP Urban Poverty Reduction Project (2002).

Completion of primary education:

Although the above section considered only the children who attend school from grade 1 to grade 5, it did not figure out how many of them complete the primary education. Table – 3 shows the percentage of children who complete the primary.

Table – 3: Primary completion rate (2006/7)

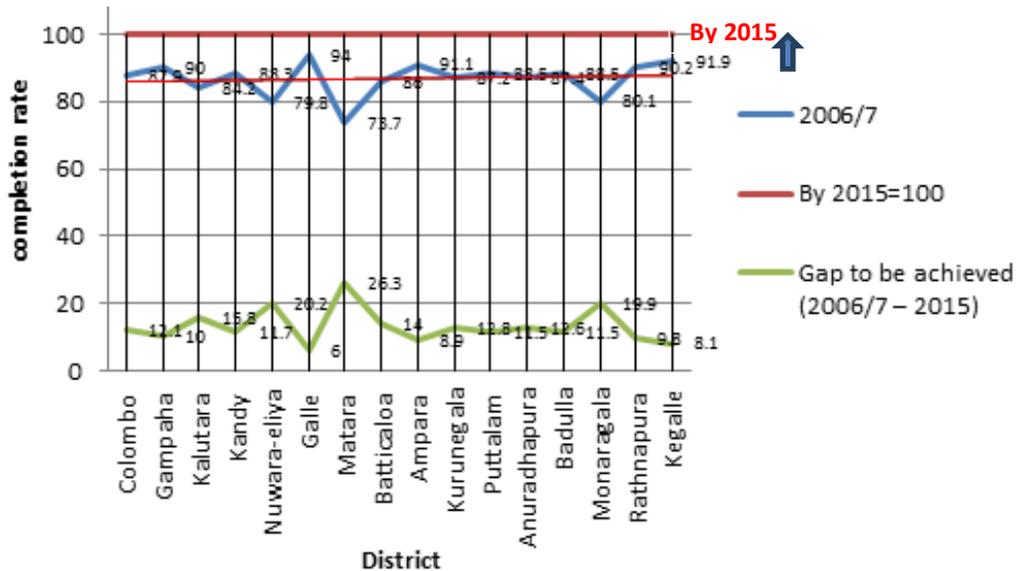
Country/province/ District/Sector	Percentage	Gap to be achieved 2006/7 – 2015
(1)	(2)	(3)
Sri Lanka (Average)	88.2	11.8
Western	88.0	12.0
Colombo	87.9	12.1
Gampaha	90.0	10.0
Kalutara	84.2	15.8
Central	86.8	13.2
Kandy	88.3	11.7
Matale	n.a.	n.a.
Nuwara-eliya	79.8	20.2
Southern	88.0	12.0
Galle	94.0	6.0
Matara	73.7	26.3
Hambantota	n.a.	n.a.
Northern	n.a.	
Eastern	88.6	13.4
Batticaloa	86.0	14.0
Ampara	91.1	8.9
Trincomalee	n.a.	n.a.
North Western	87.6	12.4
Kurunegala	87.2	12.8
Puttalam	88.5	11.5
North Central	92.2	7.8
Anuradhapura	87.4	12.6
Polonnaruwa	n.a.	n.a.
Uva	85.4	14.6
Badulla	88.5	11.5
Monaragala	80.1	19.9
Sabaragamuwa	91.0	9.0
Rathnapura	90.2	9.8
Kegalle	91.9	8.1
Sector		

Urban	87.0	13.0
Rural	89.5	10.5
Estate	69.5	30.5

n.a.-not available

Source: Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

Figure – 4: Primary completion



Source: Author constructed based on Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

The results shown in Table – 3 and Figure –4 can be interpreted in the following ways:

- Primary education completion rate remains in a very high position in Sri Lanka by 2007. The gap to be filled by 2015 is only 11.8.
- Regional differences in the completion rate show that the lowest rate is from the Matara district. However, this result suggested by data is not consistent when the other indicators of the performance of education are taken into consideration. The best completion rate is from Galle which is adjacent to Matara district.
- Apart from that, completion rate at Nuwara-eliya and Monaragala districts remains low.
- Sector-wise differences in the completion rate show that Estate sector is the worst.

Literacy rate of 15 to 25 year olds:

Recent studies show that despite the availability of schools everywhere in the country, there are huge discrepancies in the availability facilities or school quality between regions (Chandrakumara, 2012). This situation can affect the differences in literacy rate of 15 to 25 year olds between the same regions. Literacy rate of 15 to 25 year olds is not directly associated with the target of primary education. However, the literacy rate of this age group is mainly determined by the primary education that they have got before the age 15 year. Even though the literacy rate is not a great measure education success, it reflects how effective the primary education in making the people literate is. Furthermore, a higher literacy rate implies that people are trainable so as to build human capital in them in a later stage.

Table – 4: Literacy rate of 15 to 25 year olds

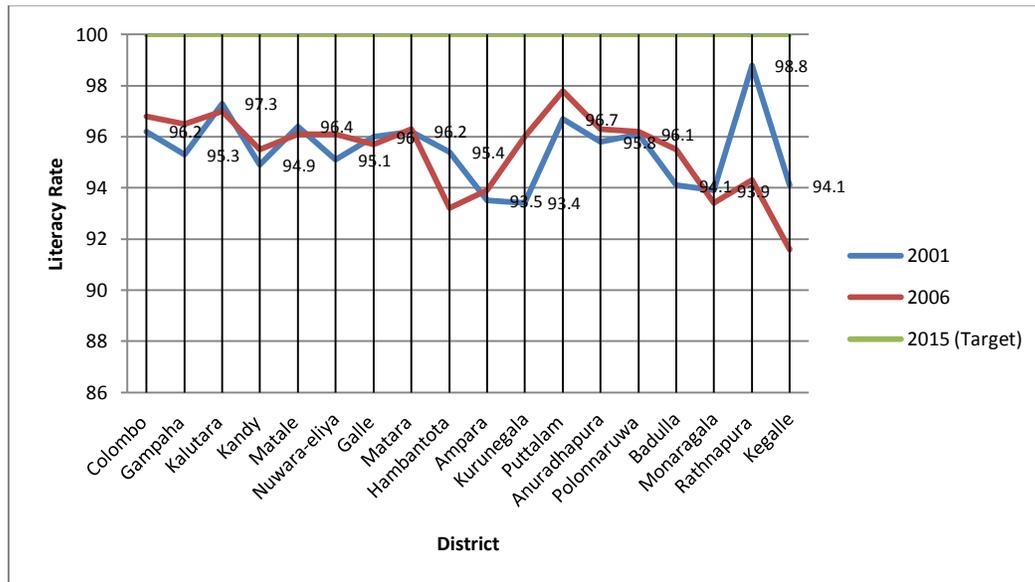
Country/province/ District/Sector	2001	2006	Gap to be achieved (2006/7 – 2015)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Sri Lanka (Average)	95.6	95.8	4.2
Western	96.2	96.8	3.2
Colombo	95.3	96.5	3.5
Gampaha	97.3	97.0	3.0
Kalutara	96.0	97.1	2.9
Central	94.9	95.5	4.5
Kandy	96.4	96.1	3.9
Matale	95.1	96.1	3.9
Nuwara-eliya	91.8	94.2	5.8
Southern	96.0	95.7	4.3
Galle	96.2	96.3	3.7
Matara	95.4	93.2	6.8
Hambantota	96.6	97.6	2.4
Northern	-	-	-
Eastern	-	94.4	5.6
Batticaloa	93.5	93.9	6.1
Ampara	-	94.7	5.3
Trincomalee	-	-	-
North Western	93.4	96.0	4
Kurunegala	96.7	97.8	2.2
Puttalam	94.2	92.7	7.3
North Central	95.8	96.3	3.7

Anuradhapura	96.1	96.2	3.8
Polonnaruwa	95.2	96.4	3.6
Uva	94.1	95.5	4.5
Badulla	93.9	93.4	6.6
Monaragala	94.5	97.4	2.6
Sabaragamuwa	98.8	94.3	5.7
Rathnapura	94.1	91.6	8.4
Kegalle	95.8	98.6	1.4
Sector			
Urban	95.5	95.7	4.3
Rural	96.3	96.6	3.4
Estate	85.5	83.9	16.1

n.a.-not available

Source: Column (1), (2) & (3): Census Department of Sri Lanka, 2009.
Column (4): Author constructed based on columns (2) & (3).

Figure – 5: Literacy rate of 15 to 25 year olds



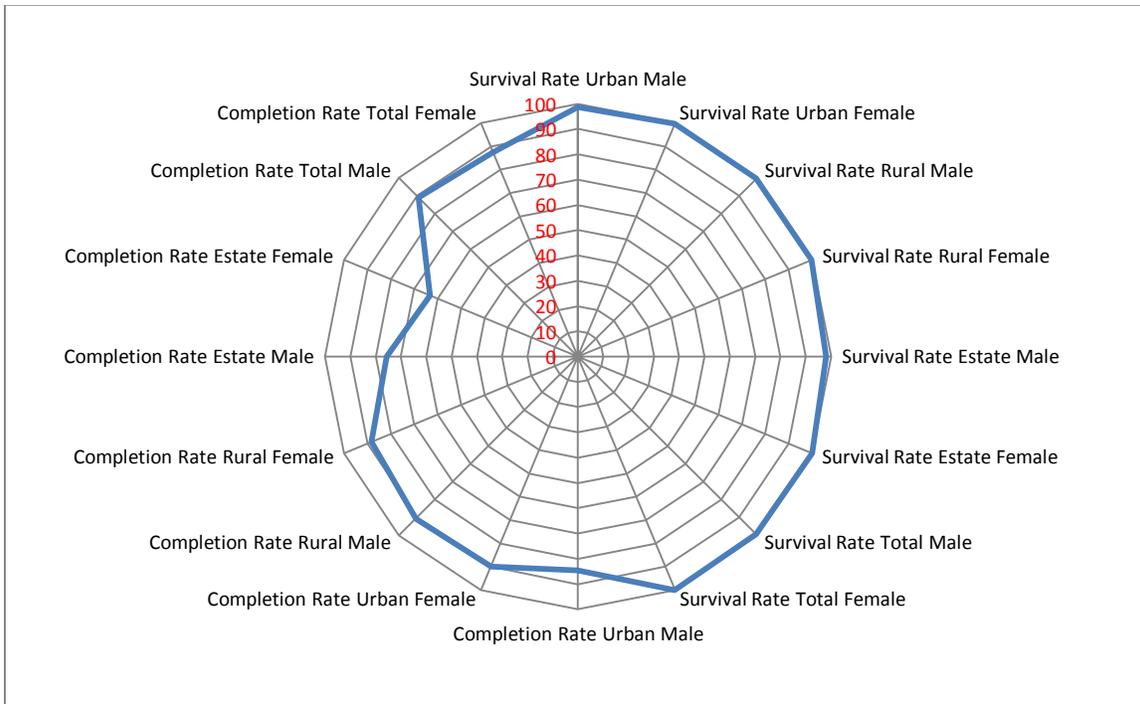
Source: Author constructed based on Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

Results given in Table – 4 and Figure – 5 can be interpreted with comments as follows:

- Increase in the literacy rate of the 15 to 24 year olds from 2001 to 2006 negligible when the country averages between the two years are compared.
- A regional comparison with respect to districts shows that highest performance is from the Rathnapura district. In addition, Puttalam, Badulla, Matara districts are outstanding.

- A sector-wise comparison shows that the Estate sector where the inhabitant of plantation laborers has been performed well.
- As a whole performance that has been achieved within the seven years period after the declaration is certainly not attractive.

Figure – 6: Primary survival and completion rates by gender and sector



Source: Author constructed based on Department of Census and Statistics, 2009.

Figure – 6 shows the male female difference in survival and the completion rates. The outstanding features of the figure can be identified as follows:

- Both survival and completion rates in primary education remains high in Sri Lanka compared to about 81 percent of children in developing world and just 51 percent of children in Sub-Saharan Africa complete primary education (UNDP, 2005).
- The right side of the figure perfect compared to that of the left side. This means that completion rates of both males and females are lesser than the survival rates.

- There is no difference in the survival rates between males and females. However, the completion rates of females are little less than that of males both in Rural and Estate sectors. However, the completion rate of females in the urban sector is little higher than that of the males.
- Completion rates of the Estate sector are the worst for both males and females. The completion rate of females in this sector is much lower than the country average and also the male completion rate of the same sector.

The above analysis shows that even if Sri Lanka has nearly achieved the primary education goal, there are inequalities between regions, schools, etc. in the educational facilities and the quality of education. Furthermore, the achievement of Sri Lanka is the result of a long-term process that started since independence and the progress after 2000 has not been attractive. In order to achieve the goal completely the real involvement of children in primary education, the participation of all stakeholders in the educational decision making process is necessary.

4.2. INVOLVEMENT OF THE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE UPLIFTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Stakeholder contribution is important for the success of any planned or other activity. In the case of primary education too it is not difficult to identify the different kinds of stakeholders. The stakeholders can mainly be divided into two parts such as supply side stakeholders and the demand side stakeholders. In Sri Lanka the primary education is highly controlled by the Government which is the dominant stakeholder of the supply side. In addition, the other three main supply-side stakeholders are,

- 1) All educational institutions (Public, private, semi-governmental, non-governmental, etc.)
- 2) Teachers (Public sector and other)
- 3) Complementary service providers (e.g. providers of transport and other complementary services)
- 4) Donors

The main stakeholders of the demand-side are,

- 1) Children
- 2) Parents or guardian
- 3) Elder and younger siblings of children (elder sisters and brothers and younger sisters and brothers)
- 4) Alumnae or ex-students (This group may be included in the supply-side also)
- 5) Those who employ children for labor with or without payment
- 6) Others who affect the education of children directly or indirectly

Involvement of all these stakeholder communities is important for achieving the goal of primary education. It is therefore possible to evaluate the role of different stakeholders in the primary education in Sri Lanka. An analysis in regard shows that the primary education has been largely managed by the Government through the supply of educational facilities and the enforcement of the rule of compulsory primary education enacted in 1997 and implemented in 1998. The following are the main activities responsible by the Government:

- Formulating national policy
- Monitoring standards at educational institutions
- Formulating national curricula and training personnel
- Management of government schools and controlling the standards of other schools
- Planning and conducting examinations

The governance framework for education has undergone a change with the devolution of power by introducing provincial councils in Sri Lanka. The central government is responsible for national education policy while the provincial councils plays an important role in school administration.

In addition, providers of education and complementary services such as transport in the private sector have also been the stakeholders involved in the primary education.

The demand –side which consistsof enrolling children schools, motivating them for attending school and be survived in education and successful completion of primary education, etc. as such, parents and other family adults who takes decisions with this regard should also participate in the education governance by way of participating in management decision making.

As a policy, it has been accepted that policy making and education management should further devolve in such a way that institutional level agents such as principals of schools, sectional heads, teachers together with local communities should involve in decision making so as to uplift the effectiveness and the outcome of education. This attempt could herald a new era of governance related to education if it happens successfully. Under this policy, a pilot project that includes 1552 schools was initiated to test the method of autonomous governance. School improvement councils were set set up in all these schools including the principal, representative teachers, parents and alumnae. They were authorized to take decisions on some given activities.The management of schools based on this method of empowerment ofservice providers and the communities was known as the school-based management. Under this method, school authorities are accountable to the community via the councils while the communities get the opportunity to participate in school management.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In considering the progress of the primary education towards the achievement of targets by 2015 the following conclusions can be made:

- As a whole Sri Lanka can be considered as a country that has been reaching the targets of the primary education goal. However, the trend towards the achievement of this target has been started well before signing for the millennium development goals. This achievement is the result of the free education policy implemented for more than six decades along with the welfare expenditure on education and complementary services. This was further supplemented by the compulsory education policy implemented since 1998.

- The progress that has been achieved after the declaration has not been attractive.
- Regional inequality in the achievement of primary education targets is conspicuous. In some areas, the targets have been achieved even before 2013 while some areas are still backward.
- The quality of education and its differences between regions and individual schools and school types, etc. have been overlooked since such indicators had not been included in the plans based on millennium declaration.
- Community participation, especially, demand-side participation of parents, family adults, etc. and the participation of stakeholders of other primary education is not satisfactory.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The on-going community participation part of the school management system should be further widened and strengthened. The inclusion of the following activities into an activity plan prepared for that purpose can be thought to be important:

- a) Develop the theoretical basis to justify why community should participate for improving primary education (social benefits, spillover effects or externalities).
- b) Identify all supply and demand-side stakeholders who can positively or negatively affect the primary education.
- c) Identify how the ways that different types of stakeholders can affect the primary education.
- d) Identify or formulate strategies to increase the positive impact of stakeholders while minimizing the negative impact.

- e) Include the identified activities in national and local level plans and implement it with a rolling plan system.

Furthermore, introducing some more additional indicators to measure the performance of primary education is necessary. Such indicators should be suitable to measure the quality of primary education and its differences between schools, regions, etc. In order to identify the issues and problems related to millennium goals, it is necessary to study it in depth so that it can give recommendations for a plan after 2015.

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