

An Analysis of Education for Social Cohesion and Peace in Sri Lanka

by

Chamila Geethanjalee Mallawaarachchi

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Abstract

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country which encountered a devastating civil war for 26 years. Although war ended in 2009, Sri Lanka is still far from reaching positive peace, as ethnic disharmony and national disintegration adversely affect the nation-building process. This situation has impelled some government and private institutions to promote social cohesion and peace through many means including education. This study is an analysis of education for social cohesion and peace in Sri Lanka. Mainly the programs proposed by the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace 2008 fall under seven areas: curriculum, teacher education, second national language, whole school culture & community, integration, co-curriculum and research (Ministry of Education, 2008) are concerned in this research. In addition, the similar programs conducted by NGOs are also concerned. Accordingly, this study discovers the progress of programs implemented in building social cohesion and peace in Sri Lanka for ten years from 2008-2018. Progress of programs were evaluated based on the extent to which the objectives of the National Policy were achieved. This research mainly used qualitative methods as it required a detailed investigation about programs and perceptions of research participants about these programs. Coding was also used to categorize data and obtain percentages and frequencies. This study was conducted covering 400 stakeholders of education, including policy and program makers, donors, educators and formal and non-formal students in five provinces of Sri Lanka. The results show a strong compatibility of participants' perceptions with the objectives of the National Policy indicating the "relevance" of programs conducted to achieve these objectives. Overall, programs were found "effective" as participants have acquired the intended knowledge and skills and are applying to their lives what they learned. Some of the programs initiated have been continued successfully marking the "sustainability." Programs have also made a positive "impact" on participants by changing their perceptions and behavior. However, "efficiency" is low as there is neither a systematic mechanism nor coordination delivering these programs.