

The Impact of Governance Related to Training of Youth as a Resource Base for National Productivity

Governance is a value based decision making process demanding high standards of integrity from all concerned stakeholders relating to life of people in all social and economic strata. State Organisations, Corporate/Private sector and Civil Society are the fundamental segments, which shares the responsibility of governance in a country.

The author perceives Civil Society as the productive base of a country and therefore, the impact of good governance has direct relevance to its high efficiency, integrity and productivity. Productivity at a National level depends on getting the maximum possible output from the inherent qualities and capabilities of the society and is best addressed at the level of the youth populace of a country.

While the State creates a conducive political, economic and legal environment, the corporate sector (public and private) generates jobs and income for the Civil Society, which in turn facilitates political and social interaction and generates economic activities. The interaction of the above stakeholders in a high productive social environment is the success to economic stability and national development.

To sustain this productive base, good governance should also take into consideration the global market environment and the sustainability of the local natural environment, which if adversely disturbed has detrimental effects on the future productivity (although the other segments retain the ability to support productivity).

In countries like Sri Lanka, there is a vast amount of human resources to be tapped by efficiently harnessing the skills and talents of the youth, which is a National Asset. Currently this segment of the population does not contribute to maximizing productivity due to neglect and deficiency in guidance towards appropriate career paths. Institutions such as the Organization of Professional Associations has undertaken a National Career Guidance Program to fulfill this lacuna and increase productivity at a national level by maximizing output through efficient career guidance. It has now become the responsibility of the state and the corporate sector, as they are the ultimate beneficiaries from a highly productive youth force, which is the foundation to a Civil Society.

The primary and secondary education sector has the responsibility of incorporating, facilitating and comprehensively addressing parental and pupil guidance through good governance and state policy, to direct the youth towards appropriate careers, better suited to the individual, to maximize output and thereby effect better productivity from the populace when they (the youth) reach adulthood.

Key Words:- Governance; Productivity; Civil Society; Productive Base; Youth force; Career Guidance; Maximize output.

The paper deals with a particular niche in the Corporate and Private Sector (which forms the civil society of a country) and is based on the premise that, "civil society is the productive base of a country", and should not be treated as a vast residual category of all non-state organizations either formal or informal. This perception by the author is based on the view that a highly educated society with high innovative and technical skills, managed and governed efficiently, is highly productive in all

spheres and hence leads to high income generation and thereby stability of the country. The opposite is unrest due to low income as a result of low productivity, as shown in the following diagram (Fig. 1), which progressively goes into a vicious cycle of decline of social values, responsibility and degeneration of the society.

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rector, Center for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka) states that, quote - (1) " There is a rich theoretical literature on the concept of civil society, ranging from the descriptive to the explicitly and self consciously ideological". quote - (2) " Whilst civil society groups in this formulation do not seek the capture of state power for themselves, they are stakeholders in the process of defining its structure, checking and balancing its exercise and in securing agreement on the rules of competition". (OPA, 2001)

1.1 Governance and Productive Base

In the context of productivity, good governance is value based, demanding high integrity from those of all social and economic strata. The State, Corporate (state and private) and Civil Society, forms the three main interactive segments responsible for governance in a country. (Fig. 2)

While the state creates the political, economic and legal environment, the corporate sector generates jobs and income and the civil society facilitates political and social interaction. This is the classic model generally accepted as the partnership to achieve good governance. However, in a democracy, the state and the corporate sector draws it personnel and is an extension of the civil society, determining the stakeholders in the interaction. Civil society comprises of all individuals of a country. Simultaneously, some individuals of this society, due

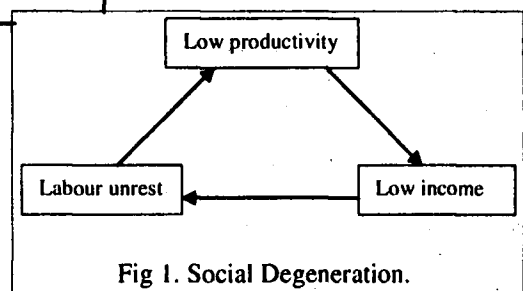


Fig 1. Social Degeneration.

to ownership, training, education, employment and individual interests, become members of the corporate and state sector and the government. Hence the authors perception of the civil

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society (state and corporate sector) being one entity, forming the productive base of a country.

1.2 Governance and the Economy

The Sri Lankan economy, which has entered a phase of decline over the past years, appear to be in a crisis not only due to the effects of globalization, but also as a result of a lack of accountability, decline in ethical standards, deviation from traditional moral values and thereby a breakdown of governance in general, which has set in motion a vicious cycle, adversely impacting on the efficiency of state, private and civil functions. It is the result of five decades of cumulative neglect and deterioration, gathering momentum over the years. Numerous efforts to reverse this process through reforms were negated by vested interests and political indifference. This crisis has been identified by the OPA as the "Crisis of Governance, the Key Issues". (OPA.2001)

While accepting the fact that the above status requires fundamental reforms, this study does not attempt to find solutions to this crisis, which is being addressed by the OPA, suggesting remedial measures to safeguard democracy through reforms in the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead it attempts to target efficiency in productivity by addressing a niche in the education system, which could be identified as partly the responsibility of the state sector and partly the private sector, to bring about long term reforms to improve the productivity and the better utilization of the potential knowledge and skills of the youth in the country.

1.3 Governance and Sustainable Development

Good Governance and Sustainable Human Development (SHD) should go hand in hand to eliminate poverty. Sustainable Human Development, according to the UNDP, quote, "is the increasing of peoples choices and capabilities through the formation of social capital so as to meet as equitably as possible the economic, political and institutional needs of current generations without compromising the needs of the future". (UNDP. HRD Report, 2001). This, according to the report, is to be achieved by focussing on poverty alleviation, advancing the position of women in society, creating opportunities for productive employment and protection and regenerating the environment.

1.4 Governance and Education

In the age of technological growth and innova-

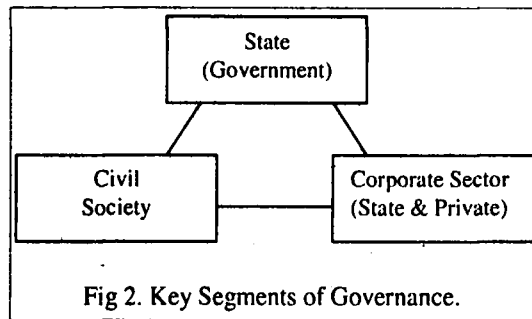


Fig 2. Key Segments of Governance.

tion, it is the responsibility of the government to invest in the development and diversification of such skills within a society. Rethinking and in some instances overhauling educational policies and redirecting funds towards appropriate sectors in education and skills development desires skillful management of educational plans, which may not be an easy task and politically unpopular. For example, in Sri Lanka the university places for arts streams far exceeds the National requirements, but affecting a change needs a complete overhaul in the secondary schools system, where there is a lack of facilities and personnel for teaching science subjects in most schools, specially in the provinces. **The statistics indicate that there are only 588 out of about 2,426 schools teaching up to Advance Level in the country, offering science teaching at Advance Level (Exams Dept, 1998).** The School census (chart below) shows that the status in year 2000 still remains the same. Consequently, 4,323 places out of a total of 11,805 places are offered to Arts graduates in the Sri Lankan universities when compared to the other streams. (Uni. Stats. 2000).

This is clear example of the need to overhaul educational budgets, resource distribution and teacher recruitment policies in schools if the country is to introduce or increase 'technical skills training' in secondary and tertiary educational system. **With better resources and mandatory enrolment, the quality and orientation of education at every grade could be improved by introduction of career guidance at appropriate levels to produce the desired balance in the output.** It is a known phenomenon that low quality in secondary schools leads to low completion in secondary schools and low enrolment in tertiary education and skills development. In Sri Lanka, this low out put of technological skills is specially attributed to inadequate science teaching in the schools, which will be detrimental to devel-

opment of overall technological skills in the future working population.

This redirection is seen in some advanced economies, where reforms have given new emphasis and better options to the people, based on employment patterns. (UNDP. HRD Report, 2001) Quote, "Students are encouraged to keep their education and career options open. In Denmark, general courses in vocational programs have opened new pathways to higher education. In the United States, examination system allows students to choose subjects from both general and vocational programs. In Finland, the government had raised the status of vocational education and increased public resources for on-the-job learning. Since 1999, all three year vocational courses have had to offer six months work experience to every student."

For good governance of the education system, orientation and context is as important as resource allocation and management. Public investment in education and skills development should be geared to yield high returns to society as a whole. In Sri Lanka, public spending in education increased from 2.7% of GNP (1985-87) to 3.4% of GNP (1995-97) (UNDP. HRD Report, 2001, p196). However, the number admitted to the various streams in the universities remain more or less the same, indicating that the increase in expenditure may have been to compensate the increase of population or cost of living and not directed towards rectifying the imbalance between the arts and other educational streams.

2. Preliminary Assessment of Governance Related to the Study

Like in all other sectors the education system too in Sri Lanka has suffered its drawback due to misguided policies and bad management, which has created vast disparities in educational standards, specifically in the underprivileged areas in the provinces. The ill effects of inefficient budgeting and misdirected governance has deprived certain schools of needed funds or inadequate funds for developing curricula and obtaining necessary teachers for training of pupils in fields specially in the science streams, appropriate to the job markets.

Functioning Schools		
	Number	Percentage
Total	9,972	100
1AB Schools having A/L (Science) Stream	586	5.9
1C Schools having A/L (Arts and/or Commerce) Streams only	1,863	18.7
Type 2 Schools having classes only up to grade 11	3,910	39.2
Type 3 Schools having classes only up to grade 8	3,613	36.2

Statistical Branch, Ministry of Education (2000)

Improper distribution of schools and inadequate transport facilities for traveling to schools in remote areas have played a major role in creating early drop-outs, reflected in the statistics giving alarming signals, which has the potential of leading to high unemployment, vagrancy, unsuited employment placement and poor development of skills for the future. In the past, Sri Lanka maintained a high literacy rate in the East due to the free education policy, which is now being challenged by bad governance and politicisation.

The Primary and Secondary educational system in Sri Lanka is structured so that the pupil spends 11 years (including the Grade 5 Scholarship Examination), before sitting the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level Examination (GCE O/Level). After which another two years of study is required before the Candidate sits the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level Examination (GCE A/Level). The analysis of performance statistics for a sample year (1998) (Fig 3) reveals certain inadequacies in the system, which requires fundamental rectification if the system is to be used as the first step for the training of the young generation, which is the future productive base.

In more recent years, statistics show that lesser numbers are sitting for General Certificate examinations. This is probably due to the drop in the rate of increase in population and not due to any changes to drop-out rates or failure in examinations.

It is alarmingly evident from the above statistics that around 365,000 youth coming out of the school system are in search of skills development and other vocational training, or in search of gainful employment. This number further increases when the drop-out rate is considered in the primary school level before the GCE O/Level, where the youth may require training in semi skills. The balance unfortunate percentage has no option but to seek unskilled labour in the various sectors available.

It should also be noted that out of the 73,422 candidates qualifying for university entrance, only 11,805 were absorbed into the universities, leaving 61,617 intelligent young people seeking other tertiary or higher education, such as technical education, management training, para-professional skills or entry into the few private higher educational institutions mainly in the city of Colombo.

This in total terms of future productivity, this is a large waste of potential manpower and talent, which if not dealt with at an early stage, would be directed towards unskilled or semi skilled labour, which is a major drawback to the development of the country.

In Sri Lanka, due to the absence of a professional and systematic vocational guidance and counseling services to help students make knowledgeable decisions regarding their future careers, a large number of youth seeking alternate skills development and employment as mentioned above, are unaware of job opportunities, alternate career paths and training options available in the country, where this mass of youth could be directed. The problem is worse in the rural areas where neither the parents nor the students have access to vocational guidance and counseling, as such services are non-existent or if provided are in a basic or rudimentary stage. Even those who qualify to continue with the education system, tend to mainly aspire to follow the Arts and Humanities streams due to the lack of comprehensive guidance or due to the encouragement of their parents or teachers, who are incapable and do not have the necessary resource material to give proper guidance and direction towards career paths appropriate to the candidates' attributes. The lack of science education in many rural secondary schools, as mentioned earlier in the paper, has aggravated this problem by narrowing the options available for the young schooling majority.

The surprising fact is that there are about 700 certified vocational training centers in the country, under the umbrella of the Vocational

Training Authority. While more are desired, the majority youth seems to be unaware of such institutes and skills training centers and the potential vocational training options available for future employment.

The draft report for the "National Policy and Action Program on Post-School Training and Employment", prepared by the National Education Commission (SL), has pointed out that the school system is in need of professional and systematic vocational guidance and counseling services to inform students and help make decisions on their career paths early in their educational years, depending on their potential abilities and attributes. The need for such services could be well justified by a study of the existing educational and skill development facilities available in the country. The need for reforms in governance related to these facilities and budgetary allocations in the education system should be included in the study with comparison made with such facilities in other developing countries in the region.

The realization of the full potential of the individual to meet the challenges of the 21st Century effectively should be the primary concern in the socio-economic development process and the Sri Lanka government should allocate high priority to human resource development with good quality education and market oriented skills development.

3. Emerging Issues / Areas for Further Research

Governance in education needs to be perceived through institutional design, propagation of values related to the society and culture. In Sri Lanka, the process of globalization has brought in Western values leaning towards a Dollar conscious society, which is distinctly and historically different to the Asian traditional culture and heritage. Our society, which appears to be in the grips of this alien culture, has firstly to be diverted towards Asian values, which thrived during earlier era and co-existed with nature in a much more sustainable manner, in comparison to the present global trends.

Agenda 21 of the Rio Summit appears to have realized this and have proposed an agenda, which coincides with the actions aligned to traditional values of the Asian region.

Traditionally, the eastern family life is a close-knit social entity, with members depending on one

Fig 3. Statistics on the Performance of Candidates for the year 1998, GCE O/Level and A/Level Examination

The statistics for 1998 are given in the following chart

1998	Total Sat	Qualified to Proceed to A/L	Passed in >6 Subjects with Credits in >3 Subjects
O/L	509,499 (83.6%)	132,255 (26%)	145,916 (28.6%)
1998	Total Sat	Qualified for Uni. Entrance	Passed In 4 Subjects
A/L	147,851 (82.22%)	73,358 (49.62%)	72,901 (49.31%)
1998	Qualified	Admitted	
Uni. Entrance	73,422	11,805 (16.08%)	

Source: SL University Statistics 2000, UGC. Dec 2000.
Statistical Handbook, Dept of Exams. SL. 1999.

another for social support and young members submitting to peer pressure due to respect for the elders. The teacher/ pupil relationship too was derived from the same culture and even though eroded to a certain extent, still bears the vestiges in the school system. **Surely, the reform process should take these factors into consideration and derive advantage from the plus points to use the traditional value system to catalyze propose changes,** which would be much easier to implement in an eastern society having its roots compatible with such a system.

Considering that only 2% of the youth aged 20-24, actually gain admission to the universities, the issue of unemployment, career guidance and skills development has become a National issue in Sri Lanka, important enough to be highlighted in the report of the Presidential Task Force on University Education Reforms, (Colombo 1998). However, as in many developing countries, in Sri Lanka too the educational policy options are constrained by insufficient resources and the socio political environment in which the choices are available. Nevertheless, a number of institutions, government and non government, has taken up the challenge to address this issue and presently visible signs are there of a rudimentary system of career guidance and skills development options being given to the youth in the school system.

The paper also deals with the work done by some of these institutions in the past few years. The task in hand is immense and it is hoped that good governance in the educational system will lead to improved institutional capabilities and participatory management working at grass roots levels to develop these rudiments, together with private sector participation hopefully playing a major role.

The magnitude of the task is aggravated by inadequate demand driven programs and the lack of industry-oriented courses in technical education and vocational training institutions. There are no established schemes for validation, accreditation, competency-based training or national trade testing. There is also a need to upgrade the quality of the curricula, content, training standards, training efficiency training material, which are demand driven, competency oriented and based on market studies. These institutions are not sensitive to the skill requirements in the industry and unable to cope with the changes of progress and globalization. **The Sri Lankan family structure and the students, having been in the free economy culture of the 1950s and '60s are not fully exposed to self-entrepreneurship or busi-**

ness employment and therefore, tend to depend on the state for employment.

Under the above circumstances, the state and a number of non governmental organizations have initiated various programs to guide the Sri Lanka youth in career education and to provide counseling to direct them to suitable career paths. They attempt to give awareness to students on educational and vocational courses available in the re-



levant institutions and inform them of job opportunities available in the private and public sector organizations. The following subsections outline some highlights of the work done in the past by selected organizations to address the crisis. It should be noted that even after about four or five years of such activity, the rectification process is still in an infantile stage, compared to similar work done in some developed countries, but has the potential of being improved and developed to a stage capable of achieving necessary targets of employment and productivity.

3.1 The Organization of Professional Associations.

The OPA Career Guidance Program started about seven years ago by launching active counseling seminars, conventions and job fairs. The following issues were highlighted at these conventions and the OPA took steps to work out further programs to address them. (Prof Lakshman Watawala. - OPA CG '97 Conclusions and Recommendations)

- An essential prerequisite to achieve economic growth is the need to enhance productivity at national as well as enterprise level.
 - A strong constrain to higher productivity has been poor work ethics and indifferent attitude to work.
 - The education system and other social institutions have not been appropriately re-structured to meet the challenging demands of society.
 - A work ethic cannot be developed within a short period of time.
 - The government should formulate a policy and implement an action plan with the objective of developing positive work ethics suitable for national priorities.
 - To consider this requirement in effecting educational reforms, there-by training and re-orienting the student population in regard to the importance of developing appropriate work and attitudes in their future careers.
 - The political leaders to establish and maintain high standard of behavior. Examples could be derived from the success story of Singapore.
 - To restructure and re-organize the public sector by establishing desired standards of efficiency.
 - Leaders in business and industry, who demand positive work ethics and attitudes at work, should set an example by adhering to fundamentals of business ethics themselves.
 - At enterprise level, many efforts have been made by certain organizations to develop positive work ethics and attitudes in their work places. Research on motivation has revealed that the employee could be encouraged to adhere to desired work norms such as efficiency, honesty and integrity, dedication and loyalty provided they sincerely feel that adaptation of such attitudes would accrue reciprocal benefits to them. Rewards are not necessarily financial, but could be non-financial such as job satisfaction, a conducive work environment, cordial relationships, involvement of employees in the organizational process, etc.
- It was noted that Sri Lanka still looks down on certain types of work (vocations), therefore to restore dignity of labour, certain trade and operations needed to be institutionalized, and trade standards maintained. Promoting certification and licensing of different occupations could lead to upgrading of such exceptions making them attractive.
- An important fact that emerged from the deliberations and interviews conducted by the OPA among participating institutions and students is that, while the basic problem was the lack

of awareness in general, the rural schools and the parents in those areas were totally neglected and had no opportunity or access to such information or guidance.

As a result, after the year 1997, the OPA embarked on a program to widen the effective coverage of their activity, by dissemination of information and creating awareness on Career Guidance across the whole country. The aim was to install a permanent, self-motivated, "**National Network for Career Guidance**", which was conceptualized by the author and promoted by the OPA, for dissemination of information and Career Guidance throughout the country. This was to be achieved by setting up resource centers for gathering and storing of information, with district centers and schools as the points for dissemination of information and for providing career guidance and counseling by trained staff.

Over the past years, the OPA collaborated with the National Youth Services Council (NYSC) to conduct a Career Guidance week each year. The mass media, which was the quickest and most effective vehicle for this purpose of maximum coverage, was used to give coverage, publicity, and create awareness among the public. Training of district officers of the NYSC and teachers from selected outstation schools was a part of the joint program. A number of organizations and their branch offices were earmarked as suitable resource centers and presently the OPA is collectively strengthening the network to optimize its efficiency and coverage. In all such activities the OPA Careers Chart (an interactive chart to guide students into appropriate Career Paths depending on their individual attributes) was used extensively and distributed free of charge to teachers and students in all provinces.

The network is based on the premise that over the past years, Governmental and Non-governmental training institutions, Youth Councils and Professional bodies have collected and documented a vast amount of information relevant to career guidance. These range from professional careers to vocational careers and skills development. Simultaneously, a number of institutions have been set up offering educational opportunities for the youth, ranging from higher education to vocational training and skills development. However, the network needed for exchange of information was not available to the stakeholders.

In the recent past career guidance has been targeted as an urgent requirement in the country to maximize the potential of the youth by offering them the choice to select their careers, depending on their educational abilities and skills.

The National Youth Services Council, Maharagama and the Organization of Professional Association, have played a leading role in promoting career guidance at a national level. The Ministry of Education has embarked on an intensive program to train selected teachers in provincial schools to take up career guidance in their respective schools.

Guiding and counseling a young boy or girl in the teens requires a skill, which ranges from human psychology to understanding the potential of the individual, coupled with knowledge of available skills development programs in the country. In simplified terms, it requires **matching of human potential to available training and skills development.**

Sri Lanka is fast maturing in the area of career guidance and has arrived at a stage where training institutions have been established and the documented information on careers is available to the public. Facilitators such as the NYSC, OPA, Career Guidance Units of the Vocational Training Authority, and other training institutions are also functioning well.

However, there is a need for a self-reliant, self-operational, permanent system at a national level for dissemination of information and exchange of queries, to maximize the efficiency of the available resources for career guidance. In this respect, the OPA has proposed the concept of a "National Network for Career Guidance (NCCG)". Firstly, it will be a virtual network for collecting data on careers and a vehicle for dissemination of information. Secondly (and more importantly) a communication network for career guidance officers and teachers to seek information from relevant training organization and skills development institutions, when actively participating in guidance work at school level, or with the unemployed youth. The conceptual diagram for the NCCG is illustrated in the **Diagram 1**. The virtual network will be made operational by **compiling a classified directory of all stakeholders in Sri Lanka involved in education, training, conducting career guidance work and generating career information.**

Since the NYSC Maharagama, operates at a national level and further its mandated target includes all youth, school students, school leavers and unemployed youth, it was envisaged that the NYSC Career Guidance Unit would be the focal point and in the best position to gather data for the directory. The NYSC has compiled similar lists in the past and has used them for their career guidance promotional work. Therefore, this proposed directory for the network will be an extension to their existing database, but formatted according to the proposed classification.

Other organizations where Career Guidance and training of youth is being done are listed below for future study. These organizations have set up their own Career Guidance Units and have collaborated on many occasions to conduct joint programs, which is seen as a healthy situation for potential growth of the activities at a national level.

- National Youth Services Council, Maharagama. (Including District Centers)
- The University Grants Commission. (Including Universities)
- The Vocational Training Authority.
- Some private schools and societies.

3.2 National Policy and Action Program on Post-School Training and Employment

The policy paper (which is at a **draft stage**) prepared by an Inter-Ministerial Committee has taken the following approach to policy formulation towards the commitment of the government on developing a formalized system of post-school training and vocational guidance, with adequate resources to cater to the needs of the country.

It aims to develop an integrated approach combining public and private sector institutions, functioning together to handle affairs related to education and training of youth under a National policy framework. A time frame of six years, with two yearly reviews are being proposed for implementation of the program with realistic labour market surveys, relating to individual personalities, available job markets and optional training paths.

The schools are also targeted as points for reforms towards creating apprenticeship and non-formal technical and vocational education. Students will be given short-term exposure to industry through internship and visits to workplaces and through presentations and discussions by industrialists and managers at school level.

Diversification of existing vocational and technical training programs to provide better choice to youth on available job opportunities are proposed with the updating of curricular of the courses. Establishment of vocational and Career Guidance units at national level and in schools are proposed, with adequate resources and **full time career guidance teachers being appointed to each school** with access to classified directories of training institutions and personnel, to provide necessary information contact.

The proposal for the 'National Network for Career Guidance' has been accepted by the policy paper as a potential tool for implementation of

National Network for Career Guidance (NCCG)
A Virtual Network for Collection and Distribution of Resource Material

IMPLEMENTATION Annex 1

The Network will function through a categorised directory comprising of 3 Groups: (1) Career guidance teachers at schools (2) Career centers / Units. (3) Training Institutions / training courses with entry requirements. The directory will list the contact persons, phone numbers and addresses. The NYSC will be the main coordinator for distribution of information.

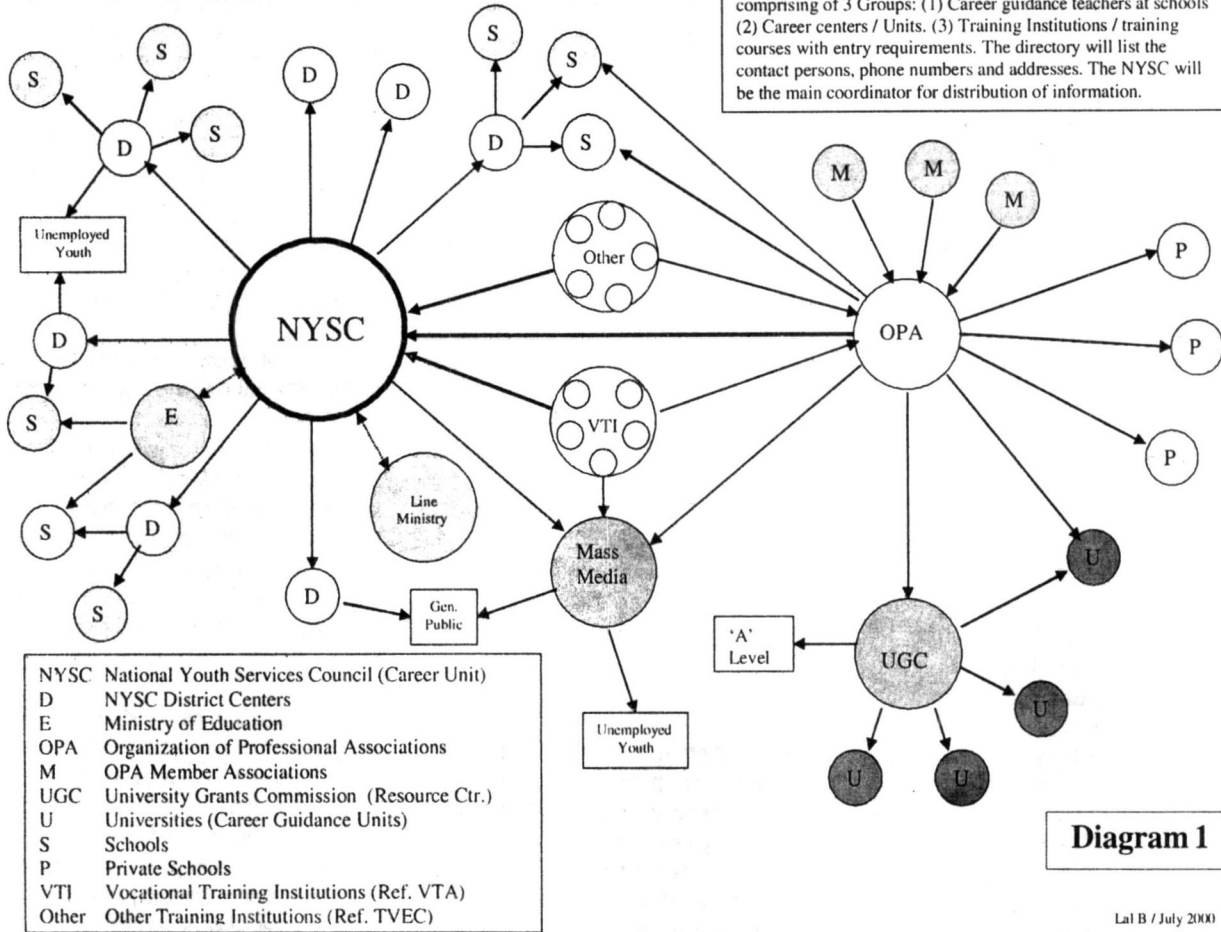


Diagram 1

Lal B / July 2000

the policy. Fifty flagship career guidance centers, under the ADB funded Skills Development Project (SDP) and with career guidance centers at 1000 schools, are initially proposed as a first step for this purpose provided with trained staff to begin career guidance in schools, ideally from Grade 10 level.

Development of a computerized questionnaire system to process student profiles and determine career paths is also proposed in the policy paper.

Finally, a very important highlight in the draft policy paper in terms of reforms is the proposal for establishment of a Bureau of School Guidance, Training and Employment (BSGTE) to integrate the work of the career guidance units and match available training opportunities and pathways to jobs with student profiles. This will be a special Bureau with district offices, resources and permanent cadre with facilities such as computerized data bases as a focal point for school leavers and job seekers to find placements.

The Bureau will function by keeping track of movements in job markets and training opportunities. In the short term with projections over a period of two to three years by tapping into various sources of information, mainly from advertisements in the media and labour journals.

4 Conclusion

It is hoped that further studies could be carried out on the work done by these institutions and the implementation of the proposed policies could be set in motion. The follow up program should also serve as a tool for monitoring the progress of the activities envisaged to be put into operation.

In conclusion, the primary concern of the educational policy of the country should be the realization of the full potential of the individual to meet the challenges of the 21st Century effectively. High priority should be allocated in the socio-economic development process, to Human Resource Development with good quality education and market oriented skills development through Career Guidance.

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