

Inculcating Professionalism among Sri Lankan Youth through Educational Reforms Empowering Youth Rights: Legacy in Retrospect

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Abstract— Youth predominantly represents most innovative and energetic community of a country. Hence it bestows a responsibility upon country to groom and enhance their professional standards guiding them on contribution for national development agenda. This research seeks to address educational reforms that could be introduced to inculcate professional discipline among Sri Lankan Youth uplifting their self- confidence and ethical standards. United Nations considering individuals between ages of 15-24 as ‘youth’ of a country, enormously efforts to encourage them on impact they could make on society with ground-breaking suggestions and standards they could maintain in professionalism. It is a right that needs to be vested upon youth for initiating and determining paradigm shifts creating the world that they would want to make a survival in future. In that regard main objective of research is to identify amendments to be introduced in Sri Lankan education curriculum and effect it could make in inculcating professional discipline identifying it to be a youth’s right to have a prestigious education. Quantitative and Qualitative sources would be of assistance to make this research a success and thus it would be based on a comparative analysis made on UDHR, ICCPR, ICESCR, African Youth Charter, Ibero American Convention on Rights of Youth and National Youth Policy of Sri Lanka with National Human Development Report: Youth and Development 2014. Interviews conducted with Secretary to Sri Lanka Ministry of Education, Chairman- National youth Services Council, Junior Chambers International – Sri Lanka and Youth Link Movement along with questionnaires presented among youth (age 15- 25), school teachers and parents would layout authoritative and public opinion for educational reforms paving way to establish ways and means of implementing professionalism as a youth right in Sri Lanka. This research while suggesting educational amendments with a rights-based approach would create platform for responsible authorities to make their attention upon an effective mechanism to empower youth and utilize their innovations in a fruitful manner for sustainability. The research would finally accomplish the Legacy of youth to become stakeholders of panoramic development exercising their inherent youth Rights.

Keywords— *Professionalism, Educational Reforms, Youth Rights*

I. INTRODUCTION

The legacy of ‘youth’ being stakeholders of a country’s future is a universal truth that the humankind has been witnessing throughout ages. An Individual who was once a youth becomes a forerunner of the nation according to the way he or she has been moulded during his or her turning point in life as a youth and the experience that he or she would have had during the early stages of life. The ambitious and the innovative milestone of life cherished by any human being as a youth, praise them with an inherent potential in leadership skills and with unique burgeoning ideas at all levels.

The United Nations organization recognizes this enthusiastic community to be 1.8 billion of the world’s population under the age category of 15-24, whereas Sri Lanka identifies 23% of the local youth population within the age group of 15 -29. Therefore the spirit of this community should be an essential concern of a country, whereby it is expected to empower them with knowledge, skills, ability, career guidance and professionalism focused on leadership skills conceded with self-confidence and a code of ethics.

The researcher through this comprehensive and analytical study on youth rights, strive to pursue the objectives of:

- Respect towards the professional standards followed by a code of ethics that needs to be inculcated for the progression of youth community in the prevailing educational system of Sri Lanka.
- Expand the scope and application of the policy alternatives that have already been established nationally by proposing them to be replaced with a youth charter for feasible and effective mode of implementation creating a binding effect.
- Render justice and promote equity in retrospect of youth Rights on behalf of the Sri Lankan

Youth community whilst formulating a background for further research and discourse on this developing branch of human rights in the domestic sphere and the international arena among youth delegates.

In that regard, the research would emphasize on the current policies recognized within the domestic legal framework to address professional education as a Youth Right and its implementation with a comparative analysis on the regional and international initiatives that have established and implemented professionalism through education as a youth right benefiting the youth community with their commitment towards the sustainable development agenda of the country.

II.METHODOLOGY

This research has based its study on qualitative and quantitative resources. As qualitative sources the researcher has focused on the National legislations. Consequently the constitution of Sri Lanka has established the foundation and had paved way to ensure the youth rights which forms an integral part of human rights. The research also has focused and has initiated proposals following the principles laid down by the Sri Lankan Youth Policy which were recently incorporated by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development of Sri Lanka.

Since the research focus to promote professionalism through educational reforms, it has also supported and had constructed major arguments upon the policies introduced by the 'National Educational goals and basic skills' the student - teacher progress report of year 2015, (the latest version).

In addition to the local standards the research adopted international instruments recognized and ratified by nation states, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural rights. The Youth Charters from foreign countries on regional basis had provided guidelines and necessary amendments that could be brought forward if the local authorities are to adopt a youth charter domestically.

The interviews conducted with a member of Sri Lanka Youth and among National and international youth delegates has enriched the research with substantial feedbacks which could be implemented within the domestic sphere.

The quantitative figures which enhanced the scope of the research has been extracted by the National Human

Development report of 2014 and by a survey conducted among youth voluntary groups, teachers and students.

The research area associated with a developing branch of law has been exclusively confined with limited resources up to date and thus, to avoid such circumstances the research endeavours to initiate a comprehensive and an intellectual discourse upon the new area and stimulate logical ideas in order to accomplish the research objectives successfully and rationally.

III.DISCUSSION

A. Sri Lankan Policy Alternatives to Empower Youth Rights in Professionalism

1) Existing Youth Policies Compromising Youth Rights:

'Professionalism' followed by leadership skills, self-confidence, discipline and Inter-cultural interaction would be the pillars of an Individual to build up its personality into a potential and a well-established citizen in the society. Apart from the subject knowledge, skills and talents, a preliminary code of ethics would escort towards a dignified character that would have the capability of making a substantial contribution to the Sustainable development of the country. Youth representing a very radical state of mind necessarily should be adapted to such a code of ethics in order to guide them how to furnish their innovative opinions in a descent manner integrated with soft skills. Robert Kennedy emphasizing on the inherent nature of youth states that:

"This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but state of mind, a temper of will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite of adventure over the life of ease"

The spirit of youth therefore needs to be ignited and professed with adequate ethical standards moulding their personalities. The assistance given through Professional Education starting from school would be an idealistic approach to achieve this common goal on behalf of the entire youth population in Sri Lanka and would compromise the Youth's Right for Professional Education.

The National Policies until the establishment of the National Youth policy (NYP) have not taken any interest of emphasizing upon this essential factor throughout the history in a broad manner. The National Youth Policy which came into force on the 14th of February 2014 was one of the major initiatives of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development of Sri Lanka to address the

youth problems and challenges they face in the society at large.

During a specific era the youth were considered to be a 'violent' or a 'frustrated' community of the local population due to the youth led insurrections in the 1970's and 1980's. Despite being an aggravating group, the youth had to undergo a discontent period due to the three decades of war in the country and their desires and opinions have been ignored and abandoned at all times.

Hence addressing the youth issues in a holistic manner the National Youth Policy was inaugurated considering the "Youth as a constituency with certain Rights and Obligations". Furthermore the Policy intends to recognize the potential of youth to contribute meaningfully to the development of the country and identifies the key actors and institutions must have a duty to ensure an enabling environment where youth could flourish.

The Principles and Values underlying the NYP sets out certain important principles empowering Youth Rights in Professionalism and recognizing Human Rights as a fundamental basis for youth development.

"3. Empowering youth:

To strengthen youth to participate and take responsibility On behalf of themselves, their community and humanity

iii. Respect for equity and social justice in conceptualizing development

v. Commitment for democratic principles and human rights as enshrined in the Sri Lankan constitution and international covenants to which Sri Lanka is signatory

vi. Promoting high standards of professionalism and integrity by all involved in youth work

ix. Ensure participation of young people at all levels of decision making process

x. Respect human rights as a fundamental basis for youth development"

(NYP- Sri Lanka)

The National Youth Policy likewise has adapted a Rights based approach to ensure the youth's Rights in an organized manner paving the way to integrate professionalism and to empower participation and respect young people's aspirations at all levels of decision making. Hence it has also strived to identify special youth groups in the society who needs an extraordinary

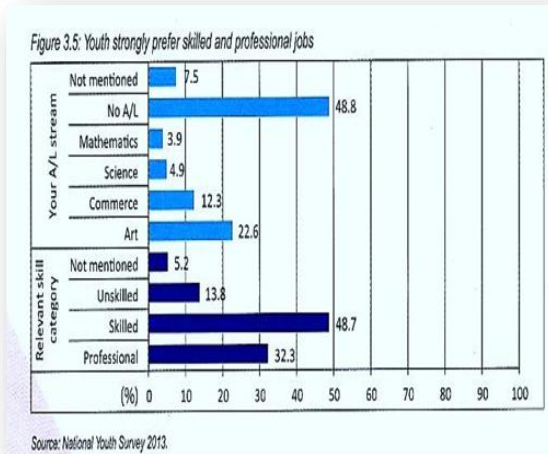
attention such as: Unemployed Youth, Youth from war affected communities, excluded, discriminated and exploited youth groups, youth at different educational levels, young women, rural youth, urban low income youth, youth in conflict with the law, estate sector youth and differently abled youth. These marginalized groups comprise a majority of the youth population in Sri Lanka thus it highlights the importance of empowering the rights of this groups through professional standards since the energy and the innovative ideas utilized would influence all advancements in the sustainable development agenda of a country.

Although these policy alternatives have been circulated within the country, the authorities associated with youth persist on the belief that 'Inculcating professionalism' needs to be implemented commencing from the school education itself, since the age group of 'youth' lies between an individual's childhood and adulthood where he or she probably spends one quarter of their youth in the school and insists that it is necessary to allocate government expenditure on professional education for effective implementation.

2) National Educational Policy propounding Professionalism:

The Educational Policy of Sri Lanka in its national educational goals has adopted a basic structure to encourage inculcating professionalism among school children. But in the practical scenario it gives effect to the doubt whether such goals are in fact implemented for the developments in Professional Education. Precisely in the progression of the ethical standards of the students to interact in diversity, Integrity, self-confidence, responsibility and the potential to face different issues at any given situation. The responses to questionnaires distributed among youth prominently highlights the necessity of professional educations where they need to be guided regarding their career from school itself and should be given opportunity to engage in campaigns organized at school levels and during their vacation period after pending results of ordinary level examination.

A similar attitude has also been illustrated in a National Youth Survey conducted in year 2013 where youth has strongly preferred skilled and professional jobs.



Source: Sri Lanka National Human Development Report 2014

The Asian Youth Delegates at the World Conference on Youth 2014 proposed the adaption of a model of ‘Summer Camps’ concept conducted constantly in European countries which is not very much constant and effectively conducted in Asian countries to uplift the leadership skills, interactive skills in cross cultural backgrounds and discipline among youth, as suggestions to initiate professional education among school children.

However, the research identifies a Code of Ethics specifically adapted in the national level would be of assistance in this contemporary urge of effective implementation to establish the basic disciplinary grounds of professionalism. Therefore In making Preference to an Australian- Victorian model, code of ethics would bring out suggestions in the national level since Sri Lanka has also been a Colony of the British and still co-exist with the Victorian influence in laws and regulations and in many more structures of the country.

The Victorian model of ethical practise encourages internships, apprenticeships, other vocational training and skills development for youth at school level with special reference to ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights(UDHR)’ and the ‘Child Rights Convention(CRC)’ since the age of youth formulates an integral part of childhood whilst simultaneously making reference to youth school leavers as well. The code precisely recognizes and inspires the professional education to be monitored with a code of ethical practise and defines a code of ethics as follows:

“A Code of Ethical Practice is a document developed by a body of practitioners to provide an agreed framework and set of values for professional practice. It provides a frame of reference in which to develop ethical and safe practice”

The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) that drafted the Code, states that it is a ‘living’ document developed for the youth sector and proclaims that it reflects the history and evolution of the youth work profession in Victoria and adapts the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia’s Code of Ethics and the United Kingdom National Youth Agency’s Ethical Conduct in Youth Work. Moreover providing a definition for ‘young people’ the code insists that the code would apply to youth between ages 12-25 and taking into consideration the necessity of other organizations it upheld that the code would also apply to young people in a broader age bracket.

However it is significant that the code has given prominence to Indigenous youth Sectors of the Australian society taking into account the ‘Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples’. Throughout the codification, it depicts that it has adopted a Human Rights based approach to convince Rights of youth in inculcating professionals among the Youth.

The compilation of the national educational goals of Sri Lanka with a code of ethics would enhance the scope of professionalism from a skills based education to professionalized education which would benefit the youth sector in their pursue to contribute in the development process being counterparts of the future Sri Lanka. Hence the responsible authorities would have to expand the scope of application and implementation in an effective manner extracting models from other countries in a way justifiable to the domestic context to inculcate professionalism among Sri Lankan Youth for National Development exercising their Youth Right to participate in decision making and shoulder the responsibility of building the nation.

B. International Jurisprudence Steering Professionalism to Empower Youth Rights through Educational Reforms

The 1978 constitution in Article 14(1) (g) declares that:
 “The freedom to engage by himself or in association with others in any lawful occupation, profession, trade, business or enterprise”

The supreme law of Sri Lanka entitles each an every citizen with the fundamental freedom to engage in any

profession and under such freedom the youth would also be an exclusive community who would enjoy the freedom of profession or any other business or trade. The professional education thereby needs to be amended and reformed for every youth citizen to enjoy this freedom in a fruitful manner.

Proposing the educational policies to be adopted in member countries the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)' and the 'International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)' set out provisions to empower human rights in professional education.

"Article 26(1) -Technical and professional education shall be made generally available....."

"Article 26(2) - Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace"

The ICESCR adopting the similar wording of Article 26 of UDHR in Article 13 of the covenant realizes the need for strengthening the professional standards.

Youth rights which needs to be ensured could be identified as a sub category of Human Rights, therefore coupling Article 14(1) (g), the domestic law of Sri Lanka with International Jurisprudence reflected in UDHR and ICESCR would establish the basic right for every citizen to enjoy the fundamental freedom of professional education where by it would be possible to comply such basic rule with the National youth Policy alternatives to formulate a Youth Right which would even provide an ideal proposal for a domestic Youth Charter.

A mechanism which could be adopted and implemented in such a way would create the platform to introduce a local charter on Youth Rights. The step by step proceeding of introducing youth charters in a majority of nation states would convey a message to the international community and would urge the need of having an internationally recognized and a binding charter exclusively on youth rights.

1) *Regional Action Plans Establishing Grounds to Inculcate Professionalism as a Youth's Right: African Youth charter / Ibero American youth charter*

The African Youth Charter and the Ibero American Youth Charter are very significant charters which make the

parties binding to ensure and empower Youth Rights within the respective regions and provide models even for drafting a charter in the Sri Lankan context for effective implementation of Youth Rights beyond the thresholds of a policy.

The African Youth Charter is one of the prominently recognized charters around the world and would be an ideal adaption to the domestic law of Sri Lanka to draft a legal framework on youth rights since both countries regulate under a similar jurisdiction following the Roman Dutch Law.

The African Youth emphasizing on the Right to Professional standards in education through

Article 10 (3) (d) declares:

"Provide access to information and education and training for young people to learn their rights and responsibilities, to be schooled in democratic processes, citizenship, decision-making, governance and leadership such that they develop the technical skills and confidence to participate in these processes;"

Article 11 (2) (f) declares:

"Institute measures to professionalize youth work and introduce relevant training programmes in higher education and other such training institutions;"

Apart from the African Youth Charter, The Ibero-American Youth Charter also lay down educational rights for youth based on professional standards under Chapter 3- Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the Convention in the following manner:

Article 22(4):

"The education shall promote the exercise of values, arts, science and technologies in the transmission of teaching inter- culturalism, respect of ethnic cultures and open access to new technologies and promote among the educated people the vocation for democracy, human rights, peace, solidarity, acceptance of diversity, tolerance and equal rights of men and women."

Article 22(5):

"The State Parties recognise that education is a life-long learning process which includes elements from formal and non-formal education which contribute to the continuous and comprehensive development of youth."

The provisions embedded by the Ibero American convention ensures the fundamental Rights of Youth in the European and American countries, thereby declares the need to ensure professional education to empower

the youth rights in the regional level which could at least pave way to adopt a charter within the Asian region and subsequently or predominantly in Sri Lanka as well.

2) *Discourse Within Youth Conferences Proposing Professionalism through Education as a Youth Right: Colombo declaration on youth*

The Colombo Declaration on youth is the outcome document of the World Conference on Youth (WCY) 2014 which clearly insisted on establishing professional standards in education and make educational reforms to the existing policies and laws. The Youth delegates from around the world at a general forum negotiated and agreed upon empowering youth rights in this regard and would commit to declare a youth rights charter in their respective countries.

“Realizing Equal Access to Quality Education

Article 11

Increase recognition of non-formal education and vocational education, including volunteer schemes and Information and Communication Technology models and apprenticeships, as an effective means of empowerment and skills transfer.

Article 4

Redouble efforts to integrate education for democratic structures, sustainable development, along with civil liberties, social leadership, human rights, gender equality, inter-culturalism, and peace education into national curricula.

Article 15

Achieve effective learning outcomes at all levels that impart knowledge and skills that match the demands of active citizenship.”

Identifying the loopholes in implementation of the professional standards among nations, the delegates have made special concerns on redoubling the efforts to integrate education for the advancement of post 2015 sustainable development agenda which could only be gain by inculcating professionalism through educational reforms which would ultimately empower youth rights igniting the key concern at the conference. Moreover the delegates focused on the importance of maintaining the ‘reciprocity’ among nations through *Article 12*.

Sri Lankan being the host country of WCY 2014 has formed the background to advance youth Rights in Sri Lanka in a substantial manner, therefore the research

suggests and encourages to take quick and effective measures to implement a curriculum to reform education to initiate professional education in a successful manner.

III.CONCLUSION

Sri Lanka being a developing country essentially needs to empower the youth through professional education to sustain the national development of the country by extracting the youth energy and innovation. According to the research study in the course of respecting the ideas and opinions of the youth groups, respecting the views of the responsible authorities and integrating the international jurisprudences suggesting stability in the empowering process, adopting of a Youth Charter would be effective to intensify the implementation process where the state would be made binding to follow the regulations in a rigid manner. The country currently expects the legacy of youth to be in action to sustain the forthcoming national development agenda therefore it is important that the government invest the national expenditure more accurately with necessary resources in education whilst adopting new reforms to inculcate professionalism among Sri Lankan Youth to empower Youth’s Rights to take part in decision making and committing themselves to drive the future of their country in a strategic manner.

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