

An immediately attainable alternative to the current equitable resource allocation mechanism of the educational reforms

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The current norm-based unit cost resource allocation mechanism (NBUCRAM) is an attempt at attaining equity in resource allocation in the schools. However, a study by this author has shown that after six years of its use, aided by massive financial input, the old status quo exists between national and state schools, between the different categories of the state schools and the provinces of Sri Lanka. Further, the situation in a significant number of schools is critical. Therefore, an immediate change of policy or amendment to the existing policy is required to safeguard the right of children to quality education. The main problem with the current mechanism arises from its neglect of the existing inequity between schools at the time of implementation. This paper therefore suggests an alternative mechanism based on the minimum core content approach derived from Limburg Principle No. 25 which requires that "irrespective of their level of development states should guarantee respect for the minimum subsistence rights for every individual". Such an approach has been tried in obtaining health rights with good success in Venezuela in 1998. Insofar as the issue relates to the provision of ESC rights, whether it relates to education or health, considerations ought to be the same. The alternative mechanism proposed here consists of a short-term quality yardstick comprising ten human and fifteen material resources formulated based on the education ministry's norms and consultation with stakeholders. It consists of twenty-five resources seen as vital for effective learning by rights-holders and was validated at about 93% effectiveness by service users. Since the yardstick falls within the stipulated governmental norms for provision of educational resources and since Sri Lanka has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this yardstick may be considered an immediately attainable measure of school resourcing in times of both war and peace.

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