



# CASE STUDY ON THE INTRODUCTION OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP STUDIES INTO THE SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN SRI LANKA



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
ES	Entrepreneurial Studies
BAS	Business and Accounting Studies
NIE	National Institute of Education
SEMP	Secondary Education Modernization Project
A/L	Advanced Level
O/L	Ordinary Level
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KAB	Know About Business
PTS	Practical and Technical Skills

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Enterprise Development for Pro-poor Growth project of the International Labour Organization supports the implementation of the Government of Sri Lanka's strategy for poverty reduction and the generation of quality employment for women and men through an integrated micro and small enterprise development program. It targets four districts with a high incidence of poverty, Kurunegala, Polonnaruwa, Anuradhapura and Puttalam. It also addresses issues at the national level that will enhance impact in the provinces, and transfers lessons learnt in the districts to the national policy level as well as other parts of the country.

One of the project's three entry points is strengthening enterprise culture, i.e. positive attitudes to and values regarding enterprise. This includes a social marketing campaign that promotes enterprise as a way out of poverty, and support to the introduction of business awareness and entrepreneurship training in secondary and vocational schools.

This case study will analyze the intervention of the Enter-Growth project to provide technical assistance to the National Institute of Education in developing an Entrepreneurial Studies (ES) course for Grades 10 and 11 of national secondary schools.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The Case study was prepared based on an evaluation done in Colombo and Kurunegala Districts where the Entrepreneurial Studies have been implemented since 2007. The study was carried out through interviews conducted with NIE staff, Enter-Growth staff, Zonal Directors of Education, Master Teachers, and School teachers, Principals and Students.

Working according to the guidelines provided by the terms of reference, the case study evaluation methodology and selection of the interviews were done with the staff of Enter-Growth. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire prepared with the guidance of Enter-Growth. This case study reflects the overarching and important views and concerns expressed in the interviews.

## 3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

The lack in much of Sri Lankan society of attitudes and values that favour entrepreneurial behaviour and private sector enterprise has been demonstrated by a number of studies. These include the National Youth Survey 2000, The Youth Perceptions Survey of 2005, and a national survey on "Peace through Profit: Sri Lankan Perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility" of 2005<sup>1</sup>. They indicate young people have a strong preference for

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<sup>1</sup> Hettige, S.T. and M. Mayer (Eds.) 2002. *Sri Lankan youth: Challenges and responses*. Based on the findings of the National Youth Survey 2000. Colombo: FES. Ibarguen, C. 2005. *Youth perceptions*:

government employment, and that self-employment and starting a small business are considered options of last resort. Many believe business exploits consumers and destroys cultural values.

A study carried out by Enter-Growth in North-West and North-Central province found that such attitudes also prevail among adults. Many consider business to be exploitative and unreliable. They do not recognise the positive contributions businesses make to their community. Business and self-employment is considered risky, and the lack of security is seen as a major disadvantage. There is little appreciation for skills that are important in business, such as planning, information seeking, and risk taking. Parents as well as teachers prefer children to seek Government employment, or farm, rather than going into business<sup>2</sup> and such attitudes contribute to a lack of growth of the private sector, and therefore to the persistence of poverty and unemployment. Some 57% drop out from O levels and there are few job opportunities. An alternative option for these youth is to go into business.

At the National Conference on Curriculum held in 2005, Entrepreneurial Studies was therefore considered as a priority need among others listed. The consultants of the Secondary Education Modernization (SEMP) project also proposed the introduction of Entrepreneurial Studies in the curricula. The rationale was that if students are given background knowledge of and more positive attitudes to entrepreneurship before they drop out, they would be more likely to consider this option and would have the knowledge to start a business.

The National Institute of Education was tasked with developing and introducing ES by the Ministry of Education. As the NIE did not have all the required technical expertise they solicited support from the ILO in March 2006. As the Enter-Growth Project had a mandate to promote enterprise culture, the project saw it as a good opportunity. It decided to support the NIE in this nationally important venture which would eventually result in enhancing enterprise culture, thus supporting the economic development of Sri Lanka.

#### 4. WHAT WAS PLANNED

The NIE planned to introduce the new course on Entrepreneurial Studies, for the students entering grade 10 in 2007. It was to replace the more academic Business and Accounting Studies (BAS). The planned sequence of activities was:

2006: development of the grade 10 and 11 (O levels) curriculum; development of grade 10 teacher's guide (teaching materials); pilot teacher training and pilot teaching; finalise the

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*Exploring results of the Poverty and Youth Survey. CEPA: Colombo, International Alert. 2005. Peace through profit: Sri Lankan perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility. Colombo: IA.*

<sup>2</sup> Weeratunge, N. 2006. Enhancing the enterprise culture of Sri Lanka; Results of the ILO Enter-Growth Project's Cultural Assessment in Four Districts

teacher's guide on that basis; Master Teacher training followed by teacher training; development of a grade 11 and 12 textbook (by another department).

2007: start of course with grade 10; development of grade 11 teacher's guide; Master teacher training followed by teacher training;

2008: start of the course in grade 11; development of A levels (grade 12 and 13) curriculum; development of grade 12 teachers' guide, etc.

2009: start of the course in grade 12; development of grade 13 teachers' guide, etc.

2010: start of the course in grade 13.

A number of technical and planning meetings were held between the NIE staff and Enter-Growth. It was agreed that the project's role was to be limited to providing technical assistance to developing the course and training Master Teachers. It would have no further role in the actual introduction of the course in schools, and it would not fund anything apart from its staff and consultants.

## 5. WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED

The curriculum was developed making use of the ILO entrepreneurship development training programme "Know About Business" (KAB). This is a course that promotes entrepreneurship in vocational and technical training institutions. Enter-Growth and a previous ILO project have supported its introduction in Sri Lanka and it is now being widely used. This was done by project staff, an Enter-Growth consultant from Sri Lanka, one of the co-authors of KAB, NIE officials and other external experts including 2 KAB trainers.

Initially, the curriculum for grades 10 and 11 was completed. The next task was to develop the course material such as the class room activities (class room teacher guide). In this phase, the teachers guide was prepared only for grade 10, according to plan. The teacher's guide for grade 11 was prepared in 2007.

In view of strengthening the foundation for this activity, foreign training opportunities were created by Enter-Growth under which two of the key implementing officers along with one consultant and two KAB trainers were trained on the KAB course under a trainers training program at the International Training Centre of ILO, located in Turin, Italy.

Pilot Teacher training was started in July 2006 to get feedback on the teaching material. Initially, 40 class room teachers were trained to pilot test the material developed and to obtain constructive comments on the grade 10 teacher's guide. There was no time to teach the entire course, but the key activities were tested and feedback was obtained, which was used to finalise the course.

This was followed by three two-week Master Teacher training programs training 150 master teachers including a group of Tamil medium master teachers from the North, East and other areas of the country. The training was designed jointly by NIE and Enter-Growth, based on the course material. The trainers were NIE and Enter-Growth staff and consultant. The objective was to introduce the new subject to Zonal level Master Teachers who would then

train teachers. Zonal Directors of Education were invited for the final day of the training, to facilitate this process and enlist their support.

The Master Teacher training programs were concluded with great success and with very good commendations from the majority of the participants. The activities had virtually had made the teachers feel 'why am I doing a regular job, it sounds very interesting and promising to start a business myself' giving the project a positive kick off. However, it is important to mention that some negative waves had run through some of the participants too. Some of the reasons were: only grade 10 material was ready and was used for training, the teachers did not get a holistic idea of the subject matter encompassing both grades 10 and 11 and misunderstood the coverage of subject matter as not substantial and useful for students; some teachers did not like the change – some were not prepared to change, and some protested against replacing Business and Accounting Studies (BAS) with ES.

After the training, the Master Teachers in turn trained the classroom teachers of their respective zones. Enter-Growth was not involved in this. Initial zonal training was successful, meeting the 'minimum number of participants' requirement of 45 at each training session (as set by the Ministry of Education) to conduct training sessions in the zones. However, this situation did not continue. The number of teachers interested in undergoing training dropped (reasons given in Results section below) and zonal training could therefore not be held. To circumvent this situation, Classroom Teacher training sessions were organized at the NIE with around 300 teachers undergoing training. As a result, a total approximate number of 1200 teachers were trained amounting to 24% of the targeted number. This completed the first round of teacher training successfully which prepared the basis for the introduction of ES.

Subsequent to finalizing the teacher's guide, the next requirement was to develop the student's textbook which was the mandate of the Department of Education Publications under the Ministry of Education. The coordination between the NIE and this Department was weak and Enter-Growth was not asked for advice or assistance.

By this time, the NIE had decided to place Entrepreneurial Studies in the already heavy optional basket of courses referred to as Arts and Commerce. This is one of three baskets of optional subjects: Arts and Commerce, Aesthetic and Technical. The student entering grade 10 can select his/her subjects taking one from each basket to a maximum of three. Entrepreneurial Studies replaced Business and Accounting Studies (BAS) which was in the Technical Basket. It had been taught for over 20 years in the school system.

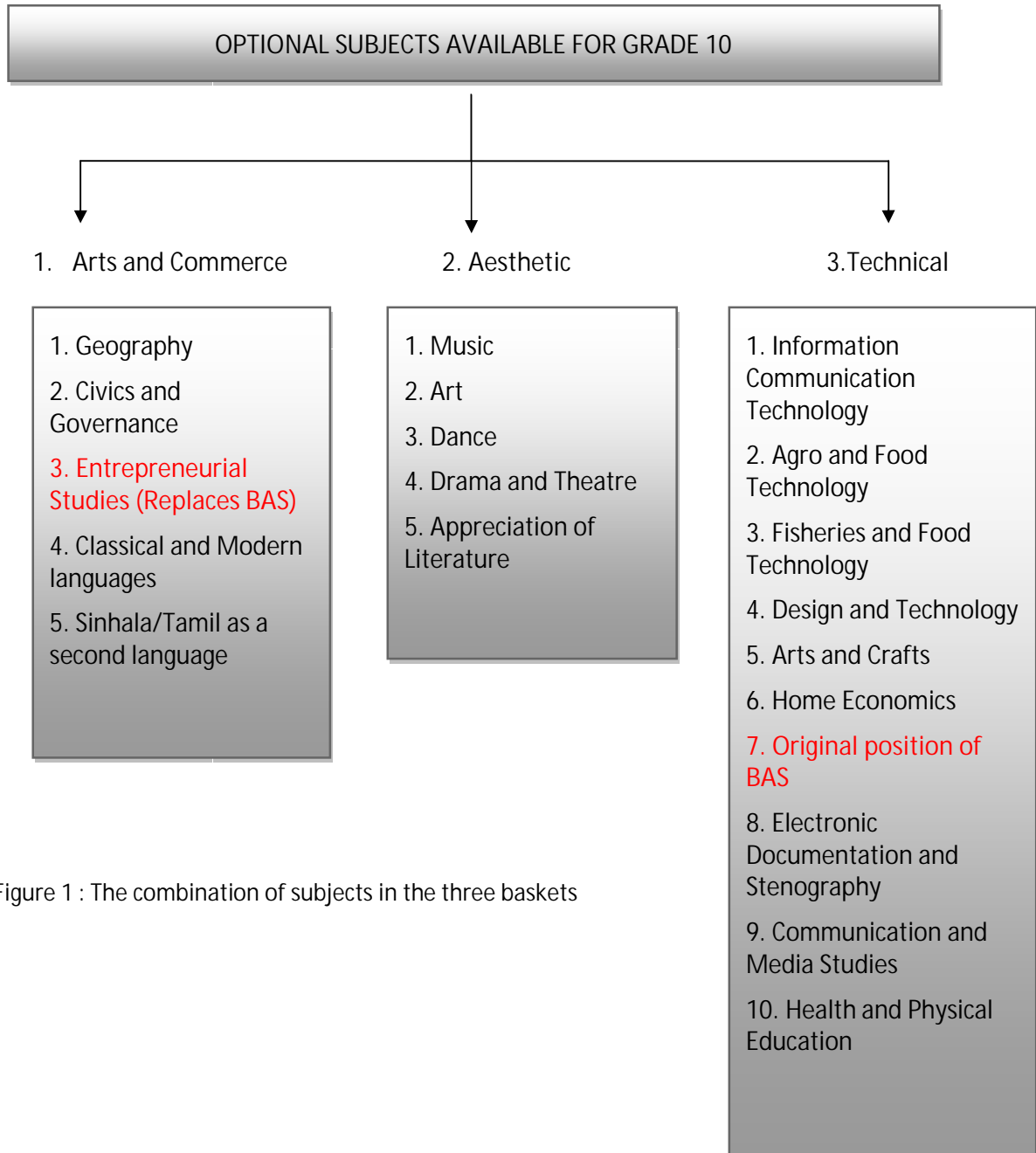


Figure 1 : The combination of subjects in the three baskets

Entrepreneurial Studies started in grade 10 in January, 2007 as planned. Since BAS was replaced by ES the commerce preferring students had no other option but to select ES as the closest matching option. During this year, a significant number of students selected ES and a significant number of trained teachers handled the subject.

Yielding to a protest by teachers, parents and others for removing BAS (see the next section), NIE decided to re-introduce BAS into the programme within about four months into the year 2007. However, it was decided by the NIE to place the subject in the same basket (Arts and Commerce) of subjects in which ES was also placed, although BAS was originally in the Technical Subject Basket.

Enter-Growth foresaw that this would draw students away from ES and advocated at the NIE as well as at the Ministerial level for the separation of the two subjects into two baskets. This would allow students a better choice and reduce competition on ES. The project argued that BAS and ES actually provided complementary skills. The Minister of Education pledged to appoint a committee to advise him on this matter, but no more was heard. The subjects stayed in the same basket.

Understanding the problem of low awareness as a contributing factor, NIE and Enter-Growth designed a poster promoting ES targeting parents and students. This was funded by the project. The NIE took care of the distribution to schools and other relevant places under the education system.

In 2007 the grade 11 teacher's guide was developed in a manner similar to what happened the year before. The second year of the course started to be taught in 2008. Today, two and a half years since the introduction, the ES curriculum for Years 10 and 11 complete with teacher's guides and student texts is in place along with experienced teachers and better awareness among parents and students.

The development of ES at A levels has, however, been cancelled. The NIE has decided to integrate some of the elements originally planned for ES at this level into Business Studies. Notably, this includes development of a business plan. Enter-Growth has assisted the NIE with designing the relevant materials. The intention is that students who have taken ES in grade 10 and 11, and want to continue, do so with Business Studies.

## 6. RESULTS

During the first term of 2007 the ES teaching in schools was going on with students enjoying the activities. The course was activity based and student centred adhering to NIE's current ideas. However, some of the parents who did not know of ES agitated as they were not comfortable with the subject and had expected their children to take up BAS. Teachers were able to convince parents that there was a problem since students with an affinity towards commerce subjects had no other option but to select ES, although they may have no aspirations to start an enterprise.

A negative side of this situation was also recognized by the members of stakeholder institutions such as the Chartered Institute of Accounting, Department of Accounts at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura and private teaching institutions and teachers, many of whom had been tutoring and giving out-of-school instruction in BAS. They found it unnecessary to have taken BAS out of the technical basket, especially since ES was placed in the new Arts and Commerce basket. They also felt that some of the activities set were not effective enough.

A protest was subsequently launched through media and campaigns voicing the concerns about removing BAS and doubts about ES.

When the NIE yielded to the protests and placed both subjects in the same basket, it created a situation for ES similar to rocking a boat which is sailing forward amidst rough seas. Many students switched from ES to BAS as they had no option to take both subjects.

This created a mix of problems in schools, such as having to switch part of the teachers to back to BAS (as it was the same teacher who originally taught BAS who was trained on ES) where more than one teacher was available. In schools where there was only one teacher who had experience on both subjects the teacher was either totally switched to teach BAS, thus scrapping ES (refer table 1 and 2), or ES was maintained and BAS not offered. Practically the same teacher could not teach both subjects. They were scheduled in the same periods as they are in the same basket.

Table 1 : Statistics of Schools offering Entrepreneurial Studies in two zonal Districts

Zonal District	Number of Schools offering ES		
	Jan 2007	Mid 2007	Jan 2009
Piliyandala	68	15	10
Kurunegala	42	14	11

Table 2 : Statistics of the number of students who sat for the GCE O/L Entrepreneurial Studies paper in 2008 (Island wide)

Sinhala Medium	Tamil Medium	English Medium	Total
18,738	8706	132	27,576

The teachers who were very keen on teaching ES faced another problem, as the teacher's guide or the students' textbooks for ES did not arrive on time due to various technical reasons. This had been the responsibility of the NIE and the Ministry of Education. This, too, diluted the confidence of the teachers who also could not prove his/her facts to the parents wanting answers and justifications on the sustainability and the recognition of the subject. Many preferred to switch back to teaching BAS as they felt comfortable in teaching a subject well known and well practiced.

This further hampered the zonal training of the teachers, as it is the policy of the Ministry of Education that training cannot be offered if the participants are fewer than 45 in number.

Where the ES course is concerned, the teachers feel that it provides an important life skill for a student and every student should have this knowledge. The teachers strongly feel that the subject being activity based makes quiet students open up and express their creative ideas. They also mentioned that the students who are average in other subjects excel in this as it brings out creativity, as it is analytical and activity based. This subject provided an opportunity to raise the self esteem and confidence in such students, as they feel very comfortable and confident about the subject. The subject also provides them with greater

public relations skills, risk taking abilities and self confidence as mentioned by some of the teachers.

The curricula and the teaching material of the Year 10 course is said to be very light and easy to understand. However, the Year 11 curriculum and the teaching material are found by the majority of the teachers to be too deep and difficult for the student of that age group. This is very significant with regard to the last lesson of Year 11 on developing a business plan. All the teachers interviewed felt that the lesson on the Business Plan needs to be made easier to understand and introduced in a manner that students of this age group will enjoy. A list of the concerns of the teachers is given below:

#### Year 10

- Many of the lessons have some concepts repeated several times (especially the first book of Year 10)
- The contents of Year 10 are very light and easy, some of the Year 11 lessons could be accommodated in Year 10 curriculum.
- There are inconsistencies between the Teachers Guide and the Text Book.
- Time taken for each activity is too long to be covered during a 40 minute period
- Some activities are very good and stimulating but some are very weak and not interesting

#### Year 11

- Overall complexity is high. The lessons should be made simpler.
- Some of the figures lack clarity
- Business Plan is too complex for the age group
- Some competencies of Year 11 could be moved to Year 10 (E.g. 6<sup>th</sup> competency of Year 11 can be combined with the last lesson of Year 10, Fundamentals of Accounting of Year 11 could be accommodated in Year 10 etc.)

The students interviewed gave mixed answers when questioned on selecting the subject. Some of the students clearly mentioned that the selection was done as they would like to start a business in the future. Others thought that it is a subject for which they can score better at the GCE O/L exam. Some felt that it is a subject useful for our day to day life and that they chose the subject as it is a new subject and like to try it out. Students also mentioned that this course has given them training in time management and also how to successfully meet challenges in life.

According to a Director of Education interviewed, the main reason for the lack of success in the introduction of the subject was that the distinct differences of the two subjects ES and BAS were not understood. ES should be considered a subject providing competency in life skills, in innovative thinking, facing challenges in life etc. In contrast, BAS is a technical subject giving a student necessary technical skills in running a business.

In 2007, another major change in the education system was introduced. This was the conversion of all the subjects previously taught as Teacher Centred to be activity based and Student Centred. Introduction of ES as a new subject along with the introduction of the activity based system as a whole became overwhelming. Some teachers mentioned that at

times students felt tired and frustrated continuing from one subject activity to an activity of another subject during the next period. It was suggested to convert some of the subject areas which can be taught as non-activity based to provide a balance in the situation.

Many of the stakeholders interviewed (with a few exceptions) were concerned about the mismatch between the teacher’s guide and the students’ text book. The reason for the inconsistencies is that when the curriculum was finalized it was sent to the Education Commission as required. However, parallel a copy was sent to Department Education Publications who had the mandate to prepare text books, probably to expedite the preparation of student’s text book. The Commission made changes in the curriculum and the classroom activities. However, the text book developers did not get this information on time resulting in the current inconsistencies. Enter-Growth had an input here: it edited the student’s text and highlighted the inconsistencies. Unfortunately the edits were not incorporated due to reasons unknown to the project.

When developing the grade 11 text book this problem was resolved by having a panel including NIE staff and external consultants for the development of the text book. However, Enter Growth was not invited for this work.

Table 3 below list the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges of the ES curriculum as perceived by the teachers interviewed.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a subject that could be taught easily with activities</li> <li>• Helps improve self-esteem of the students brings weaker students to the forefront</li> <li>• Students generally weak in other subjects excel in this subject</li> <li>• Provides training on new creative ideas to utilize their home based resources better</li> <li>• Subject gives some hope for the school dropouts</li> <li>• Provides the right mind set and skill for school dropouts to be self employed</li> <li>• It is a subject more closely to children’s life and it could be popularized among the village students</li> <li>• The subject is very practical, stimulating and useful in life</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most activities take too long and difficult to complete within the period</li> <li>• Discrepancies between the teacher’s guide and text books</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of UVA Wellssa, University of Wayamba, University of Ruhuna (4 year course) have started and are conducting courses in Entrepreneurial Studies which will create a demand for this course in the future</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents are not aware of ES and its contents and prospects.</li> <li>• Lack of well trained teachers</li> <li>• Subject is too new to compete with a subject like BAS.</li> <li>• With the current situation attracting students as well as teachers to take up the</li> </ul>

	subject
Table 3 : SWOT analysis of Entrepreneurial Studies	

## 7. ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the usefulness and importance of Entrepreneurial Studies in Sri Lanka's secondary education, the failure of successfully establishing the subject lies primarily on the weaknesses of initial planning and introduction of the subject. That little or no effort was made to create awareness among parents and students was one of the primary drawbacks. A good media campaign explaining the value and the importance of the subject would have made an impact on the popularity and the firm establishment of the subject. Weak understanding of the value and importance of the subject among Principals also contributed to the slow pick up currently experienced. Changing Sri Lanka's traditional and cultural parental aspiration of making one's child a professional and self-employment being looked down on is certainly a difficult task but could be achieved with a well planned and well executed introduction.

Gaps in coordination among the main stakeholder institutions are an important factor that needs attention according to many of the interviewed groups. The institutions involved and related to curriculum development and education in Sri Lanka are many: Ministry of Education; Department of Education; National Institute of Education; Department of Examinations; Department of Educational Publications; Zonal Education Offices and Schools. As an important example of lack of coordination, the ministry's circulars did not include ES as a qualifying subject for selection of the Commerce stream of GCE A/L until recently. Lack of interdepartmental/institutional coordination, weaknesses in planning, ad-hoc decision making, lack of appropriate and timely consultation of stakeholders were found to be some of the other contributing factors for the current weak position of ES in the secondary education system.

The indirect stakeholder institutions include Universities and Vocational Training Institutions which could indirectly make an impact on the effectiveness and the popularity of the subject. Some of the Universities such as the Uva Wellassa, Ruhuna and Wayamba have already introduced Entrepreneurial Studies as a core course. Many of the Vocational Education Institutions too have introduced the subject in their core curriculum. This will certainly support the recognition of the subject at secondary level thus making it popular among the students.

Entrepreneurial Studies is undoubtedly an important subject for students who do not pursue GCE(Advance Level) or post secondary education due to various reasons. As mentioned above an important step that could be suggested in re-activating and strengthening the position of the subject is placing ES and BAS in two different baskets. However, before doing so the current mixing up and repetitions of subject matter should be reduced (but may not be totally removed as some overlap is justifiable) in such a way that

the two subjects are distinct: ES as a life skill subject and BAS as a technical subject. BAS should then be placed in the Technical Basket. An example of the restructuring of the subjects is that the current heavily emphasized accounting section of ES should be reduced to an introductory level and the newly introduced business planning section of BAS should be either removed or reduced to a basic level. This will allow a student to choose one or both. Teachers will also have the flexibility of teaching both subjects as the periods will not clash. This will allow both subjects to be popular within the system.

It is also important to ensure reduction of the mismatch between the teacher's guide and the student text book while ensuring that additional reading material is included in the text book for the student's knowledge enhancement. We are now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year after introducing the subject and should consider these two years as the pilot. It is important to re-visit the curriculum, teacher's guide and student text book in consultation with the teachers who have experience in teaching the subject for the last two and a half years as a step towards continuous improvement.

When training is conducted, especially in introducing new subjects, zonal level training should be given priority. This will ensure better teacher turnout and thereby the sustainability of the program. Special support should be given to teachers who have taken up ES and is recommended they are re-trained. Teachers should also be provided with additional reference material.

It is not too late to launch a fresh awareness program using media to educate the students and parents on the potential benefits of the subject. The subject has immense potential and is sure to reap benefits for the students and also create a significant impact on Sri Lanka's economy if handled in a well thought-out and an effective manner.

## 8. LESSONS LEARNED

- Should have a well planned awareness creation program (media based) when introducing a new subject
- Awareness among the Principals on the merits of the subject is vital for such new introduction which was not very well done
- The decision to place back BAS in the same basket as ES should have been preceded by adequate research and consultations
- It is important to evaluate 'What Went Wrong' at the teacher training to create a misunderstanding about some on the objectives of the activities trained on. (Yes I inserted this during the preparation of the second draft based on the interview with the Zonal Director Piliyandala) The teacher training should be well planned and thought out to create a positive first impression and acceptance.
- When conducting introductory training, introduction of the overarching and complete concept of the subject is important. The syllabus of Year 10 was introduced first and then 11. The teachers did not perceive the concept of the ordinary level program as a whole which was one of the main reasons for the protest. For example the teachers did not know where the accounting related subjects fitted in the ES

curriculum as they were not given the content of the Year 11 curriculum as it was not ready.

- New subjects should be introduced in a more planned and timely manner
- Problems in introducing such important changes should have been anticipated. There was a pre-conceived feeling among NIE staff that the implementation would be smooth and they did not anticipate such major negative situations, which made it difficult to face them.
- At zonal level, special permission should have been given for training of teachers even if the numbers did not meet the minimum criteria rule of the Ministry (45 participants). It was critical that more teachers were trained to sustain the newly introduced subject, deviating from the rule for constructive purposes.
- When an intervention is accepted, Enter-Growth should conduct a needs assessment to ascertain the capacity of the client to absorb and implement. This intervention could have been better supported if it included an institutional capacity building component by:
  - Addressing weaknesses related to the coordination between institutions/ departments falling under the purview of the Ministry of Education in a purposeful manner.
  - Capacity building of the relevant stakeholders on launching of new subjects along with relevant checks and balances one should adhere to in the process using international experiences.