SSUNS MUN Position Paper

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Governance and its effect on Education

Country: Sri Lanka

School: Lower Canada College

The provision of education plays an important role in the socio-economic development of a country. They are vital a way of spreading knowledge amongst the general populace, enabling them to develop their skills to survive, thrive, and most importantly, learn about the virtues and importance of democracy. Sustainable development in our increasingly globalized world depends on the international community’s willingness to provide universal education. Universal education is essential and imperative for any form of socio-economic growth, as education can not only expand the individual’s insight of the world around them, but also enable them to pursue forms of high-level employment and education. Achieving universal education relies on good form of governance, as the implementation of government policies can reinforce and manage the system of education efficiently. Maintaining good governance is pivotal in maintaining an effective system of education. The arising issues that threaten this preservation of good governance are corruption, and political instability.

In 2015, Sri Lanka was recorded to have a 92.63% literacy rate, above the world average. The government of Sri Lanka recognizes the provision of education as a fundamental right for all citizens, as described in the Sri Lankan constitution. Currently, both primary and secondary education is funded and managed by three branches of government ministries. Our ministry of education is in charge of primary and second schools across the country, while the ministry of Higher Education manages education for tertiary education services. The ministry of education services provides any physical facilities that are required for general education. Governmentally mandated schools provide free education for all students. However despite this framework for education, certain schools especially schools in rural areas tend to suffer issues of poor facilities and shortage of staff and teachers. Education equity tends to be another issue, as there seems to be a distinction of schools that are considered “elite” and schools that are not so. 2-3% of Sri Lanka’s GDP is spent on education.

Corruption seems to be the most prevailing implication for the lack of adequate facilitates for the majority of provincial or government schools. Corruption exists within the management process of teachers and officers as well as the process of school admissions. Corruption deters the effective transfer of qualified teachers to rural areas of the country, weakening Sri Lanka’s vow to effectively provide fair education for all. There have been several cases of principles of more “privileged” schools accepting bribes to accept students into their schools, damaging the integrity of universal education. We have also seen several cases of unqualified promotion and appointment, reducing the quality of education drastically. The problem of education inequity is both a prominent burgeoning issue among the Sri Lankan community.

In response to these problems of corruption, Sri Lanka believes that the following policies should be put into place in order to improve the quality of education:

-Strict enforcement and regulations must be put into place in order to diminish the abuse of power of managing education facilities.

-A whistleblower protection should be put in place in order to expose cases of clandestine, secretive crimes. Corruption can only be dealt by injecting fear of prosecution to those involved in unlawful activity.

-Resources must be distributed evenly throughout the country, rather than sourcing them all into one specific area or region.

-The Government should spend an adequate amount of resources and GDP on education. OECD nations on average spend 6.2% of their GDP. South Asian countries on the other hand, spend an average of 3.5% of their GDP.

-Emphasis on developing infrastructure and digital outlooks. Providing schools with good faculties are important in providing stable education. The Government should make efforts to improve school faculties by investing on school structures. The government should also make effort in developing the widespread use of information technology, which can benefit the student’s learning capabilities and prospects in this increasingly digitalized world.

-The government must strictly regulate private schools. A quota should be set on the number of private schools present in the country, in order diminish education inequality and retain the dignities of those who cannot afford fees for private schools. In Sri Lanka, Private schools are seen as a more “privileged” form of education than its government school counterpart, making it more desirable, yet more costly to enroll. This can cause inequality in the quality of education, damaging the dignities and potentially diminishing their opportunities to thrive.

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Preservation of World Heritage Sites

Country: Sri Lanka

School: Lower Canada College

The preservation of heritage sites is important for retaining the cultural and historical significance of a country. One of UNESCO’s main goals is to preserve these sites that hold great value to humanity, and work collaboratively with other nations to protect both cultural and natural heritage sights all around the world. Many member nations of UNESCO have played a significant role in achieving this goal, with various cultures and governments playing an active role in the process. However, the efforts to preserve these cultural and historical sites are threatened by two burgeoning factors; war and climate change. Both global warming and war can damage the structural and cultural integrity of heritage sites around the world. This is not an issue that cannot be ignored.

The effects of war on Sri Lankan cultural heritage have been devastating. During the course of the Sri Lankan conflict, thousands of manuscripts from the library of Jaffna were destroyed in 1981. Climate change has also become a serious issue, and imposes a great threat towards various natural heritage sites of Sri Lanka. Increased temperatures have made habitats to coexist more difficult within the depths of the jungle, such as the Sinharaja Forest Reserve, a World heritage site of Sri Lanka since 1988. The damage of these natural heritage sites may damage the tourism industry within the country, in which will most likely have a negative spill over effect on the economic well being of locals whom depend on the tourism industry.

Sri Lanka urges the international community to recognize Global Warming as an escalating issue, and to take direct initiatives to restore the eco system of our world. Certain solutions regarding climate change could be investments in greener energy, and imposing a carbon tax on industries across the globe. However, in order for such initiatives to flourish, all countries must cooperate with one another in order to effectively tackle the problem of climate change.

In terms of tackling the issue of preserving cultural sites within unstable regions, a clear solution is not yet determined. Sri Lanka urges the United Nations to potentially take strict and defensive initiatives in the means of protecting these heritage sites. This will include forming a UN peacekeeping mission, with the aim to protect these sites at risk in conflicted areas. The United Nations has the responsibility to do all it takes to preserve and protect these sites. An international rapid response force must be dispatched into these conflicted zones, to defend them from the heinous acts of cultural and historical destruction of humanity.

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Supporting and accomplishing education 2030

Country: Sri Lanka

School: Lower Canada College

This particular topic seems to overlap with the first topic that has been presented in this conference, which was the topic of education and its relation to good governance. In order for countries attain good education there must be good governance. Governments will have to ensure their resources are being managed and used efficiently, and most importantly ensure that education is provided for all citizens and peoples regardless of their age, gender, race, religion or wealth. The Education 2030 program that in cooperates the SDG 4 (Sustainable Development Goals) was adopted in 2015, for the purpose of providing universal education for all countries, especially among the developing nations. In order to ensure that Education 2030 is effectively implemented, a certain framework of education and goals must be set for all nations and states to follow. This will ensure that the quality of education is satisfactory for all nations regardless of their differences in cultural backgrounds.

Sri Lanka believes that there should be a clear international standard for both primary and secondary education. It acts as a benchmark and framework for developing nations to follow and will be able to facilitate them to pursue their goals of establishing a well-managed education system. Of course, these standards must respect the national sovereignty and the cultural differences of nations. The standards of education here are meant to act as a way to facilitate the country’s efforts in trying to establish effective education system within the country.

Sri Lanka also believes that foreign aid can be beneficial for many developing and impoverished nations across the globe. Foreign aid can be in forms of monetary, volunteers…etc. Aid can allow these countries to structure the basic fundamentals for education, and spread the importance of education and learning amongst the general population. It can also help the governments of these impoverished nations to help tackle the problem of illiteracy, and contribute to the breaking of the poverty cycle, allowing the country to develop both socially and economically.