



Saturday 29th of March
2025

OPINION

Developing attitudes of schoolchildren for development

Published 4 days ago on 2025/03/25



LATEST



Sri Lanka was once at an economically comparable level with some of the world's most developed countries in the 19th century. However, despite our country's potential, we are still striving to fully develop. Many people often blame politicians, government officers, or various sectors for the situation. However, I believe the root cause of these issues lies not in any individual or group, but in the lack of good attitudes within our society.



We are investing significant resources into our education system, which is funded by the taxes of hard- working citizens. However, when we examine the outcomes, we realise that the academic achievements of our graduates alone are not enough. There are instances where professionals, despite having the necessary qualifications, fail to uphold ethical standards. In some cases, this even results in malpractice or harmful actions that damage our country's reputation and progress. This highlights the gap between academic success and real-world responsibilities.

The education system, which is currently focused on competitive exams and rote learning, does not emphasise the development of attitudes and character in students. While our students are academically capable, many lack the qualities required to contribute positively to society. This lack of focus on social values, such as patriotism, selflessness and respect for elders, is holding us back from achieving the level of progress we deserve.

To address these concerns, I wrote to His Excellency, the President of Sri Lanka, on 24th September 2024, proposing education reforms that emphasise not only academic qualifications but also attitudes, ethics, and social responsibility. I suggested a holistic approach to university admissions and government recruitment, incorporating moral integrity, character, and extracurricular involvement, key traits for fostering well- rounded, responsible citizens. More importantly, I strongly recommended introducing a compulsory school subject, with both theory and practical components, focused on attitude development, which would be evaluated in university admissions. Encouraging extracurricular participation alongside academics will help shape ethical and socially responsible individuals.

I am pleased to inform you that the President, recognising the importance of these reforms, has directed the relevant ministries (by a letter dated 24th October 2024) to explore integrating these ideas into the education system. This marks a crucial step in transforming the values and attitudes of our youth for the nation's benefit.

However, meaningful change requires collective effort. Parents, teachers, students, and citizens all play a role in shaping Sri Lanka's future. Together, we must instill responsibility, ethics, and patriotism in the next generation. I invite you to share your thoughts and suggestions on further enhancing the values and attitudes of our youth. Your feedback will be invaluable in building a brighter future for Sri Lanka, one driven not just by knowledge, but by integrity and character.

Dr. Mahesh Premarathna

Research Fellow, National Institute of Fundamental Studies, Sri Lanka Email:
mahesh.pr@nifs.ac.lk