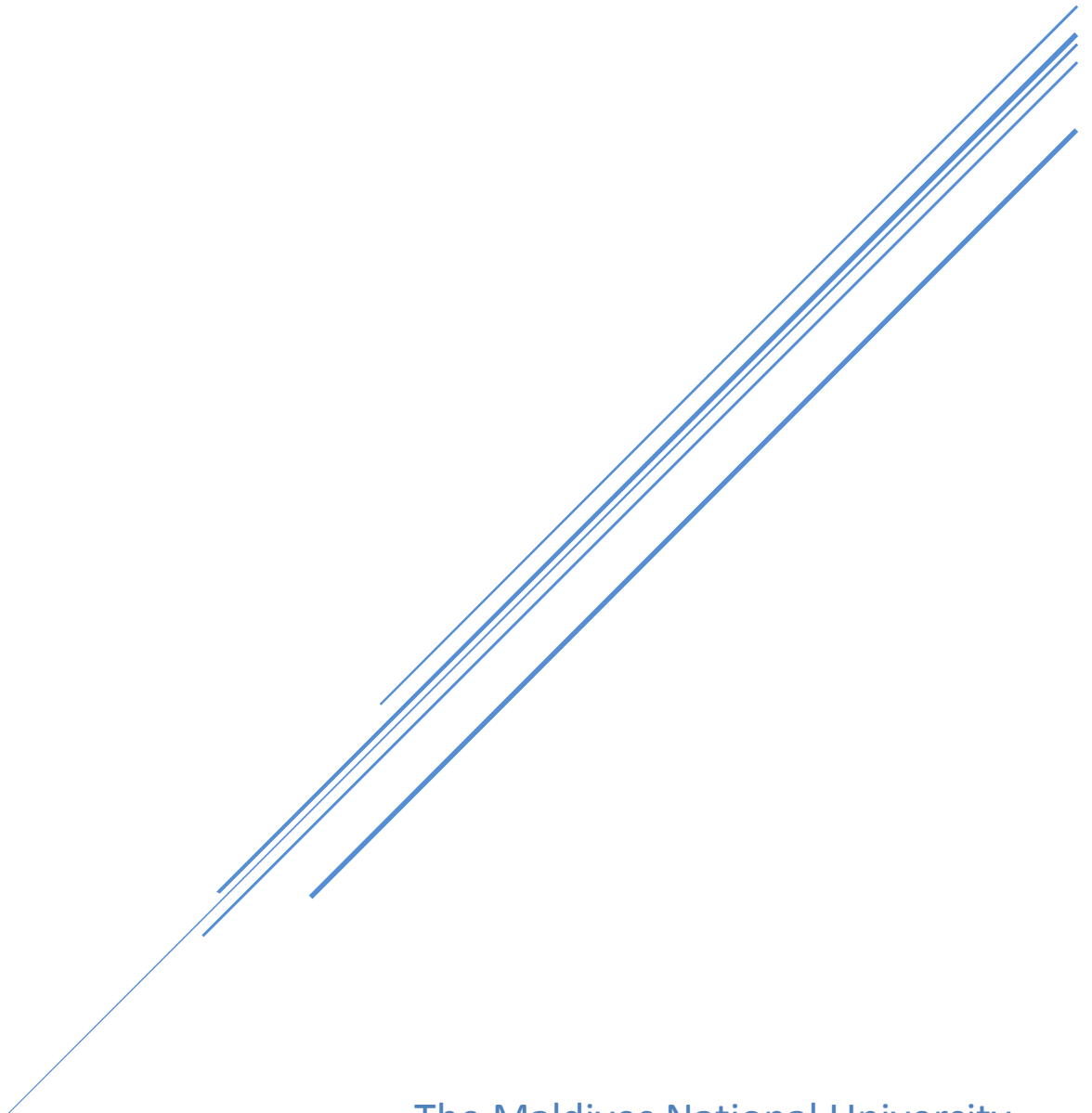


# A FAILED EDUCATION SYSTEM

Issue with low achievers.



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### **Abstract**

This article is about the Maldives Education system. In this article, the issue with low achievers has being discussed. How to overcome the major issue in education. The article is backed with literature.

### **Introduction**

Making a judgment may be an easy task. Before coming to conclusions people research and think in different perspectives. The stake holder easily mentioned “Maldives' education system has failed: State Minister” (Shifleen, 2012). The catchphrase led to a concussion. Readers, researchers, policy initiatives and non-governmental organizations may have observed the issue very closely. Furthermore in the article the author had highlighted important facts, which lead the system to a failure.

Speaking to Haveeru, Imad explained that the current issues being witnessed in society is associated with the education system which was a sign that the system had failed. Hence he stressed that the whole education system needs to be reformed. Imad also said that the youth idling on the streets today, were once students of some school. He added that the state of such youth in the country was down to the major issues within the education system. “That faction of the population has now slipped through our fingers. So we need to provide adequate education and training for the youth still within our reach. I believe that the level to which this disease has spread in our society is due to the issues in our education system,” Imad detailed. (Shifleen, 2012, “Speaking,” para. 1).

This statement gives a good evidence for the failure of the system. The youth roaming around the streets, creates a lot of problems in the society. Preeminently the behavior of roamers plays a vital role in attaining the identity as youth. Gangs are formed when roamers act together, which they are involved in fighting, dealing drugs and various crimes.

The Ministry of Education must take full responsibility for the inappropriate behavior of present youth. They achieved low results because of their language barrier. The sudden change from a fully localized syllabus to a modern syllabus, provides a negative impact with learners.

### **Agreeing with MOE official**

From early childhood, parents take good responsibility of their children. When they grow up year by year the responsibility of the parent decreases as the child grows. In fact the parents are of different types, authoritative, permissive and authoritarian. Children learn most of the things from home or the society they tend to live. Till the age of 12, students attend to school and follow a local syllabus. When they are transferred to grade 8, the students have to follow a foreign syllabus. Most of the context taught will not be related to the Local system.

The current syllabus followed by the Government schools is owned and assessed by University of Cambridge. A foreign syllabus, has to be followed using a second language. Maldives Government invests MVR 2.4billion on education alone. Hence the outcome is of poor status (Shifleen, 2012). When the results of the exams go down the students who finish secondary education do not get the chance to join higher secondary institutes. The next choice for them is to join some private college, some students manage to go through the tertiary education system, and some students do not get the chance because of funding issues.

Research by Shiuna and Sodiq (2013) proves that In lower secondary school, the attainment rates have been a concern for some time. In the lower secondary grade 10 Cambridge IGCE/GCE examinations, only 27% of students achieved a pass (Grades A-C) in 5 subjects or more in 2008, although there has been some improvement in the pass rates between 2008 and 2011 More concerning is the fact that 16% of students did not achieve a single pass in 2011, despite an 8% improvement since 2008 (p. 13).

The 27% is more than one-fourth of the students who sat the exam. Shifleen (2012) confirm that more than 10000 students sat the Cambridge exams in the year 2011. By doing a simple calculation assuming the exact number as 10000, around 2700 students did not pass the exam. This is a very crucial issue, which has to be focused on. The low achievers case is not a new scenario for Maldivian school. Each year a percent of students fits into this category. This issue has been addressed, very rarely. Once a year the Ministry would announce this amount of students achieved high grades, and this amount of students did not pass in any subject. No action is taken to solve the issue.

One cause for this issue is the education system. The education system forces students to learn a foreign syllabus. To learn the subjects a second language must be mastered. If the students are not thorough with the second language the chance of failing will be closer. The communication gap causes real issues. This example can be seeing in different parts of the world, from the past and present.

As Kabir (n.d.) wrote there are many defects in our prevalent system of education. The British built the existing system for their own purposes. They wanted men who could

help them in carrying the administration and the present system of education caters to them (Kabir, n.d.).

This is the outcome of attaining a foreign education system. The system will cater for their needs and wants. The country needs a local education system, attaining to local needs. Though the system is corrected, the attitude towards education must be changed. At present parents prepare their children for a challenge. To get the highest mark in assessed tests. To show the child is a good temporary learner, not a lifelong learner. As the assessed exam is over the child forgets everything or the data is stored as rote memory.

Those children who are unable to compete in this stage are left behind. They have no option. The current syllabus provides basic principles of different subject areas, but if the learner is unable to communicate the outcome will be very low. These students are classified into a different category in the Maldivian Schools.

### **The Limited Class.**

Students with low results get the chance to sit the Cambridge exam with three subjects. That is English, Mathematics and an Optional subject. These students attend to school in normal school hours. With the rest of the high achievers they spend equal amount of time in the school. The subject teachers get extra periods to cater the Limited classes. Hence the results are not changed. According to Finland results, Gamerman (2008), wrote

Finnish educators believe they get better overall results by concentrating on weaker students rather than by pushing gifted students ahead of everyone else. The idea is that bright students can help average ones without harming their own progress (Gamerman, 2008, "Fanny," para. 6).

This theory is very similar to the Maldivian current concept of limited classes. Results are not affected, reasons may be the teachers are not putting an effort or student's perception of learning is not changing. The slightest difference from Finland system is students are distributed according to their ability, hence the change expected do not occur.

### **Vocational Subjects to the curriculum**

This is a trend followed in the education system since the beginning. The government insisted to have vocational training for all the secondary students. The vocational training program acted like cognitive apprenticeship programs. Students take the initiative to go and work with the experts. According to the report on Education for All, Azza (2008) highlights a short history of vocational subjects in the curriculum.

The national work experience scheme introduced in 1988 reflects the importance placed by the government to extending the range and quality of vocational and work-related opportunities for students. Under this scheme, all lower secondary students must complete 30 days of work experience by the time they join Grade 10. As by Azza, (2008. p. 31).

Hence the programme worked well with the well-off students, high achieving students gained field information while the low achievers didn't participate in the program. From 1993 the Center for Continuing Education opened its gate for non-formal education, and trained lots of skilled people (Azza, 2008). These programs helped the low achievers to master on different skills. But the real youth remained as youth. Along this a second chance program was also carried out by the CCE.

In March 2005 they started the “CCE Cambridge Programme” for the students who have achieved low results (Azza, 2008). The outcome of this program was not that much successful. In 2008, low achieving students from different schools were transferred to CCE. CCE signed an MOU with two ward schools, Maafannu Madharusa and Ameer Ahmed School. The students were distributed equally among the two schools. At that time two schools obliged to provide compulsory education to the students along with two vocational subjects.

The final result was within three months the project had problems, qualified teachers were unwilling to come and teach these students. The fact was time and money. Since that CCE gave all the powers to the ward schools to take over the program. The vocational subjects were stopped immediately. Resources were not provided by the government and instructors refused to come for a low salary. The problem at this level was, the low achieving students were selected because they cannot compete with the current Cambridge syllabus, and again without any planning the students are subjected to learn the same syllabus. This has being witnessed by myself, in that period I worked in one of that schools.

After the failure of the vocational subjects, students were not removed from schools, whether they are low achievers or high achievers. The Limited Class system were reintroduced to the schools. Different programs were launched to the youth but the interest of being educated is not within the hearts of the youth.

### **The solution**

The Students achievement is affected by three major factors,

1. Home atmosphere
2. Learned intelligence and background Knowledge

### 3. Motivation (Marzano, 2003)

According to Marzano, (2003) home atmosphere has an effect size of 1.42 on achievement of students. When the home atmosphere is good, the child achieves good results. Home atmosphere can be divided in to different subparts, like a good level of communication between the child and parents, supervision, parental expectations and parenting style (Marzano, 2003). When the home atmosphere is peacefully maintained the child will be motivated for learning. The situation of Maldives is little bit different. Most of the parents are workaholics. They intend to work day and night to find a better living standard, sometimes people live jobless, the necessary skills required for communication will lack among most of the parents. Like the non-formal education programs the government can conduct family planning and other important programs to raise a family for newlywed parents. Awareness of raising children brochures can be distributed. With the modern technology family planning tips can be sent to the mobile phones. This will help the home atmosphere to become a peaceful place.

Marzano (2003) suggested a program, where schools can provide training and support parents to enhance their communication with their children about school, their supervision of their children, their ability to communicate expectations to their children within the context of an effective parenting style (p. 131).

To overcome the issue of low achievement Marzano (2003) suggested a second factor as learned intelligence and background Knowledge. Student's intelligence can be increased when they work hard, by specifying a target. Students with good background knowledge achieve high results. To increase the background knowledge the child can be introduced to new environments. When the student's vocabulary increases the intelligence level also increases (Marzano, 2003).

The students must be motivated to learn. Then the real learning will happen. Most of the low achievers will show very low self-esteem.

Others factor which Marzano (2003) identified are the School and the Teacher. These two factors plays a role in Managing and Planning different methods in teaching. The low achievement can be influenced by this two factors. The level of impact may be lower than the Student factors.

Another study by Leung (2010) suggest that when low achieving students work in groups their learning ability increases. Assigning mentors also the learning ability increases.

### **From a different view**

Academic low achievement does not make the person fail in all aspects of life. Academic low achievers shows improvement in other aspects. For example in handicrafts, boat building, masonry work. When they leave formal schooling, there are no people to direct them, guide them. Without guidance most of them becomes roamers.

As Marks had mentioned in his paper on Influences on, and the consequences of, Low achievement. For low achievers the important policy focus should be on employment opportunities as soon as they leave full-time education. Once they have gained experience in employment, subsequent labour market outcomes are far healthier (Mark, 2006).

There are possible ways to open employment opportunities for low achievers. The belief system of most learners must be changed. This must be inculcated from the first day of schooling. Every job is respectable, a carpenter a bar bender or a mason will contribute his work to the country.

The belongingness must be developed inside the child from the start. Maldives is a country with

a high expatriate working population. If the expatriates coming to Maldives can be controlled, the youth can engage in different jobs. Similarly the Government has to set a salary band. When a salary band is set, local companies will not offer jobs to expatriates. The cheap labor market can be withdrawn. Youth will be interested to work.

The names for different jobs can be modified, like for trash pickers can be named as waste engineers. This will attract the youth for new jobs. The country can be back on its track.

### **Conclusion.**

The stake holder's message given to the public is wrong. The education system haven't failed. It's the problem with the policies. Policy makers must make policies according to the local context. Each and every aspect of the policy must meet all the areas of the government. Ministry of Education cannot act alone to correct the education system. The system can be corrected with the cooperation of all the stake holders. Marks (2006) suggests that his analysis presented on encouraging low achievers to complete Year 12 or participate in non-university forms of post-secondary education and training will do little to alleviate the poorer labour market outcomes of low achievers (Marks, 2006). Therefore the stake holders must focus on creating new jobs and setting policies to formulate job opportunities for the youth.

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