

Sri Lanka–Maldives Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science Conducted by the SLLA: A Historical Narration

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Abstract

This research paper presents a chronological account of the initiation, implementation, and conclusion of the joint Sri Lanka-Maldives distance education program in library and information science. The three-tier diploma course started in 1996 and was officially completed in 2003. Tier one was repeated in 2003 but was not continued to other levels. This study explores the program's origins, implementation, outcome, and challenges. The research method was to analyze the publicly accessible Annual Reports of the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) from 1995 to 2005. The results of the content analysis were presented in a narrative style. This is the second stage of a multi-stage research which includes an in-depth literature review on published research, administrative documents of partner organizations, and interviews with selected participants.

Although there was a significant enrollment of students initially in 1996, the pass rate was relatively low. The program took more time to complete due to financial challenges. As a result, it prolonged for a duration of 8-9 years for delivery instead of 3 years. The narration reveals the course organizers' and participants' tiring efforts throughout the project. It is a unique historical case for an international library and information science capacity-building initiative.

Keywords: Sri Lanka Library Association; Maldives Library Association; Distance education; DEPLIS; ADEPLIS

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Introduction, background, and scope

Capacity building plays a crucial role in enhancing the skills and competencies of professionals across various sectors, including Library and Information Science (LIS). The growing demand for education, often exceeding domestic capacity, causes importing foreign programs and providers to increase access to education.

In this context, cross-border capacity building in LIS emerges as a valuable solution to meet the educational needs of professionals while promoting international cooperation and knowledge sharing. This research paper examines the case of the Sri Lanka–Maldives Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science, a pioneering initiative led by the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) in collaboration with the Maldivian authorities.

The study delves into the origins of the Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science (DEPLIS) and the Advanced Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science (ADEPLIS) I and II, conducted from 1996 to 2003. In the current SLLA Diploma/Higher Diploma program structure, these are equivalent to the Diploma in Library and Information Science (DLIS) and Higher Diploma in Library and Information Science (HDIPLIS) I and II (see Table 1).

Distance education primarily depended on postal correspondence as educational technology was transitioning then. This paper examines these programs' implementation, challenges, and outcomes in the pre-online era.

Capacity building through education

Capacity-building is developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes, and resources organizations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive (United Nations, n.d.). Capacity-building activities can be performed to serve individuals, organizations, geographical or interested communities, etc. (Light et al., 2002). Long-term capacity-building initiatives bring about institutional strengthening besides educational achievement. This is highlighted in a landmark publication of the World Bank on cross-border education as follows.

That the increased demand for education cannot always be met by domestic capacity makes the import of foreign programs and provides an attractive option to help increase access to education...". (Knight, 2007, p. 32).

LIS education programs of SLLA

SLLA is a pioneer of LIS education in Sri Lanka (Wijetunge, 2003). Formal library education in Sri Lanka started with the introduction of the flagship professional education program in 1961 following the British style (Lankage, 1989). This part-time course was offered in three tiers: First, Intermediate, and Final level. Each tier is approximately equivalent to one year. The three-tier nature of the program remained intact throughout the changes in nomenclature which took place over the years (See Table 1). Currently, these levels are known as Diploma, and Higher Diploma Part I and II, which are in alignment with the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and Sri Lanka Qualification (SLQ) Frameworks (Ministry of Public Administration and Management, 2016; *SLQF (Rev)*, 2015). In addition, SLLA developed the Library Technician's Course (LTC) and the Course on Library Automation (COLA) also. While the LTC is no longer offered, the COLA remains actively available (Tissa, 2011). As an offshoot of DEPLIS, a local distance education program was also established in 1998 (SLLA, 1998, 1999). Distance and face-to-face diplomas have traditionally been reported separately by the SLLA, although they are different modes of the same professional diploma.

Table 1: Years when the names of the three-tier SLLA Professional Diplomas offered in Sri Lanka, were changed (Sources: Compiled based on Lankage, 1999; SLLA Annual Reports of 1999, 2008; 2021).

Year	State/Change
1961	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First Examination of the Ceylon Library Association* 2. Intermediate Examination of the Ceylon Library Association 3. Final Examination of the Ceylon Library Association
1998	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS) – Level I 2. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS) – Level II – Part 1 3. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS) – Level II – Part 2
2008	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS)–Level I 2. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS)–Level II 3. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DIPLIS)–Level III
2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diploma in Library and Information Science (DLIS) 2. Higher Diploma in Library and Information Science (HDIPLIS)–Part A 3. Higher Diploma in Library and Information Science (HDIPLIS)–Part B

* *When DEPLIS in Maldives was started in 1996, this was the name used in the parallel course in Sri Lanka, except for the word 'Ceylon' being replaced by Sri Lanka when the country became a republic in 1972.*

Needs of the Maldives

The Republic of the Maldives, an archipelago in South Asia comprising 188 inhabited islands and 105 tourist resort islands, faces unique educational challenges because of its geography and demographics. The highly dispersed nature of the country makes the fair distribution and access to education challenging (Di Biase & Maniku, 2021). In 1999, Singh (1999) noted that despite boasting the highest literacy rates among the seven South Asian nations, the Maldives hadn't seen comparable advancements in library and information work relative to the progress made in its economy.

Malé is the capital city and the center of the Maldives' political, social, and commercial life. Distance education was new to Malé. Distance education was introduced to the Maldives in the late 1980s, with the first reported graduates from distance education courses as 2 graduates from International Correspondence School, funded through Australia, who received their Diploma certificate in 1989 (Abdul-Raheem, 2013). One of the most widely reported and large-scale distance education program in the Maldives was the Distance Education English Course (DEEC) (Brahmawong, 1994) which was commenced in 1989 as a pilot program in 3 atolls (clusters of islands) of the Maldives, financially supported through UNDP and UNICEF (Abdul-Raheem, 2013). DEEC (level) 2 and 3 commenced in 1993. (Abdul-Raheem, 2013 citing Non-Formal Education Centre, 2002). The financial support for DEEC was stopped in 1994 and consequently there was a shortage of students and eventually the course ceased (Abdul-Raheem, 2013 citing Centre for Continuing Education, 2005).

Established in 1987 by a group of librarians, the Maldives Library Association (MLA) also recognized the need for a comprehensive, long-term plan to enhance library services in the nation (Riyaz et al., 2012). The MLA turned to its close professional ally, the neighboring country of Sri Lanka, for help (Yapa, 2004). The Maldives already had many connections with Sri Lankan librarians, and the country's library services relied heavily on them. Local school libraries in the Maldives during the 1990s were typically overseen by expatriate library professionals from Sri Lanka (de Alwis Jayasuriya et al., 2021; Hockly, 1949; Islam et al., 2012).

The initiation of the project by SLLA

The Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA) responded to MLA's request for assistance. Both parties agreed that the most effective approach to developing library services in the Maldives was establishing the library profession in the country, as there were no professionally qualified librarians at the time (Yapa, 2004).

Preliminary discussions on a development program took place in Colombo in 1995, during the Thirty-Fifth Annual Sessions of SLLA, attended by the President of MLA (Yapa, 2004). SLLA's Education Committee proposed offering the Diploma Course in Library and Information Services (DIPLIS) as a distance education program to MLA and granting SLLA membership to those who complete it. In 1995, SLLA assigned Mr. N.U. Yapa to develop a distance education program based on DIPLIS for Maldivian librarians.

The program's objectives were to:

- i. Enhance the knowledge and skills of Maldivian library personnel in service methods, processes, and practices.
- ii. Strengthen the relationship between the library associations of the Maldives and Sri Lanka.
- iii. Enable Maldivian library professionals to take part in SLLA's professional development programs.

The entire course was agreed to be similar in structure to the local course. However, their names were different from the local program, obviously for easy identification and administration.

- a) Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science (DEPLIS)
- b) Advanced Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science Part I (ADEPLIS I)
- c) Advanced Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science Part II (ADEPLIS II)

SLLA conducted the program with the support of the Maldives Library Association (MLA) and the National Library of Maldives (NLM). Launched in 1996 and officially concluded in 2003, this marked the first long-term LIS education program ever conducted in the Maldives (Gross & Riyaz, 2004). The motivation for the study was that the 20th anniversary after completing the program falls this year. A detailed analysis or description of the project has never been done before. In this setting, the current study proves historically significant.

Methodology

The research question for this study was "How was the Sri Lanka–Maldives Distance Education Program in Library and Information Science initiated, sustained, and concluded as documented by the Sri Lanka Library Association (SLLA)". The objectives were investigating the origins and

implementation, identifying key stakeholders, and exploring the challenges faced.

To address this, the paper analyzes the publicly accessible Annual Reports (SLLA, n.d.) of the SLLA from the pertinent period. A preliminary examination determined that the SLLA Annual Reports from 1995/1996 to 2004/2005 are directly relevant to the study. Data collected from these reports were supported and triangulated by other published literature.

This descriptive historical narrative employs archival research method for data collection. Qualitative textual analysis of annual reports and published literature was the data analysis technique. Where applicable, comparative analysis was also employed. Some data were collated and organized into tables for easy analysis.

Annual reports serve as comprehensive summaries of an organization's activities, providing insights into its corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and commitments (Elmogla, 2009, p. 125). Consequently, these reports have been utilized as primary sources in various studies (Hofhuis et al., 2021; Parshakov & Shakina, 2020; Ren & Lu, 2021). As the sole authoritative public records of the SLLA, annual reports document all activities conducted each year. While the SLLA's quarterly newsletter also covers relevant events, the newsletters from the relevant period are not accessible on the organization's website. Therefore, the utilization of annual reports as the primary source for documenting the activities of the SLLA is justified.

Data analysis and presentation

DEPLIS started in 1996

In this pioneering effort, the SLLA started its first-ever international professional education program in 1996. This postal correspondence course was inaugurated in Malé on January 3, 1996. As recorded by SLLA, DEPLIS was expected to bring prestige, financial benefits, and recognition to the organization(SLLA, 1996).

The annual reports of 1995/1996 and 1996/1997 have comprehensive reports on the DEPLIS course since it was implemented and concluded within one year.

The program's inception was in response to a request from the National Library of the Maldives, as the country lacked professionally qualified

librarians. To establish a library profession in the Maldives, Ms. Habeeba H. Habeeb, the Director-General of the NLM and the President of the MLA, sought help from the SLLA for professional development (Riyaz et al., 2012; SLLA, 1997).

The SLLA agreed to deliver its existing professional Library and Information Science course as a distance education program, marking the first time the initial year of the three-tier diploma was offered in this format. According to an SLLA project report, the Maldivian government requested USD 6000 from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Colombo for the project (SLLA, 1997).

Key SLLA officers during this time included Mr. P. Vidanapathirana as President, Ms. G.N. Fernando as General Secretary (GS), Ms. N.P. Wanasundera as Education Officer, and Mr. N.U. Yapa as a former SLLA President and member of the Education Committee. Mr. Yapa was crucial in launching the project and was later appointed coordinator of the DEPLIS program (SLLA, 1996).

The course began in Malé on January 3, 1996, with Mr. Yapa and prominent Maldivian figures in attendance. Ms. Dharma Diyasena, temporarily living in Malé, was selected by local authorities to serve as the coordinator in Malé. Ms. Diyasena was a Library Consultant for the NLM at the time, who had conceived the idea for a distance education program several years before, which she discussed with her colleagues in Maldives and Sri Lanka (SLLA, 1997).

Mr. Yapa was supported by a sub-committee within the Education Committee, comprising Ms. C.L.M. Nethsinghe, Ms. Sumana Jayasuriya, Mr. S.M. Kamaldeen, and Ms. Nanda P. Wanasundera. Lesson writers and editors were identified after consulting with the Association's general membership and soliciting volunteers.

DEPLIS comprised three major components: a postal course lasting ten months, a three-day DEPLIS seminar hosted in Malé, Maldives, and a year-end examination.

Table 2: Presidents, General Secretaries (GS), and Education Officers (EO) during the period concerned. Source: SLLA Annual Reports 1995 to 2005.

Year	President	General Secretary	Education Officer
1995/1996	Mr. P. Vidanapathirana	Ms. G.N. Fernando	Ms. N. P. Wanasundera
1996/1997	Mr. P. Vidanapathirana	Mr. W. Ranasinghe	Ms. N. P. Wanasundera
1997/1998	Mr. H. Perera	Mr. W. Ranasinghe	Mr. H.M. Gunaratne Banda
1998/1999	Mr. H. Perera	Ms. D. Diyasena	Mr. P. B. Gallaba
1999/2000	Ms. S. Jayasuriya	Ms. D. Diyasena	Ms. P. Wijetunge
2000/2001	Ms. D. Ratnayake	Ms. S. Jayatillake	Ms. P. Wijetunge
2001/2022	Ms. D. Ratnayake	Ms. S. Jayatillake	Ms. R.H.I.S.Ranasinghe
2002/2003	Mr. N.U. Yapa	Ms. D. Talagala	Ms. N. P. Wanasundera
2003/2004	Mr. N.U. Yapa	Ms. D. Talagala	Ms. N. P. Wanasundera
2004/2005	Ms. D. Talagala	Ms.G. Amarasekera	Ms. R.H.I.S. Ranasinghe

The first set of lesson notes was distributed in early January 1996, and lecture notes created by SLLA professionals were mailed from the SLLA office to the NLM. This process continued until October 1996, following a predetermined schedule specifying distribution and assignment submission dates. Students were required to complete 48 assignments in four subjects, graded by SLLA lecturers, and mailed back to the students.

Initially designed for 25 students, the program expanded to accommodate 31 at the NLM's request. However, by July 1996, enrollment had decreased to 19 students, and three more students withdrew by November 1996.

A seminar took place in Malé from November 18 to 20, 1996, with Ms. Sumana Jayasuriya, Ms. Nanda Wanasundera, Mr. S.M. Kamaldeen, Mr. Wilfred Ranasinghe, and Mr. N.U. Yapa serving as resource persons. The seminar allowed students to discuss their concerns and assignments with the lecturers, and 16 students attended.

In December 1996, 15 students took the examination in Malé, and a marking center was set up at the SLLA office to assess the answer scripts. Six students passed all four papers on their first attempt. A repeat examination was held in April 1997. Therefore, a total of 13 students completed the exam by 1997 (SLLA, 1998). While the course was initially named DEPLIS, the SLLA ensured that the qualification offered was identical to that provided in Sri Lanka. As a result, the examination was titled the 'First Examination in Library & Information Science'.

The Annual Report of 1995/1996 (SLLA, 1996) notes that because of the program's success, Malé authorities requested to extend the DEPLIS course to the next higher level offered in Sri Lanka before the program's completion.

ADEPLIS Part I started in 1997

At the SLLA Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in 1997, Mr. Harrison Perera, Director–Information of the British Council Colombo, became the President. Mr. Wilfred Ranasinghe and Mr. H.M. Gunarathna Banda were selected as the GS and the EO, respectively.

Incidentally, the British Council agreed to fund Part I of the ADEPLIS held in the Republic of Maldives (SLLA, 1998). A committee was appointed to plan and implement the project. Mr. Yapa continued to be the Course Coordinator. He designed the ADEPLIS Part I similar to the Intermediate Library and Information Science Course the SLLA offered. It was the second stage of the three-tier professional diploma.

At a meeting of the SLLA members held on 12 July 1997 at the Colombo British Council Hall to discuss the program, 16 members agreed to write ADEPLIS lessons. The Council appointed Mr. N.U. Yapa and Mrs. Dharma Diyasena (who by then had returned to Sri Lanka) as the Project Leader and the Assistant Project Leader, respectively.

Two committees were also appointed.

Advisory Committee:

- Mr. N. U. Yapa (Convenor)
- Mrs. Sumana Jayasuriya
- Mr. H. M. Gunarathna Banda
- Ms. C. L. M. Nethsinghe and
- Ms. Dharma Diyasena (Secretary)

Editorial Committee

- Miss C. L. M. Nethsinghe
- Mrs. Nanda Wanasundara
- Mrs. Sumana Jayasuriya and
- Mr. Wilfred Ranasinghe

SLLA Annual Report for the period of 1997/1998 The Librarian of the NLM Ms. Zulfa Mohammed was appointed as the Malé Coordinator (SLLA, 1998). However, Nashath (2012, p. 35) and Riyaz et al (2012, p. 7) reports that Ms. Melanie Weeks, the NLM's Teacher Librarian from Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), coordinated this program.

The 13 students who completed the SLLA First Examination enrolled for ADEPLIS I. ADEPLIS was ceremonially inaugurated in Malé on 19 October

1997. Mr. Y. U. Yapa and Mrs. Daya Ratnayake represented the SLLA. Arrangements were made to conduct two workshops in Malé in 1998.

The progress of the course that began in 1997 was predominantly documented in the SLLA Annual Report of 1997/1998 (SLLA, 1998). Next year, the report was limited to the fact that 12 students passed the ADEPLIS I (SLLA, 1999). Further, no information on the ADEPLIS program is present in the annual reports for the subsequent two years. During this period, Maldivian authorities (NLM and MLA) explored potential funding sources for the third and final stage. An attempt to secure funding for ADEPLIS Part II from the IFLA/ALP (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions/ Advancement of Librarianship Program) had also been unsuccessful (SLLA, 2000).

ADEPLIS Part II started in 2002

Concluding the search for funding, the NLM successfully secured financial support from UNESCO with the assistance of government mediation to sponsor the final part of the program (SLLA, 2002). The course inauguration occurred on March 17, 2002, with Ms. Dharma Diyasena appointed as the Project Coordinator and Mr. N.U. Yapa, Mr. Harrison Perera, Mr. L.A. Jayatissa, Mrs. N.P. Wanasundera, and Mr. P. Vidanapathirana as resource persons.

Although 12 students passed Part I of ADEPLIS, only six students from Malé traveled to Colombo in August/September 2002 for a study tour and workshop. They presented their projects, which were evaluated by a panel of lecturers (SLLA, 2003). The final examination took place in Malé in November 2002, and students who completed the ADEPLIS course were granted SLLA membership by the end of the 2002/2003 term.

The Advanced Distance Education Program in LIS for librarians in the Republic of Maldives concluded in 2003. Six students, including repeat candidates, passed the final stage. Certificates were awarded at a ceremony on September 9, 2003, when Mr. Yapa (President-SLLA, 2002/2004) and Ms. Wanasundera (EO, 2002/2004) visited Malé to inaugurate the second batch of the DEPLIS program (SLLA, 2004).

DEPLIS second batch started in 2003

During the 2002/2003 term of SLLA, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Maldives requested it to conduct a distance education program for 40 librarians (SLLA, 2003). This was targeted for school librarians. The 2003/2004 Annual Report recorded the reflection of SLLA as follows.

“Seeking the help of SLLA by a foreign government for human resource development is another achievement recorded in 2003/2004. The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Maldives, after evaluating the training courses conducted by SLLA, invited SLLA to train their school librarians...Offered as a distance education program, [this course] was completed during the period under review. This was the most expensive project undertaken by the Association in its history.” (SLLA, 2004).

With prior experience in conducting distance education programs for the Maldives, then SLLA President, Mr. N.U. Yapa negotiated and outlined the project. A committee was formed, and they created a timetable and defined modalities. Lecture modules and units were identical to the original DEPLIS, which resembled the DIPLIS Level I (See Table 1).

On September 9, 2003, the course was inaugurated. Resource persons were selected based on previous experience, English language proficiency, and availability. Some participants were from libraries in Malé, and most were from the atolls (clusters of islands in the archipelago). From September 2003 to April 2004, four workshops were held in Malé, and a fifth workshop took place in Colombo from June 3-10, 2004.

The course-end examination was held in Malé in mid-June 2004, supervised by the Maldivian Coordinator appointed by the Ministry of Education. Marking and results were done in Colombo. A repeat examination was held in January 2005, with results released in May 2005. Of 41 students, 30 completed the course, passing all four subjects. The S.C. Blok Memorial Award was given to the best-performing student. It is a prestigious scholarship which exempts the student from the subsequent examination and course fees for the next level. It is named after the founding President of SLLA, Mr. S.C. Blok. Nevertheless, this course did not continue to the next stage.

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

DEPLIS and ADEPLIS exemplified international library cooperation, with one country's library association conducting a professional course on behalf of another country's library association. Regardless of the program's working title, the SLLA demonstrated thoughtfulness by adopting the same qualification title used in Sri Lanka for examination purposes, thereby emphasizing the spirit of harmonization.

The program fostered a strong relationship between the library communities in both countries. Yapa (2004) suggests that small nations with fewer resources could adopt DEPLIS to develop their library profession. He further reveals that the MLA planned to organize training programs for Maldivian librarians, leveraging the expertise of professionals produced by the program. An article by Fathimath (2012) confirms this fact since it lists the names of some participants of the ADEPLIS as resource persons in the subsequent training programs conducted by the MLA.

The following table summarizes the courses mentioned in this article and the number of students who completed them. However, student numbers are sometimes contradictory in different sources [eg: Riyaz et al., 2012; Yapa, 2004; Gross & Riyaz, 2004)].

Table 3: Summary of the regular courses offered by SLLA for the Maldives
(Source: SLLA Annual Reports).

Course	Year	Number enrolled	Number completed
DEPLIS	1996	31	13
HDEPLIS I	1997	13	12
HDEPLIS II	2002	7	6
DEPLIS	2003	41	30

The pass rate of DEPLIS in 2003 (73%) is an improvement on the rate in 1996 (41%). However, the rates cannot be compared to each other since there could have been many other factors affecting the success of the second project. It is also questionable why it was not continued to the ADEPLIS stage. Islam at al. (2012) reports that no documented evidence can be traced for the reason of this. However, discussions with the NLM management and senior MLA officers revealed that a difficulty in accrediting the DEPLIS qualification by the Maldives Qualification Authority(MQA), difficulties in coordinating distance education, lack of funding, and the poor level of interest by the required cohort group of school completers had been some of the constraints. The 2009/2010 annual report (2010) mentions submitting another proposal for a distance education program for Maléat the request of Malé authorities. However, that never materialized.

Table 4 lists resource persons who contributed to the program as resource persons (course writers and lecturers). All Sri Lankans served on committees of the project had served as resource persons, except Ms. Dharma Diyasena, who was not listed therein. However, she had already conducted some short

courses in Malé, before starting DEPLIS (Nashath, 2012). It is not clear why there had been a confusion in documenting the name of the Malé Coordinator of the ADEPLIS I program.

Table 4: Resource persons contributed to the DEPLIS/ADEPLIS in Malé – sorted by surname. All workplaces apply to the time the courses were conducted (Sources: Nashath,2012;SLLA Annual Reports. The data were triangulated with names on the DEPLIS/ADEPLIS Course Notes).

Name	Employer at the time
Amarakone, Lionel R.	Save the Children (NGO)
AmaraweeraJ.	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Bandaranayake, Padma	Nat. Lib.and Documentation Serv. Board
Chandramala, P.A.N.	Public Library Colombo
De Alwis, A.Maniq	International Irrigation Management Institute
Dodawatte, D.G.S.	National Institute of Technical Education
Fernando, Niliya	UCC-ISS Project Library
Gunarathna Banda, H.M.	National Institute of Education
Jayasuriya, Sumana	University of Colombo
Jayatissa, L.A.	University of Kelaniya
Kamaldeen, S.M.	Sri Lanka Islamic Centre
Kodagoda, Saumya	National Institute of Education
Naguleswaran, Sumi	Institute of Agri. and Women in Development
Nethsinghe, C.L.M.	Ceylon Inst. of Scientific and Ind. Research
Perera, Harrison	The British Council
Ranasinghe, Wilfred	Environmental Foundation Ltd.
Ratnayake, J.	Colombo International School
Silva, G.A.P.J.	Urban Development Authority
Talagala, Deepali	National Science Foundation
Vidanapathirana, P	University of Sri Jayewardenepura
Wanasundera, Nanda P.	Centre for the Study of Human Rights
Wimalaratne, Dr. K.D.G.	Department of National Archives
Yapa, N.U.	International Irrigation Management Institute

It is not clear why the SLLA divided the program into DEPLIS and ADEPLIS. While naming the second tier as Advanced Course, the SLLA had deviated from its own course nomenclature on Sri Lankan soil. However, this structure well suits the current course structure, which was introduced by SLLA in 2020 (Table 1). This was due to the influence of the qualification frameworks introduced in the post-2000 era. Sri Lanka had started discussions of standardizing vocational qualifications by 1997, but it took several more years to finalize the levels (Asian Development Bank, 2011).

That way, SLLA had been quite forward thinking in structuring and naming courses it offered to the Maldives.

The DEPLIS program was beneficial to SLLA, too. It generated a set of literature that could be used for local courses. SLLA lecturers had to learn different teaching methods and evaluation techniques. Experience gained by teaching foreign students would have enhanced the teaching ability of the SLLA lecturers. On the other hand, the distance education course introduced within Sri Lanka was a direct outcome of the project. The English course notes were translated to Sinhala and offered to the Uva Province library staff as a pilot project. This was implemented on request of the National Library and Documentation Board of Sri Lanka (SLLA, 1999).

Following the phasing out of SLLA courses, MLA discussed with the NLM to develop a curriculum at the Diploma level, which had not been successful for various reasons (Islam et al., 2012). The first long-term LIS program in the Maldives was introduced in February 2010 at the Maldives National University (MNU) in the name of the “Advanced Certificate in Library and Information Services” (ACLIS). MNU also developed locally produced curricula for the certificate, diploma, and undergraduate degree levels. The SLLA curriculum influenced the establishment of the local syllabi (Islam et al., 2012).

However, an in-depth study with other evidence, such as council minutes, correspondence, and interviews with stakeholders, is necessary to understand the dynamics of these projects, and fill the gaps identified here. Such a study will contribute to a deeper comprehension of the challenges, policy frameworks, and the impact of the project on cross-border education.

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