

These couple of articles explain best, why the Jayawickreme

Foundation Education Centres are so important to give poor

children a good education:

1) LANKA BUSINESS ONLINE

Failed System

Sri Lanka 'free' education crisis worsens: report

Apr 26, 2010 (LBO) - A crisis in Sri Lanka's state-run 'free' education system funded by people's taxes has worsened with 47 percent of students failing a key junior high school test leaving them stranded with no prospects, a report said.

At Sri Lanka's general certificate of education - ordinary level, equal to a junior high school diploma the pass rate has fallen to 53 percent in 2009 from an already low 55 percent, *The Sunday Times* newspaper said.

Out of 272,000 students, 129,062 will not be able to enter the advance level (senior high school) stream in state schools because they have failed even compulsory subjects like mathematics.

The newspaper quoting Sri Lanka's exam department chief Anura Edirisinghe said, 51 percent of students failed Mathematics and 55 percent failed science. A student has to pass six subjects out of nine and get three credit passes including a compulsory subject like Mathematics to be considered to have 'passed' the examination.

Failed students will have to re-take the exam losing another year or drop out of the system. But students who fail the exam will have poor job prospects.

Paying Twice

Sri Lanka's state-run education system is funded out of taxes extracted from the people but there is no system to make schools or teachers accountable or assure quality.

Students are given 'free' textbooks, 'free' school uniforms and even some food in addition to basic tuition.

Though all government services are funded by taxes, borrowings or through money printing (and inflation) Sri Lanka's rulers have successfully perpetrated a myth that government services are 'free' and that the 'burden' is borne by state and not the people.

Due to the poor quality of tuition parents are now paying monthly fees to get private tuition for their children effectively paying twice for the 'free' education system.

Students who attend private tuition classes after school hours are deprived of their leisure and opportunity to engage in other extra curricular activities. Others have turned to private schools and 'international schools' which are springing up around the country.

Students are 'automatically promoted' until they hit a brick wall at the 'ordinary level' national exam, allowing schools escape scrutiny of the quality of their tuition.

However a concept of 'popular' schools have arisen and there is a rush to enroll new students each year with the matter also going to courts.

Allegations of corruption, bribery with hundreds of thousands being paid under the table and forging of documents come up each year.

Next Step

Students who pass the advanced level university entrance stream face another bottleneck. In 2008 20,069 gained admissions to state-run 'free' universities. In 2008, 12,958 graduated.

Hundreds of thousands of students register for 'external' degrees. Thousands of graduates with general arts degrees taught mainly in vernacular languages are unable to get jobs in productive sectors.

However there is core of group of high quality universities in the state system including the technical oriented Moratuwa University and medical, engineering, management and IT faculties in several others.

Led by Sri Lanka's Marxist-Nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna party, which has systematically opposed education reforms, unemployable graduates agitate for state jobs with tax free salaries and pensions.

Since 2004 tens of thousands of such graduates have been stuffed into an already bloated government service in a blatant vote-buying exercise never seen

in the history of the country.

Ironically, some of the unemployable graduates involved in the state job scheme were recruited into the education service as teachers, in a bizarre self-feeding vicious cycle.

According to official data in 2003, there were 195,000 teachers and 4.09 million students, giving a teacher to student ratio of 21.

In 2009, there were 4.03 million students and 224,000 teachers and the teacher to student ratio had fallen to 19 despite the rising failure rates.

In 2009 Sri Lanka had spent 100.5 billion rupees of people's money on the education system, almost the same as the 100.1 billion rupees spent an year earlier.

Though the state-run education system served the people at one time by extending access, its quality and usefulness is now being increasingly questioned.

2) Student Sri Lanka Educational Network

High failure rate in Sri Lankan GCE O Level examination

May 5, 2010

By [Hiran](#)

About half (47% or 129,062) of the 272,000 school students who sat GCE O/L examination in 2009 will not be able to gain entry to the Advanced Level classes, and without OL certificate, they may not even be able to get a simple job. The 2009 results were poorer than the previous year (2008), when 55% qualified to do their ALs.

The pass percentages of core subjects such as Mathematics, Science and English language are relatively low, but the percentage

of passes in some subjects like Sinhala is high, English language only 28% passed in 2009.

- . Mathematics – only 51% have passed. This is the same as in 2008.
- . Science – only 45%, have passed. This is a further drop from 2008 which recorded 47% .
- . Sinhala (a first language or mother tongue) — 80% have passed
- . Tamil (a first language or mother tongue) – 75% have passed.

“It is a kind of a crisis in the education system. There should be more focus on O/L failures”, Commissioner General of Examinations, Anura Edirisinghe said to National Newspaper “Sunday Observer”.

Some possible causes for this educational crisis:

Sri Lankan O/L syllabuses are both wide and deep. Width of the present curriculum prepared by National Institute of Education (NIE) is acceptable as the earlier curriculum was very narrow and did not cover even the basic concepts in each subject. The real problem is with the depth of the curriculum and the depth of the questions at GCE O/L examination. For example many questions in O/L Science paper are at the level of Advanced Level.

NIE publishes curriculum, text books and Teacher’s Guides. Curriculum and well written text books would definitely increase the level of teaching and learning. But the way the teachers teach can differ and therefore creativity of individual teachers can be lost, when they try to restrict the fashion of teaching as indicated in TG’s.

Education authorities say that they have adopted a skill based system. This type of system should rely on the mode of teaching. However when the contents that need to be covered are so deep, as in the case of Science, how can teachers do skill based system. One student told me that the teacher advised them to prepare models of atoms using different types of seeds. Three dimensional model of atoms cannot be understood by this type of 2D models and its is not

a skill that makes a student more capable, or confident, but these activities eat their valuable time in preparing for studies.

Also skill based system cannot be checked by a traditional examination based system. If the work load is less in O/L then students have more free time, where they can be directed to Sports, Societies and Social work which will build up their skills, character building and making them confident, capable, healthy, presentable individuals.

For those who fail the examination, it is essential to develop vocational training courses to train them so that they can get well paid jobs in foreign countries, as there is a big demand for such trained people.