

Lessons from Passara

A report on people's views and experiences on the quality of education in the plantation schools of Passara



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Foreword

It is with great pleasure that TISL presents 'Lessons from Passara' to the public.

Education is the key to the development of our country and each and every child should have the right to have a good education irrespective of gender, caste, ethnicity or other differences.

Education is also closely linked to good governance and our education institutions including schools and their administration should ensure not only equity in education but also quality. Good governance in education will lead to more resources being available and less resources being wasted. It will make sure that available resources are better used and teachers are more evenly deployed among all schools while also being better trained. A better learning environment for students and greater equity in access to schools will also be outcomes of good governance in education.

These will lead to a good education being imparted and society being strengthened by good citizens who resist corruption and work towards the public good.

The present study focuses on plantation schools. The estate sector is socially and economically disadvantaged, with education outcomes being poor and school drop-out rates high. The government has devised a number of strategies to redress this situation, but problems appear to persist, with children on plantations not getting a level playing field.

The study examines existing problems and analyses the relationship between governance and the quality of education in plantation schools. It is part of a larger programme which aims to facilitate a dialogue between teachers, principals, officials and parents. It is our sincere belief that a joint and honest effort by all stakeholders is necessary to address the problems.

While our study identified many problems, we wish to acknowledge the difficulties under which local schools and authorities operate. We hope that the findings of our study will result in a constructive debate on the quality of education, and would be complimentary to the efforts of the government to strengthen education in general.

I wish to express my gratitude to the officials at the Passara Zonal Education Office, the principals and teachers of the schools visited and the CBOs that

helped us to design this programme. I am deeply grateful to Zonal Director W.A. Piyasena, to Mr Prabath Kumara and Mr Suresh Nadesan for their invaluable assistance in carrying out this study. I also wish to thank the research team at TISL, especially Ms. Sharmely Thatparan for her outstanding dedication and Ms. Bettina Meier for her guidance and persistence in producing this publication. Thanks also to Kumudini Hettiarachchi for editing the report.

J.C. Weliamuna
Executive Director



1. Introduction

The Sri Lankan Education System is often quoted as a model for other countries. Adult literacy is 90.7%, enrolment at primary school level 98%¹ and completion of basic education 90%.² Since 1997, basic education both primary – Grades 1-5 – and junior secondary – Grades 6-9 -- is compulsory for all children below fourteen years of age. In addition, Sri Lanka has achieved gender parity in education and is likely to fulfil the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goal of ensuring a full cycle of basic education for all its children by 2015.

1. World Bank. Treasures of the Education System in Sri Lanka: Restoring performance, expanding opportunities and enhancing prospects. Washington, DC (2005)

2. Harsha Aturupane: The Pearl of Great Price (2009), p 16

However, according to UN statistics, 3.6% of children in the school-going age did not enroll in school in 2002. These are children living in extreme poverty, on the streets, in public institutions (orphanages) and rural and plantation areas; children displaced by the ethnic conflict; and children of marginalized groups.³ Disparities exist particularly in relation to the plantation sector: While the national school drop-out rate average is a low 1.4% (the rate of primary students who drop out before completing five years of schooling or turning fourteen years of age), it is significantly higher at allegedly 8.4% in plantation schools.⁴

Poverty and lack of parental support are frequently quoted as reasons for the high drop-out rate while poor conditions in schools, inadequate resources and poor quality of teaching have also been attributed to the low educational achievements in plantation schools.⁵ Both factors are mutually reinforcing: Poverty prevents children from attending school and poor education leads these children back to poverty when they become adults. It is a vicious circle.

Quality schools will attract and encourage children to attend school and in turn be a major tool in reducing poverty. Education helps youth to find employment. This is why most parents wish for a good education for their children. Quality education, therefore, is not only a human right and constitutional requirement but also a vehicle for poverty reduction.

This survey hopes to support ongoing efforts by the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the international community to address poor levels of educational achievement in the country's plantation sector. An earlier survey by Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) in 2008 identified a number of problems that challenge accountability in the education sector including malpractices in school admissions and teacher appointments, promotions and transfers; misappropriation of educational resources; and high costs for parents. This survey adapted the methodology used for the earlier survey to assess plantation schools. Some aspects specific to the plantation sector such as remoteness of schools and quality of teachers have been examined in greater detail than others less relevant such as corruption in school admissions.

3. Millennium Development Goals. MDGs in Sri Lanka. 2009. Accessed on November 26, 2009. http://www.mdg.lk/inpages/thegoals/goal2_primary_education.shtml

4. Wijesiriwardane, Panine & Amaranath Sujeewa. 'Inadequate schooling in Sri Lanka's plantations'. World Socialist website. April 17, 2009, Accessed on November 26, 2009.

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/apr2009/sled-a17.shtml>

5. Wijesiriwardane, & Sujeewa (2009)

This study intends to highlight how accountability and integrity problems in plantation schools have an impact on the quality of education. It is based on the hypothesis that problems in plantation schools are aggravated by poor school infrastructure and finance, poor teacher management and behaviour as well as poverty and lack of parental involvement.

The survey sample is not representative of all plantation schools in Sri Lanka. However, by providing a snapshot of the existing problems, it hopes to add value to the ongoing discussion on improving education outcomes in the plantations.

The division of Passara in the Badulla district was selected for the survey since the people here are plantation workers and because TISL has already worked in Badulla and has a good rapport with the authorities.

Carried out with the approval of the Finance Commission and the Badulla District Secretary, the survey was used to inform a series of workshops and other local events in Passara aimed at creating a dialogue between parents, teachers and officials. The Passara Divisional Secretariat provided demographic information and the Zonal Education Office facilitated access to schools and officials. Two Community-based Organizations (CBOs) – Future in Our Hands and Uva Shakti – helped conduct the survey.

For the purpose of this study, plantation schools are defined as schools located in plantations which were taken over by the government after 1973 and whose students predominantly come from the plantations.

The objectives of this survey are:

- To examine whether there are problems in school administration and to identify issues in the delivery of education in the plantation schools in Passara
- To document parents' opinions and experiences with regard to the education system
- To document the views and experiences of teachers and local officials on the quality of education in Passara

The survey hopes to stimulate a constructive debate on accountability and integrity in education, particularly in the plantation sector.



2. Methodology

This survey was designed in June and July 2009 in consultation with the education authorities.⁶ The project team met and sought the cooperation of all school principals of Passara during a Zonal Office public day in June 2009. CBOs involved in development activities in the area were also consulted.

To develop the survey instrument, a desk study was conducted while focus group discussions and key informant interviews were held with teachers, principals, officials and CBOs.

6. Planning trips were held from June 6-18 and August 25-27, 2009. TISL held consultations with Provincial Education Department Additional Secretary Ms. I.M.A. Kumari and Passara Zonal Education Director Mr. Piyasena on June 18, 2009 and Passara Divisional Secretary Mr. T.M.B. Tennakoon on June 19, 2009

Four questionnaires were developed for interviews with households (parents or guardians), teachers, officials and the Zonal Director and a fact sheet prepared to collect basic information about the schools. The survey instruments were tested twice in the field with parents/guardians, teachers and officials before finalization, then translated into Tamil and Sinhala and printed.

Multi-stage sampling was used for the survey. There are 48 government schools -- 23 Tamil medium and 25 Sinhala medium – in the Passara division. Twenty-one of the 48 schools fall under the plantation school category (as defined by TISL) as they were run by the plantation managements until 1977 and their students are predominantly from the estates. These 21 comprise one Sinhala and 20 Tamil medium schools. One school has classes from Grades 1-13 (Advanced Level), three schools have classes up to Grade 11 (Ordinary Level), two schools have classes up to Grade 9 and the remainder have classes up to Grade 5. Seven of these schools have more than 100 students and seven fewer than 40.

Three-hundred households were selected based on the students of the 21 schools and using stratified sampling based on their grades and gender. (See Appendix I for sample frame and Appendix II for a detailed explanation of the sampling method.)

The sample of teachers and officials was also drawn from the same frame, with 50 teachers being randomly selected from the schools and 12 officials from the Zonal Education Office.

Six enumerators were selected through interviews for data collection and trained on September 19 and 20, 2009. Data collection which was carried out from September 21-October 7, 2009, included interviews with 310 households, 42 teachers and 12 officials. While getting the questionnaires answered, case studies were documented on separate sheets wherever respondents shared relevant additional information. School fact sheets were filled by enumerators in consultation with the principals. The enumerators were supervised and monitored in the field by a Programme Coordinator who reviewed the questionnaires filled by the interviewees on a daily basis.

Three databases for households, officials and teachers and school fact sheets were developed to analyse the quantitative data and statistical analysis used for the descriptive data.

After the preliminary analysis, the project team met with various stakeholders including officials and teachers in Passara in February 2010⁷ to discuss the findings and seek feedback and input before the formulation of policy recommendations.

The challenges in data collection included the verification of hard data, for example, the number of teachers employed in the 21 plantation schools. While the Zonal Office records indicated that 227 teachers were deployed, verification on-the-spot through the principals, found only 167. There were more teachers on the schools' roll than those actually engaged in teaching as some were either on temporary leave or transfer, according to the principals.

Sample characteristics

Passara, a division in the Badulla district of the Uva Province has 41 Grama Niladhari areas. There are 125 villages with a population of 52,786 in Passara covering 124.4sq km. of which 7,389 hectares are under tea, the main crop in the division.⁸ Thirty-two per cent of Passara's population was listed as living below the poverty line in 2002.⁹

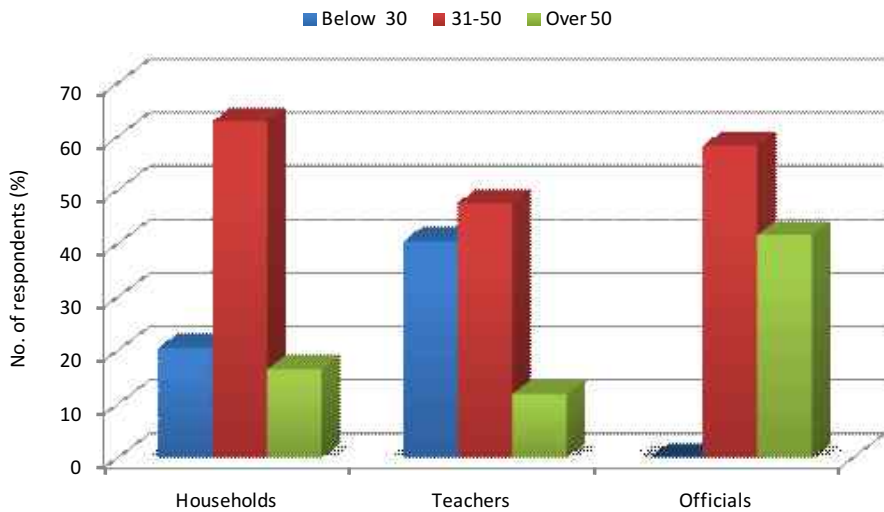
Of the 310 respondents interviewed in the household sample, 53.2% were men and 46.8% women. Eighty-eight per cent were married, 5.3% widowed and 6.6% single. The respondents in the households were parents and guardians of the students as many mothers were employed as migrant workers abroad.

7. February 11: World Bank; February 24: Passara Zonal Education Officers and Director, teachers and CBOs; March 09: National Institute of Education, GTZ Project for Education Cohesion

8. http://www.dmc.gov.lk/DistrictSection/badulla/01_badulla_Profile.htm (accessed on 30 March 2010)

9. <http://www.statistics.gov.lk/poverty/small%20area%20reportNEW.pdf> (accessed on 30 March 2010)

Figure 1: Age distribution of the respondents

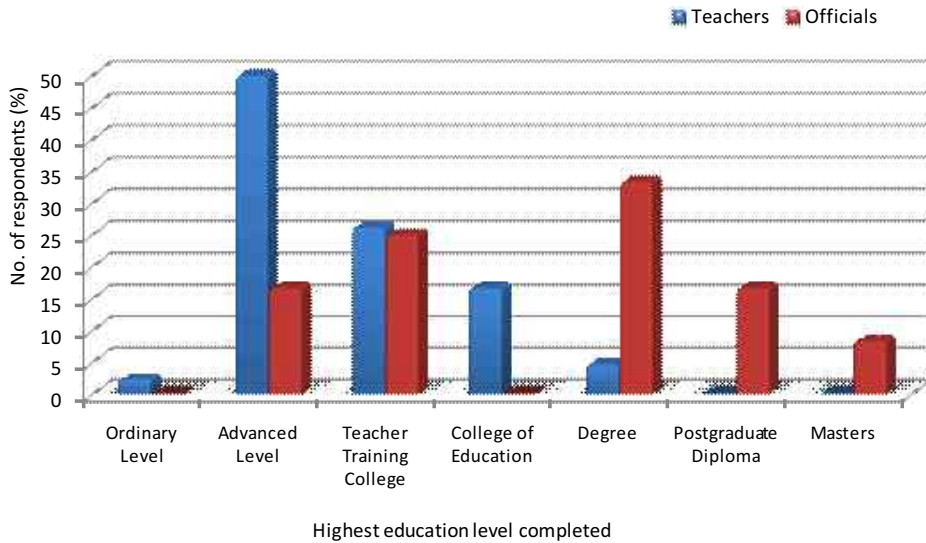


In interviews with teachers and officials, 44.4% were men and 55.6% women with their experience being an average of 8.6 years. Of the twelve officials, nine were Sinhalese and three Tamil and a majority were born in the Badulla district. They were from various departments such as accounting, education development, institutional unit, socio-cerebral, intervention and In-Service Advisors (ISAs).

The education level of the respondents was low with 39% of the households interviewed having studied up to Grade 5; 40.7% up to Grade 11 but not completed their education; 8% passing their O/L; 2.7% studying up to their A/L but not sitting the examination; and 1.7% passing their A/L. Nearly 8% had not attended school at all.

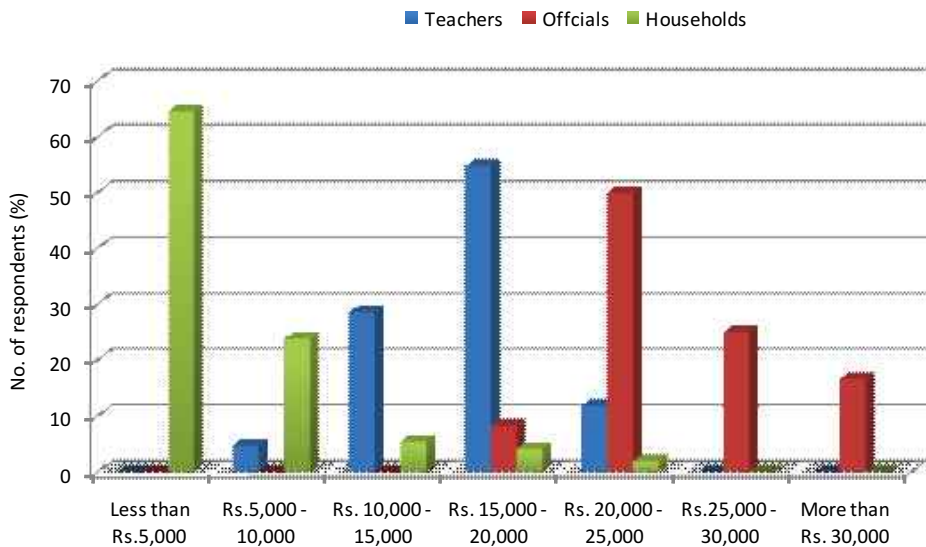
Of the teachers and officials, nearly 50% of the teachers had only completed their A/L while 33.3% of the officials had completed their degree.

Figure 2: Educational qualifications of teachers and officials



The income level of the respondents was also low with poverty being a major problem. The income distribution of the households is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 3: Monthly income distribution of the respondents

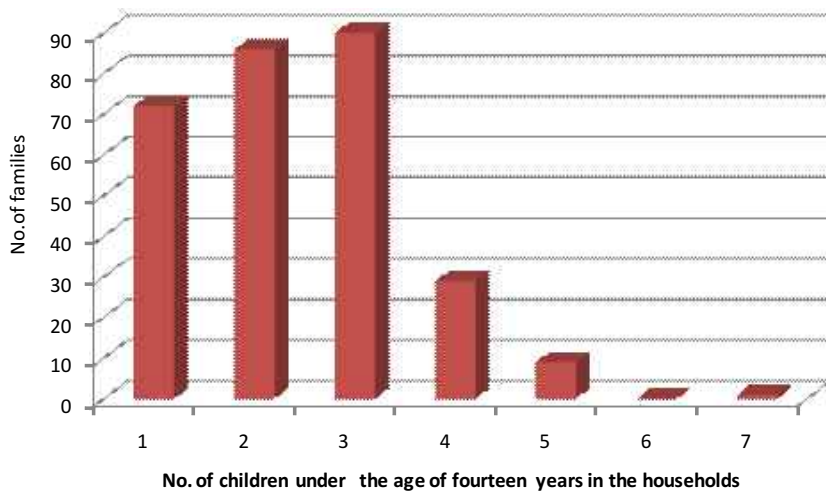


The monthly income of 55% of the teachers was in the range of Rs. 15,000 - Rs.20,000 and 50% of the officials Rs. 20,000-Rs. 25,000.

In each of the surveyed households, there was an average of 2.4 children under the age of fourteen years, ranging from a minimum of one child to a maximum of seven children.

Among the children in the age group of six to fourteen in the households surveyed, an average of 1.88 children was attending school regularly.

Figure 4: Families with children below the age of fourteen years



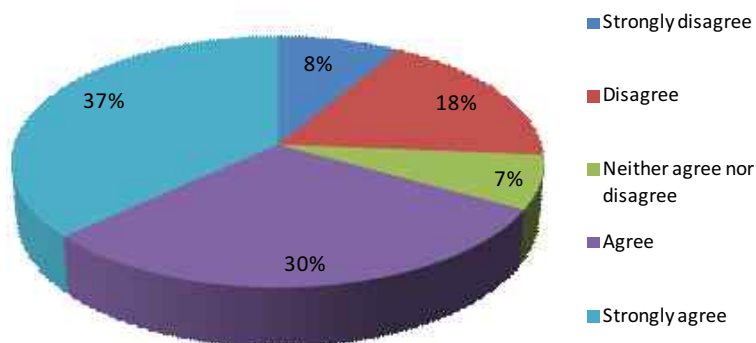


3. Findings

3.1. Levels of satisfaction with education and drop-out rate

More than half, 65.5%, of the parents and guardians appeared to be satisfied with the overall quality of education provided to their children. Most of them had the hope that educating their children will give them a good future -- 69.2% said schooling will help fulfill their hopes, which in turn indicated that they had faith and confidence in schools and teachers. Another positive indicator was that 85.5% of the respondents said that their children liked school and were eager to study.

Figure 5: The overall education provided to our child is satisfactory



However, this overall positive assessment should be seen in the light of another finding of the survey that three-quarter of the teachers said that parents never came to school (see chapter 3.5). One reason for the high levels of satisfaction might be the low levels of education of parents -- only 12.4% had studied beyond the O/L. These parents might have been inclined to declare their satisfaction with the schools due to lack of experience and low expectations. As in any user satisfaction survey, respondents from low social strata tend to be more satisfied with services than those with a higher education and from higher social strata. This is also true for this study, where guardians' views and assessments were more positive throughout than the views of teachers and officials.

In general, only a few students in Passara appeared to study beyond the O/L, with the lack of A/L classes in schools here (only one school offered education beyond Grade 11) being attributed to this situation.

Table 1: Total number of students in schools in Passara in 2007

Grade	Total number of students	Per cent
1-5	2,252	50.4
6-11	2,070	46.3
12-13	149	3.3
Total	4,471	100

Source: Census 2007, Zonal Office, Passara

This finding confirms other research that only 7% of students in the plantation sector who pass their O/L continue to the A/L and fewer than 1% complete their A/L and enter university.¹⁰

Although it is mandatory for children to complete basic schooling (Grades 1-9) and also be in school until the age of fourteen, a significant proportion of school-age children in Passara were reportedly not attending school and the drop-out rate also appeared to be high.

When asked what percentage of children in their community attended school, only 10.4% of households said all. Forty-two per cent thought that 75-90% of children attended school, while 26% estimated the number to be 50-75%.

Meanwhile, teachers and officials estimated the drop-out rates to be as follows:

Table 2: How many students drop out of school before the age of fourteen in Passara?

Per cent of teachers and officials	Estimated drop-out rate
27.8	Less than 10%
38.9	10%-25%
13.0	26%-50%
7.4	More than 50%
13.0	Don't know
100.0	

Source: Survey data

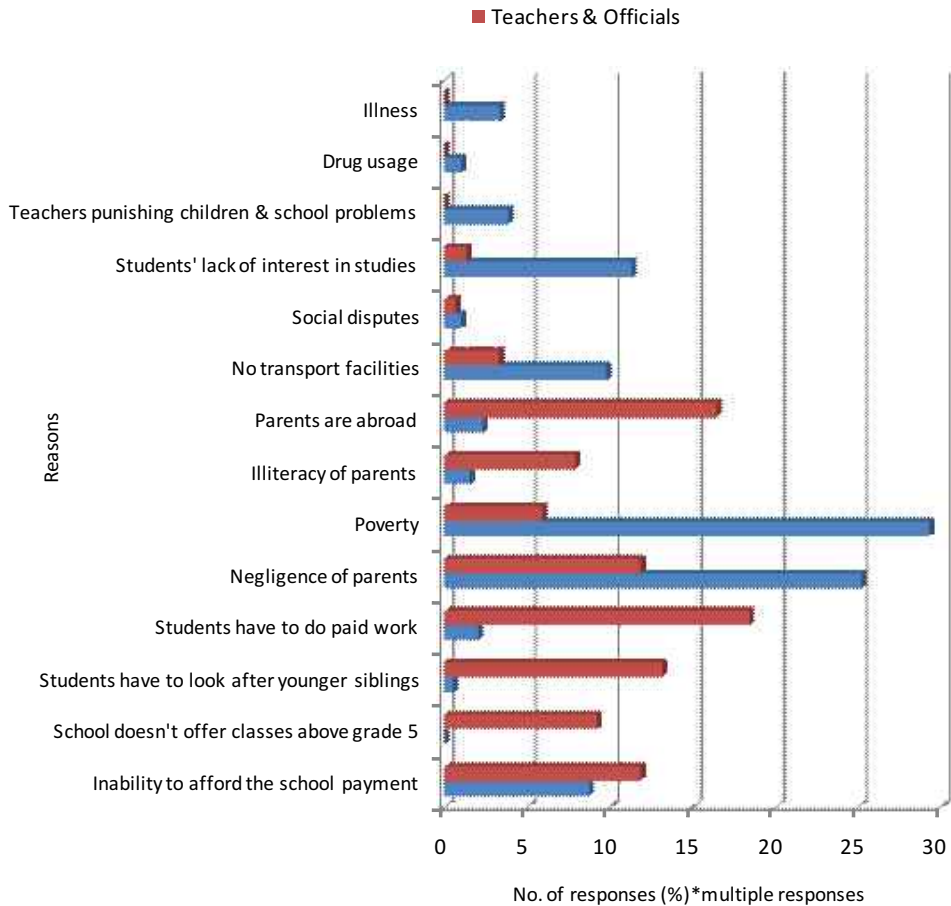
Sixty per cent of teachers and officials estimated the drop-out rate to be more than 10% of all students and 20% of teachers and officials thought the drop-out rate to be higher than 25%. These alarming figures underline the need for more determined action to retain students at school.

The reasons for drop-out rates were manifold: Lack of transport, poverty, poor parental support, non-availability of schools, peer influence and a yearning to earn an income.

10. Wijesiriwardana & Sujeewa (2009)

Survey respondents gave the following reasons:

Figure 6: Reasons for students to drop out of school



Most households thought poverty and negligence on their part were the main reasons for the drop-out rate, while 4% claimed that it was due to teachers punishing the children.

Teachers and officials attributed it to parents being abroad and students having to engage in paid work or looking after younger siblings. Principals, especially in the Agarathanna estate, pointed to the absence of mothers who had gone abroad to work having an impact on families, leading not only to students dropping out of school but also to absenteeism. The Zonal Director, meanwhile, said that alcoholism among parents was the main reason.¹¹

11. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

Interviews and observations revealed a high level of student absenteeism. While not dropping out altogether, some students only attend school randomly, because they have to work, are ill, parents cannot meet demands for payments or simply because parents do not send them to school.

Most children do not continue their studies after Grade 5 because there are no transport facilities to go to a secondary school - **Teacher of Demmeriya No. 3**

Many students have to work as well as study. Therefore, they come to school one day and go to work the next day - **Teacher of Wewekele T. V.**

Most of the students don't like to go to school because they are scared of the teachers - **Parent of Dayanawaththa T. V.**

The teacher scolded my son and told him: You are only suitable to work at a hotel, now go and work. After that, he didn't like to go school. Now he is working in Colombo - **Parent of Gonakela T. V.**

They ask Rs. 200 from each student. Where can we get this money? Due to that my daughter did not go to school yesterday - **Parent of Wewekele T. V.**

3.2. School infrastructure

A good learning environment is the key to a good education. Learning outcomes, to a large extent, depend on infrastructure such as transport, a safe school building, the condition of classrooms including the availability of desks, chairs and blackboards, learning materials such as textbooks, writing books, pens and pencils and also drinking water and sanitation. School infrastructure means the physical learning environment and constitutes an enabling element of teacher effectiveness and motivation. Poor infrastructure is often quoted as a reason for teacher absenteeism -- not coming to work, being late, leaving early or being present at school but not teaching.

Transport

Transport and the remote location of the schools appeared to be a major problem in Passara with punctuality and attendance of both students and teachers being affected and officials being hampered in school supervision. Absenteeism of teachers had an impact on the quality of education.

Fifty-five per cent of the students surveyed lived less than 1km from the school and 15% 2-5 km. As the majority of the students lived in “line-rooms” on the plantations themselves, 87.9% walked to school. However, the condition of the roads was bad and there was no transport within the plantations.

The students and teachers who lived far away from the schools spent much time walking to and from school and were tired after each journey which affected the learning and teaching process. There were no public buses or in areas which had this facility they were irregular, with only 9% of the students using buses. Some of the areas which had no buses were Cannaveralla, Wewekele, Galbokke, Dayanawaththa, Ury, Meedumpitiya, Demmeriya and Agarathanna.

Every day I leave home around 5 a.m. and return only around 7 p.m., as the school is too far and there is no bus. I have no quarters. Sometimes I travel in tractors with bags of tea leaf, seated among these bags like a labourer -

Principal

The roads are lonely and dangerous as there are no houses close by. If something happens on the way to school there is no one to help us -

Teacher

This school does not have proper roads. Most students face difficulties. One boy fell and broke his leg on the way to school and was admitted to the Badulla General Hospital. Although we informed various people no action was taken -

Parent

Nearly 30% of the teachers and officials were spending much time on travel as they lived more than 10km away. They came late to school or left early and were also tired and unable to attend to their work efficiently.

Officials said they faced transport issues when visiting schools and the Zonal Office had only one vehicle with a fuel allowance of Rs. 100,000 per year which was inadequate. Therefore, the lack of transport facilities had an impact on school visits by supervisors¹² and overall on the quality of education. The poor transport facilities were in contrast to the government’s policy of subsidizing transport for students as part of the minimum assistance to attend school.¹³

12. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

13. Harsha Aturupane: The Pearl of Great Price (2009), p. 7

The impact of the poor state of roads on education was illustrated in a letter written by a principal to Ceylon Workers' Congress Uva Leader Senthil Thondaman in August 2009, requesting that the road be repaired to enable him to develop his school.

An appeal to construct road to Cannaveralla Vidyalaya

“The school was established in 1933 and there are 100 students studying in the school at present. However the road to the school was not improved from the above period till the present day. As a result the teachers and students are compelled to face much hardship during the rainy season. We intend to improve the infrastructure of the school but are unable to do so under the present circumstances. The necessary materials cannot be transported to the school compound because of the bad state of the road. I am also aware that the above road is used by 50 families in the Cannaveralla estate. Therefore, I kindly appeal to you to consider our dilemma and build the road with concrete and cement” - **Principal**¹⁴

Teachers' quarters

If teachers had lodgings close to the school eliminating long hours of travel, absenteeism could be reduced. As such the provision of quarters would be important to improve the delivery of education.

However, of the 21 schools surveyed, only three had quarters for teachers and nine for principals, according to officials.

We do not know what is happening after school hours. If there were teachers' quarters, we would be able to look after the school after school hours. Now I come from Gonagalle and the other teacher from Namunukula. We leave our houses at 5.30 a.m. and return at 5 p.m. -- **Teacher**

Some schools had no quarters for both teachers and principals while in others the quarters were not occupied due to various reasons such as security problems or social taboos.¹⁵ An example cited was the alleged refusal by a

14. Copy of original letter in TISL's custody

15. Enumerators' observations and household interviews

principal to allow teachers of a lower caste to stay in the quarters, keeping it exclusively for those of a higher caste.¹⁶ Therefore, the availability of quarters alone may not suffice to retain teachers at a school but should be reinforced with other measures such as the provision of security and elimination of social stigma.

Sanitation

Poor sanitary conditions were another major problem. The fact sheets recorded that although 20 of the 21 schools had toilets, the enumerators observed that most of them could not be used for lack of water, doors and maintenance. Some schools had toilets for teachers and girls but not for boys. In others, toilets were exclusively for teachers. The lack of toilets could be a reason for girls to drop out of school.

The school asked Rs. 10 per month to keep the toilets clean but didn't allow the children to use them. They come home during school time to use the toilet -

Parent

There are enough toilets for teachers but not for students. Even those available cannot be used - **Teacher**

Forty-seven per cent of the households said that schools didn't have any toilets while 81.5% of the teachers and officials said they were inadequate.

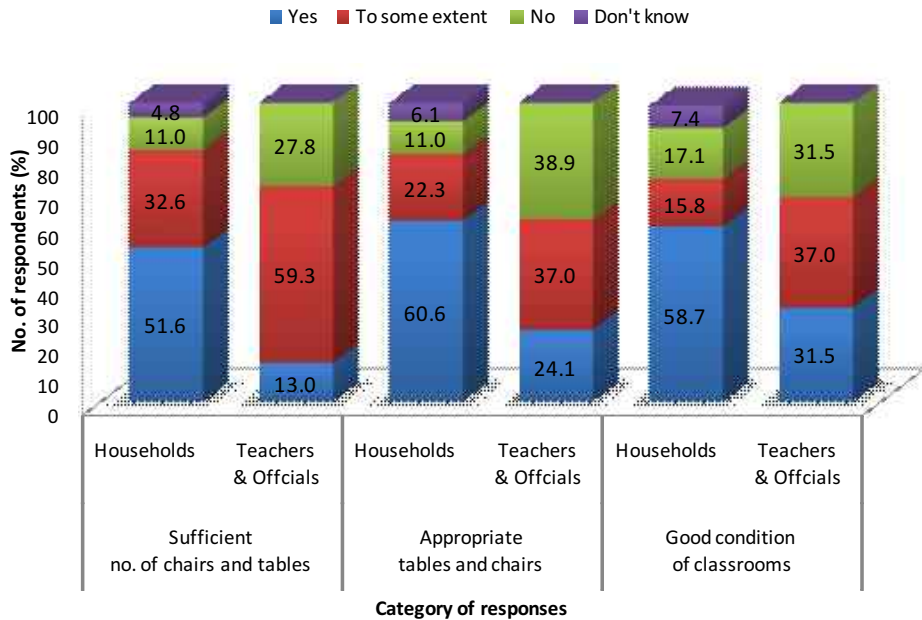
Furniture, classrooms and condition of buildings

The condition of the furniture and the classroom is also a vital factor in ensuring a good learning environment. A classroom should have adequate light, ventilation and space and the right number of desks and chairs to suit the age, height, weight etc. of the students.

The survey got contradictory opinions from the households on one hand and teachers and officials on the other. In general, the households had more positive views than teachers and officials, possibly because parents or guardians had not visited the school.

16. Feedback from CBOs on February 24, 2010

Figure 7: Responses about the condition of the classroom and the furniture



Fifty-two per cent of the households were of the view that the schools had a sufficient number of desks and chairs but only 13% of the officials and teachers were in agreement. While 60.6% of the households thought that tables and chairs were suitable (the right size), only 24.1% of the teachers and officials agreed. The Zonal Director was also of the view that the lack of furniture and equipment was a major problem.¹⁷

The significantly more positive views of households may be attributed to the fact that they did not visit schools and also compared the furniture in schools to what they had at home. Since they were from poor backgrounds their expectations were lower.

The views of teachers, confirmed by enumerators' observations, indicated that in some schools students of Grades 4 and 5 had big tables and chairs which compelled them to stand most of the time. In other schools, senior students sat on small chairs and at small tables which caused them physical discomfort.

17. Feedback from Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

Lessons were also hampered by lack of space and classes not having individual rooms -- nine of the 21 schools had only one hall which was divided into several classrooms using temporary screens. Noise from the classes disrupted lessons.

The survey found that all schools had to hold several classes in one building without adequate demarcations and some even held lessons outdoors under trees. Some teachers also pointed out that the classrooms were in a bad condition. All these factors hindered learning.

Safety was another issue especially in this hilly environment, with teachers explaining that the lack of boundary walls led to students falling and injuring themselves. After such an incident, one school used plants as a fence, while another had been so badly damaged by a cyclone that classes were being held in a Hindu kovil.

This school doesn't have a gate and goats and cows come into the building and dirty it - **Teacher of Galbokke**

The noise from the factory disturbs the school. The school also doesn't have enough space and a playground - **Observation at Elteb No. 1 T.V.**

Our Grade 4 and 5 classes only have big desks and chairs and students have to stand during lessons. They suffer physical discomfort due to this - **Teacher of Passara No. 4 T.V.**

We don't have water. The school spent money and fitted some pipes, but they were stolen by those brewing kasippu (illicit liquor) - **Parent of Agarathanna T.V.**

The non-issuance of building permits by the Provincial Education Department was blamed for inadequate school buildings and lack of fencing, with 55% of the respondents stating that the provincial office extended no support when their schools needed renovation or expansion and only 20% saying it did.

Drinking water and electricity

Access to clean drinking water was another problem in the schools. Six of the 21 schools had pipe-borne water and three, well-water. The quality of the water could not be assessed. Forty-five per cent of the households and 53.7% of the teachers and officials said that drinking water was not available in the schools, with some children carrying bottles of water from home. When considering the hot climate, the lack of water may have an impact on the performance of the children.

Meanwhile, nine schools had electricity, although two of them only in one room. Sixty-two per cent of the teachers and officials and 39.4% of the households said the schools did not have sufficient electricity.

Textbooks, uniforms, school meals and teachers' manuals

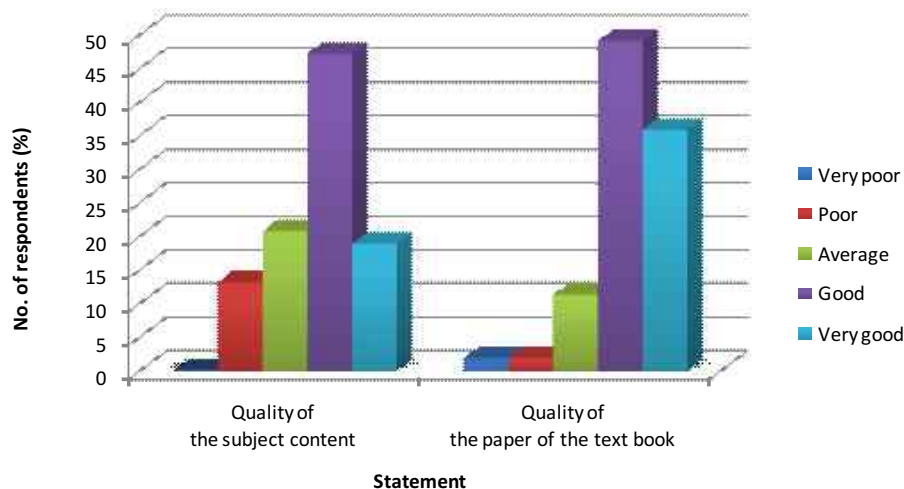
A hallmark of the country's free education policy is the provision of free textbooks and uniform material. Another measure which encourages children to come to school is the provision of breakfast up to Grade 5 to children in schools which have more than 100 students.

Textbooks are an important part of teaching and learning. This survey attempted to ascertain whether textbooks were available at the beginning of the school year, were of good quality and households had to incur a cost in securing them.

Seventy per cent of the households said that all children received their textbooks on time in 2009 and 82% of those who did not, got them within a month. However, only 57% of teachers and officials said that all students received their textbooks on time.

The quality of the paper and the subject content of the textbooks were also assessed positively: 83.3% of the teachers and 90.9% of the officials said the paper quality was good while 66.6% of the teachers and 63.6% of the officials said the subject content was good.

Figure 8: Quality of textbooks



When asked whether they paid for the textbooks, 97.1% of the households said they received them free of charge.

However, there was discontent over the quality of the Tamil translations -- 55.3% of the teachers and 25% of the officials said the translations were poor or average. Some teachers pointed out that the textbooks had Sinhala words instead of Tamil and the Zonal Director explained that the disparity in textbooks caused problems for the students.¹⁸ But 40.5% of the teachers and 25% of the officials who disagreed were of the view that the quality of the translations was good.

With regard to uniform material, 99% of the parents said they got it free, with the Zonal Director confirming that it was also issued on time.¹⁹ However, some households said teachers requested money to stitch the uniforms and that some did not return the material or the uniforms to the students.

Meanwhile, 78.7% of the students had received their breakfast free of charge but some parents were not satisfied with the quality of the meal.

18. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

19. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

An egg is cut into four and given to the children for breakfast and the remaining food is shared by the teachers and helpers. If a student asks any questions, the helpers beat him/her up - ***Parent of Gonagalle***

We don't know why they collected Rs. 5 from each student when they distributed the uniform material and textbooks - ***Parent of Cannaveralla***

The Teacher Instruction Manuals (TIMs) are an invaluable resource for the teachers. Teachers were keen to use them. However, interviews revealed several cases of teachers who had not received TIMs for their subjects or not been issued the most recent version. Teachers were also of the view that TIMs did not cater to frequently-experienced situations where several classes are taught by one teacher. Then teachers could not use TIMs but had to improvise. There were also complaints about the quality of TIMs.

3.3. Teacher management and behaviour

Teacher performance

The most important element in education is the teacher. A dedicated teacher can make a difference even if the teaching environment is adverse and the infrastructure in a school is inadequate. Whatever facilities are available, the quality of education will be poor if the teacher does not perform well. Performance is good if the syllabus is covered and the teacher treats students equally and with respect and carries out his/her duties according to the terms of employment.

Overall, parents in Passara appear to be content with the performance of the teachers. Sixty per cent of the households were satisfied with the performance of the teachers as opposed to 18% who were not satisfied and another 18% who were satisfied to some extent. The dissatisfaction stemmed from inefficient teaching; lack of interest, knowledge about the subject or explanation of lessons by the teachers; teachers not being qualified; poor performance of students at examinations; and unethical behaviour by teachers.

Some households said that the performance of teachers had declined in recent years, with poor teaching attributed to students not passing the Grade 5

scholarship examination. Others complained that teachers were not giving proper explanations when teaching English, Mathematics and Social Studies.

Primary education is not good in this school, so the students are not promoted when they go to another school to continue their studies. Then they stop schooling and go to work - **Parent of Grade 9 student in Agarathanna**

Teachers don't teach or perform their duties properly. They just come to school and return home. They work only for a salary - **Parent of Grade 2 student in Elteb**

An indicator of teacher performance would be the completion of the syllabi within the school year. Forty-three per cent of the households said the students completed the textbooks in 2008 but 45% that they did not. This was due to lack of time or teachers, school functions taking up time, teacher absenteeism, slow teaching, lack of interest in teaching, unavailability of a timetable, repetition of the same lesson etc. However, the survey found that the reasons for not completing the syllabi may have been beyond the control of teachers as most students were slow learners and the syllabi may have been too demanding for them. The teachers viewed TIMs as inadequate for plantation students and the curriculum as inappropriate.

Teacher availability and qualifications

The dearth of teachers is often quoted as a reason for the poor quality of education in plantation schools. Although, according to the Zonal Director, the lack of teachers is a major problem in the Uva Province, it did not seem to affect Passara. On the contrary, the teacher-student ratio was extremely low in some cases, indicating overstaffing in many schools.

Table 3: Teacher-student ratio in the selected schools

No	School Name	Teacher-student ratio
1	B/Namunukula V	1:7
2	B/Cannaveralla No. 3 T.V.	1:30
3	B/Gonakela T.M.V.	1:23
4	B/Passara No.2. T.V.	1:15
5	B/Meedumpitiya No. 1 T.V.	1:5
6	B/Demmeriya No. 1 T.V.	1:11
7	B/Demmeriya No. 2 T.V.	1:10
8	B/Demmeriya No. 3 T.V.	1:24
9	B/Agarathanna T.V.	1:13
10	B/Ury T.V	1:18
11	B/Cannaveralla No. 1 T.V.	1:20
12	B/Cannaveralla No. 2 T.V.	1:13
13	B/Wewekele T.V.	1:30
14	B/Meedumpitiya No. 2 T.V.	1:8
15	B/Sriganesha T.V.	1:15
16	B/Passara No. 4 T.V.	1:7
17	B/Dayanawathttha T.V.	1:16
18	B/Elteb No.1 T.V.	1:19
19	B/Thannuge T.V.	1:7
20	B/Elteb No. 2 T.V.	1:15
21	B/Galbokke T.V.	1:10

Source: School records

Of the 21 schools, five had a teacher-student ratio of more than 20, seven less than ten and one seven teachers for just 32 pupils. The survey clearly indicated that scarce resources in the area could have been re-allocated and spread out more effectively by re-assigning and providing transport to the few students in some schools to attend larger schools. Then teachers in those schools which had a few students could have been deployed to other schools which needed more teachers.

In practice, however, many teachers were not present at the time of data collection. In a number of schools, one teacher was found to be teaching several classes simultaneously, while his/her colleagues were said to be on leave, temporary transfer or attending training. Therefore, the above statistics do not necessarily reflect the reality at the schools that may be suffering from a dearth of teachers despite adequate and more than adequate numbers being on the register.

Many teachers from town schools come to estate schools because they can ignore their duties here - ***Parent of Agarathanna T.V.***

Although teacher availability does not seem to be a problem in Passara, their qualifications were a strong concern. Poorly-trained and unqualified teachers have an adverse impact on the quality of education and have been a problem in the plantation sector for a long time.²⁰

According to the Minutes of the Sri Lanka Teachers' Service, a trained teacher has successfully followed a two-year training programme approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE) either at a Teacher Training College after being appointed as a teacher or a College of Education before entering service. Alternatively, he/she has followed a three-year distance teacher training programme approved by the ministry.²¹

The minimum qualification to enter a College of Education is four passes at the A/L, according to the Education Reforms of 1981, but in the 1980's and 90's, teachers could be appointed to plantation schools after passing only their O/L. The minimum A/L qualification requirement was reintroduced only after 1997.²²

In 2007, 3,000 plantation youth with the O/L qualification were recruited as teachers to provide them employment and also develop education in the plantation schools.²³

Alarmingly, of the 21 schools surveyed three did not have a single trained teacher and five had only one trained teacher. Eight schools had one or more teachers who had completed the course at a College of Education or Teacher Training College and there were only four whose entire staff consisted of trained teachers.

The fact sheets recorded that of the 167 teachers who were actually working at the 21 schools, 89 had gone through the Teacher Training College and 17 the

20. Wijesiriwardane, Panine & Amaranath Sujeewa. (2009)

21. Minutes of the Sri Lanka Teachers' Service - No 865/3 - 1995.04.03

22. 'The EFA 2000 Assessment: Country Report' accessed on December 3, 2009.

http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/sri_lanka/rapport_2.html

23. Wijesiriwardane, Panine & Amaranath Sujeewa. (2009)

College of Education. Therefore, 61 teachers had not received any training at all, according to the records. The number of untrained teachers may be even higher, as the majority of interviewees – who were picked randomly from the school register – said they had not been trained. Other types of one-off and weekend training that unqualified teachers may have benefitted from have not been checked. However, it is clear that there is a problem with teacher qualifications in the surveyed schools.

The qualifications of teachers were a concern for the households, many of whom complained that no trained teachers were available for English, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and Sinhala.

Teachers, meanwhile, revealed that they were compelled to teach subjects in which they had not been trained. A teacher trained in Home Science was teaching all subjects to Grade 3 students while another who was trained in Mathematics was teaching all subjects to Grade 1 students. The Mathematics teacher explained that it was difficult for her as she had no training as a primary teacher.

The lack of training affected both teachers and officials alike. Eleven per cent of the teachers and officials said they had never had in-service training and 55.6% of the teachers said they needed support/training from the zonal and provincial offices.

The Zonal Director conceded that there were a limited number of teachers for English, Science and Mathematics and most of those teaching in plantation schools were not trained for that particular subject. The number of graduate teachers was minimal, according to him, but almost all the teachers had passed their A/L. The government should find a mechanism to curb this problem, was his opinion.²⁴

While having a degree or formal qualification does not guarantee that a teacher will perform well, quality teaching may be expected if a teacher has been trained. Therefore, the poor qualifications of a large number of teachers in Passara are a serious impediment to good education outcomes. Poorly qualified and supported teachers deprived plantation students of a good education. Therefore, the steps taken by the government -- such as a weekend teacher-training programme initiated by the National Institute of Education (NIE) in March 2010 for the 2007 recruits -- to address this shortcoming should be commended.

24. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

The last teachers were useless because they started teaching without any training. This will definitely affect the plantation school children's education -

Parent of Grade 3 student in Gonagalle

We have to know Sinhala and English in addition to Tamil in our country. But these teachers are not interested in teaching Sinhala and English. I am disappointed because this will affect the child's future -

Parent of Grade 4 student in Dayanawaththa

They don't teach English properly in this school. Students face difficulties when they go to another school (in Grade 6). So they leave this school -

Parent of Grade 3 student in Dayanawaththa

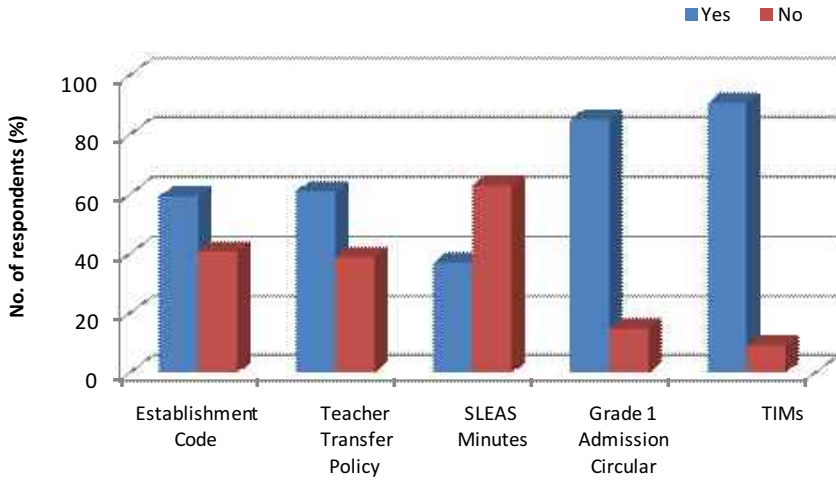
This school has Grades 1 to 5 but only one teacher and principal. Today the principal was absent and the single teacher is taking all five classes. They do not have teachers for Mathematics and English -

Parent of Grade 5 student in Demmeriya

Knowledge of important regulations and the language problem

An important prerequisite for good governance in education as in any other sector is the awareness of existing rules and regulations by stakeholders. Therefore, the survey also checked the knowledge of teachers and officials with regard to key regulations such as the Establishment Code, the Teacher Transfer Policy, the Sri Lanka Education Administration Service (SLEAS) minutes, Grade 1 admission circular and TIMs that guide the behaviour of teachers and officials and also specify their rights and duties. The Establishment Code comprises circulars with regard to all government services; the Teacher Transfer Policy sets out the rules, regulations and eligibility criteria for teacher transfers; the SLEAS minutes consist of the administrative regulations relating to the education sector; the Grade 1 admission circular deals with the specific rules, criteria and regulations on Grade 1 admissions; and TIMs describe the syllabi and teaching methodology for each subject in each class.

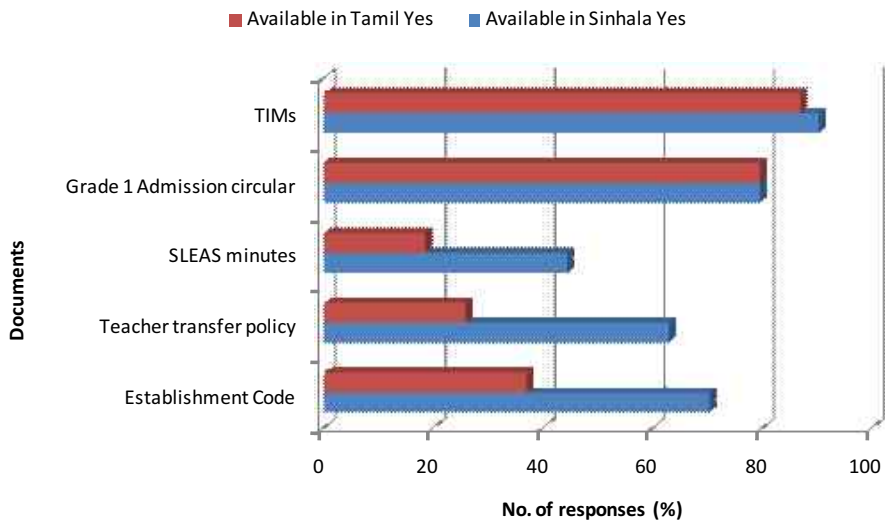
Figure 9: Knowledge about important regulations on teachers



As Figure 10 shows, the knowledge about these regulations was varied. While 92.9% of the teachers and 83.3% of the officials had a good knowledge of TIMs with regard to their subjects, only 52.4% of the teachers and 83.3% of the officials were familiar with the Establishment Code. It is only the officials and not the teachers who need to know the SLEAS minutes.

Low levels of awareness of these regulations may be due to the fact that these documents are not available in Tamil, the survey found.

Figure 10: Availability of documents in Sinhala and Tamil



TIMs and the Grade 1 admission circular were available in both languages, the respondents said but there were no Tamil copies of the Establishment Code, the Teacher Transfer Policy and the SLEAS minutes at the Zonal Office. Tamil teachers and officials said they got details of the regulations by asking those zonal officials, principals, ISAs and friends who knew Sinhala.

The non-availability of circulars and other documents in Tamil kept teachers, principals and officials in the dark not only about regulations but sometimes also about their own terms of employment. Forty-five per cent of the teachers surveyed said they did not get their letters of appointment in the language they were familiar with. The Zonal Director pointed out that the Tamil teachers should receive their appointment letters in Tamil and if they did not it was a major problem.²⁵ Meanwhile, 31.5% of the teachers and officials got their appointment letters in both languages.

Officials conceded that most of the documents were not given in Tamil and even if the Department of Education sent Tamil copies, they were very few. Another reason given by zonal officials for the lack of Tamil copies was that it would be illegal to translate official Sinhala documents which had the signature of the Secretary of the Provincial Ministry, as they did not have the authority to do so.²⁶

This seems to alienate Tamil teachers and officials and also prevent them from supporting and implementing regulations and policies. This practice is also a clear violation of Sri Lanka's Constitution that defines both Sinhala and Tamil as languages of administration²⁷ and of the National Language Policy.

Teacher appointments, promotions and transfers

Another major issue in teacher management was the lack of clarity on appointment procedures. According to the law the Provincial Council decides on teacher appointments while the letters of appointment are issued by the MoE. However, a majority of teachers (57.5%) were of the view that decisions with regard to teacher appointments were taken by the MoE while only 20.4% thought the Provincial Education Department had the final say. The thinking was different among the officials, with 25% saying that the MoE decided while 41.7% responded that it was the Provincial Education Department. According to the perceptions of the respondents the MoE dominated the appointment process.

25. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

26. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

27. Constitution of Sri Lanka, Article 22 as amended by the 16th Amendment of 1988, section 3

Someone who worked during the election period got a teacher appointment -
Parent of Grade 7 student in Gonagalle

Teacher appointments to plantation schools fell under two categories – most of the respondents had been appointed under the 2007 recruitment programme that is specific to the plantation sector and only some under the normal circular.

Teacher transfers were also vulnerable to manipulation. According to the Teacher Transfer Policy,²⁸ those teachers appointed under the normal circular could seek a transfer after serving a minimum of three years in a ‘very difficult’ or ‘difficult’ school; a minimum of four years in a school which is not congenial; a maximum of eight years in a school having privileges; or a maximum of six years in a school having more privileges. However, those appointed under the 2007 recruitment programme could not seek a transfer before serving in the same school for at least ten years. Having to remain in a ‘difficult’ school for such a long time had an adverse impact on the quality of teaching and was perceived to be unfair by these teachers.

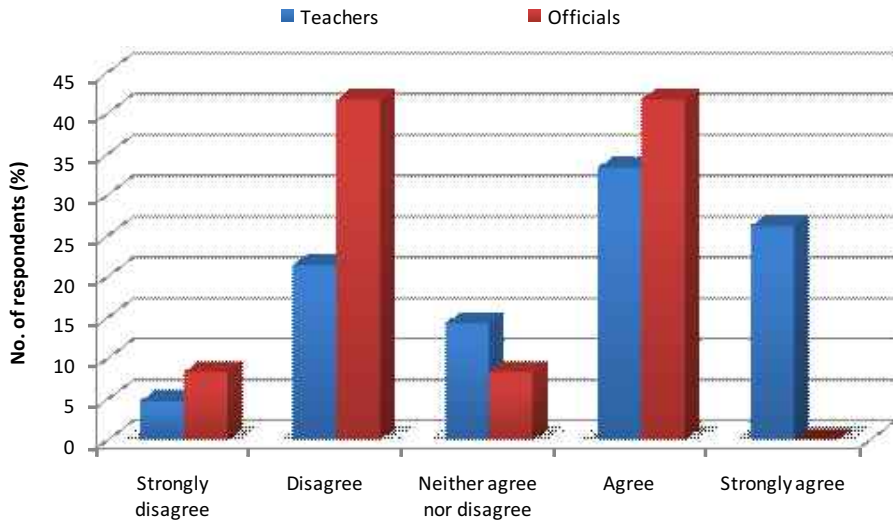
There is a widespread perception that transfers can be manipulated and were subjected to political influence. Seventy-nine per cent of the teachers (but only 25% of the officials) agreed that a major reason for the lack of qualified teachers in plantation schools was due to those in urban schools influencing officials not to transfer them. The Zonal Director conceded that the transfer policy was not implemented properly in this zone.²⁹

Almost 60% of the teachers and 41.7% of the officials agreed that teacher appointments and transfers were made on political recommendations.

28. Ministry of Education, National Transfer Policy (2007/20), 2007-12-13

29. Feedback session with the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010.

Figure 11: Teacher transfer and appointments are made on political recommendations



Another overwhelming perception was that the political victimization policy helped unqualified people to get into the public service: 90.5% of the teachers and 66.7% of the officials thought so while some parents were dissatisfied with the newly-appointed teachers in 2007 on the grounds of political influence and bribery.

Transfers were another issue, with principals revealing that some teachers manipulated temporary transfers immediately after being given their appointments to avoid teaching at the school assigned to them. Under the Transfer Policy, teachers may apply for temporary placement due to medical reasons but the medical certificate which should be issued by the government Medical Council should stipulate this.³⁰ However, principals disclosed that some teachers, who were appointed to a particular school were working for a long period, more than six months, in another school on temporary transfer but were paid their salary by the first school though they were not teaching there. It appeared that the temporary placement policy was being abused.

Transfers were also seen as a mode of punishment, though ineffective, with teachers who had allegedly done something wrong being sent to another school but continuing to indulge in wrongdoing there as well.

30. Ministry of Education, National Transfer Policy (2007/20), 2007-12-13

Two new teachers were transferred to my school in May 2009 but they only reported to work in September. They take leave without notice. They have been dismissed from many schools and now they are here - **Principal**

Four teachers came to this school and got a transfer the following day. We can't say that corruption is not a problem - **Principal**

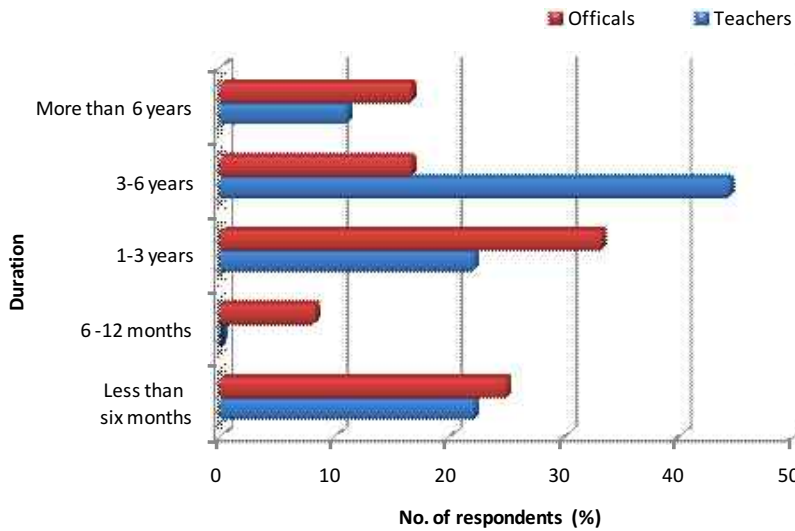
Irregularities in teacher deployment were both a symptom and a consequence of poor governance, as regulations (such as the Teacher Transfer Policy) which were supposed to enhance equitable distribution of teachers across all schools in the country were circumvented for the benefit of those who were well connected and to the detriment of students. This may have also resulted in poor quality education.

Frequent delays in promotions from one class/grade to another -- usually carried out to a specific schedule when they passed examinations -- or in the case of untrained teachers on completion of 10 years of service had a major impact on the motivation of teachers. Untrained teachers are promoted after completion of their 10 year service.³¹

Promotions were granted on 'promotion letters' issued by the Zonal Office. The survey found that only 21.4% of the teachers but all the officials secured promotions during their service period. However, among them only 22.2% of the teachers and 25% of the officials got their promotion letters within six months and 11.1% of the teachers and 16.7% of the officials six years later. A possible explanation for the delays may be the expectation of a payment by officials, although this could not be corroborated by the survey.

31. Minutes of the Sri Lanka Teachers' Service, Part I (03 April 1995)

Figure 12: How long does it take to provide a promotion letter?



The delays were attributed to slow decision-making, inefficiency, lack of knowledge and shortcomings on the part of officials, legal issues, circular delays by the MoE, delays in sending information by the Public Service Commission to the MoE and red tape in departments.

Thirty-four per cent of the teachers and 66.7% of the officials said the Zonal Director had the most say with regard to teacher promotions while 26.8% of the teachers and 16.7% of the officials said it was the MoE.

Support and supervision by education authorities

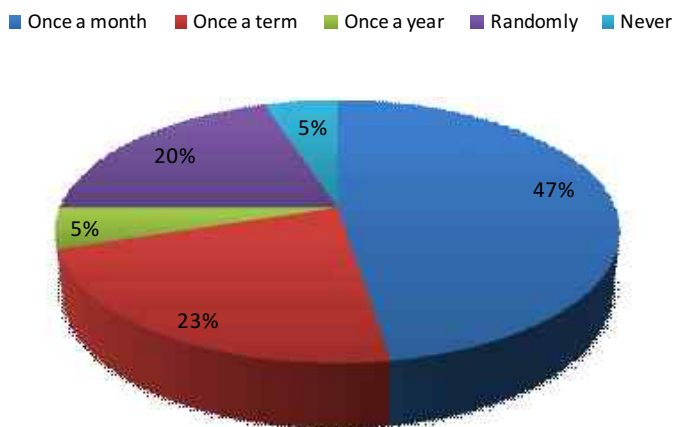
Regular visits by officials to schools are important in ensuring a high standard of teaching. In the survey, 41.5% of the teachers said that zonal officials visited their school once a month, 22% that it was once a term, 12.2% that it was once a year, 19.5% that they came randomly and 4.9% that they never came. Overall, the support from the Zonal Office was perceived to be weak -- 37.7% of the teachers said they never got support to perform their assigned tasks. However, this contrasted with the statements of officials, with 58.3% saying that they visited the schools every week and 25% that they did so once a month. The survey found that most officials paid frequent visits to schools in the town or those close to main roads but not to remote schools on plantations.

Eighty-two per cent of the officials agreed that lack of transport was a major impediment in visiting schools while the Zonal Director explained that they had only one vehicle and a fuel allowance of Rs. 100,000 per year which were inadequate to visit all the schools. During the feedback session, however, ISAs said that they visited Tamil schools every Tuesday and Sinhala schools every Thursday.³²

Supervision from the higher ranks in the education bureaucracy appeared to be sparse: 35.9% of the teachers said that provincial officials never visited their schools and 25.6% said it was randomly. Seventy-three per cent of the teachers also indicated that MoE officials never visited their schools and 90% said the same about NIE officials.

ISAs, at least one per subject, are a crucial segment in improving the quality of teaching as they advise and guide teachers. Sixty-nine per cent of the teachers said they had ISAs for their subject, 11.9% that ISAs were available for some subjects and only 19% said they did not have ISAs for their subjects.

Figure 13: How often do ISAs usually come?

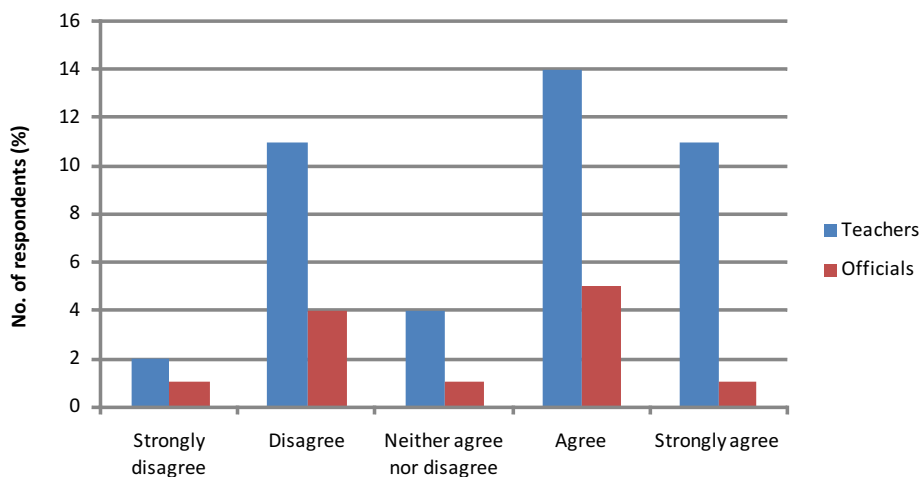


Almost half the teachers interviewed said that the ISAs visited their schools once a month, while 23% said that they visited once a term. However, several interviewees revealed that ISAs and other officials only visited schools when a MoE official came for supervision. Teachers also complained that ISAs and directors gave contradictory advice.

32. Feedback session with the Zonal Director and officials on February 24, 2010

Views differed on the quality of the ISAs, with a majority of the teachers acknowledging that their advice was adequate but 40.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that ISAs often did not provide adequate advice. A majority of the teachers and officials, meanwhile, were of the opinion that ISA appointments were not done in an acceptable way.

Figure 14: ISAs are usually not appointed on the basis of experience and qualifications- Teachers' and officials' opinions



Teacher behaviour

Teachers are role models for students and society. Students not only learn lessons but also behaviour and habits from teachers. Therefore, teachers should have good manners as their way of communicating, their habits, activities and values have a strong influence on students. Given the high incidence of parental neglect in the plantation sector, teachers play an even more vital role in creating good citizens.

Eighteen per cent of the households said that their children were abused by the teachers, but 74.4% of them had not complained about it. Twenty-five per cent of the households were not happy with the behaviour of the teachers.

Some observations by the households were:

- Verbal abuse – the way teachers spoke to students during school time was unpleasant. Some teachers from the towns scolded students using bad words and also teased and laughed at them calling them “estate man” or “line man”.

- Sexual harassment - this appears to be an important issue according to key informant interviews, but it was not rated as frequent in the household survey. An incident which was revealed during the survey was of a girl being sexually harassed in school, following which a complaint had been made to the principal but no action taken. Several also told enumerators that there were affairs between male teachers and female students and female teachers and male students as well as between students.
- Using mobile phones during class hours - some teachers used mobile phones while teaching in classes, some respondents said, pointing out that when they got calls during lessons they stopped teaching, left the classroom and chatted on the phone. Even during meetings with parents, teachers left one by one to chat on the phone.
- Personalizing students' problems - teachers did not care about the children and scolded them in a bad manner. A parent said that after zonal education officers came to his daughter's class and asked about the lessons by a particular teacher and she told them that they were not good, the teacher harassed her. Thereafter, his daughter did not like to go to school.
- Behaviour unbecoming of a teacher - some of the male teachers taught only the girls' side of the classroom and did not take any notice of the boys.
- Corporal punishment - Circular No 2005/17 which deals with school discipline sets out clearly that corporal punishment is taboo.³³ However, a parent said that a teacher pinched his son's ear, leaving him in severe pain and the boy had to seek treatment at the Passara Hospital. Others said teachers hit students with big canes until their bodies swelled up. One boy's hand was also broken.
- Using students for their personal work - teachers made students bring water when they wanted to go to the toilet or sent the students to the shop during school time.
- Ignoring their duties - sometimes teachers asked students in Grades 11, 12 or 13 to teach Grades 1, 2 and 3 while they attended to their personal work. A parent pointed out that there were many problems in his son's examination paper because A/L students had corrected it.

33. Ministry of Education -- School Discipline (2005/17), 11-05-2005.

Parents who had noticed that the colour of their daughters' gold earrings had changed had been told by their children that their teacher replaced them. This teacher had apparently given them fake earrings instead. The teacher has since been transferred to another school³⁴ - **Teacher**

Favouritism when selecting students for extra classes, special events or competitions was identified as an important factor during many of the household interviews. Most of the households said that teachers treated students differently based on their caste while the Zonal Director conceded that in Tamil medium schools students were treated better or discriminated against based on their caste.

They selected certain students who were residing in the upper division (close to the school) for the sports meet, cultural events etc. Due to this our children don't like to go to school. Teachers treat the rich and the poor students differently and this affects the students psychologically - **Parent of a Grade 6 student in Agarathanna**

They selected students for cultural events based on their caste. They selected certain students for all the events and not our children. They choose incompetent students for competitions. They are looking at the rich people in a different way from the poor. Due to this, children are not interested in their studies. They are conducting evening classes for certain students. We do not have enough money to send our children for extra classes - **Parent of a Grade 3 student in Agarathanna**

If students don't bring the money that was asked by the school, teachers beat them - **Parent of Demmeriya No. 3 T.V.**

We are not in a position to send our children in neat clothes to school due to poverty. But the teachers look down on them, call them names and treat them in a bad manner. This affects the students mentally - **Parent of Dayanawaththa T.V.**

34. This teacher has been suspended since February 2010, according to the Zonal Director, February 24, 2010

However, households also reported positive examples of dedicated teachers who do their best despite adverse circumstances. Some teachers were commended for being caring, kind and performing well. Households acknowledged that teachers sometimes become victims of bad behaviour by parents.

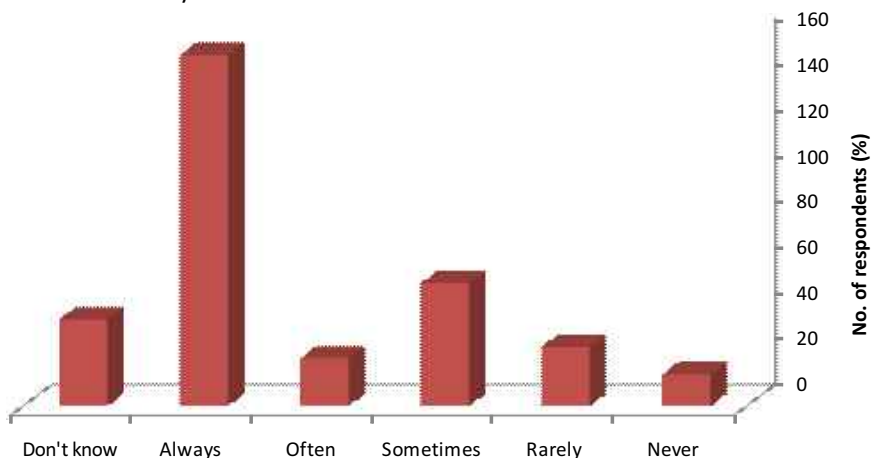
The principal goes to absent students' houses and brings them to school. He also gives school bags and shoes to poor students - **Parent of Elteb No. 1 T.V.**

Teachers are allowed to give private tuition but this should be strictly separated from their school duties. Several cases were revealed where teachers gave private tuition within the school premises or where they threatened parents not to use tutors other than themselves.

Poor teacher behaviour also includes absenteeism -- coming late or leaving early, being absent, being in school but not in the class or being in the classroom but not teaching. Obviously, teacher absenteeism strongly affects the quality of education. A quantitative assessment of teacher absenteeism in the Passara plantation schools would have exceeded the means of this study. Households appeared to be satisfied with teacher attendance and punctuality.

Figure 15: Teacher attendance according to households

Are teachers usually in class on time?



Fifty-four per cent of the households said there was no problem of teacher absenteeism at their child's school while 23% said there was and another 23% said they did not know. When asked to quantify teacher attendance, it was ranked well, but during discussions, a lot of anecdotal evidence was given to indicate problems with attendance and punctuality. Many were the complaints about teachers and principals coming late to school regularly or not coming at all. Households reported incidents of teachers coming to class at the end of the period or not being in school during school hours. Explaining that some of the teachers may be on training programmes, the Zonal Director said that parents should complain about teacher absenteeism so that the problem could be addressed.³⁵

Most of the teachers come to school between 9 and 10 a.m. The principal comes around 9 and goes around 1 p.m. - **Parent of a Grade 12 student in Gonagalle**

Teachers are leaving early from school because they want to conduct private tuition classes - **Parent of a Grade 3 student in Gonagalle**

Disciplinary action is needed against errant teachers to enhance morale and maintain standards of integrity. Fifty-seven per cent of the teachers and officials said the Zonal Director was in charge of taking action, with 37.7% indicating that he had the authority to dismiss a teacher. The Zonal Director was seen as playing a major role in teacher management. However, the lines of authority seemed to blur sometimes, with 59.2% of the respondents saying that there were too many layers of bureaucracy and directors.

In conclusion, there appeared to be several weaknesses in teacher management: Deployment of teachers was not optimal, with overstaffing at certain schools and many teachers being on irregular transfers leading to a waste of resources. Qualifications were unacceptably low, a problem that is now being addressed by the MoE. The non-implementation of the language policy led to the alienation of Tamil-speaking officials and teachers. Supervision and support appeared to be weak, not least due to the lack of

35. Feedback from the Zonal Director on February 24, 2010

capacity and resources at the disposal of the Zonal Office. Finally, integrity and work ethics of teachers were not deemed satisfactory by the households, with violations of rules and unethical behaviour leading to perceptions of low morale among the teaching workforce.

3.4. Transparency and participation

Payments made by parents

Most parents in Passara were in the low-income class and could not afford to pay for education. However, when asked why students dropped out of school, 66.8% of the households said it was because education was too expensive. This, however, was not confirmed by other statements and overall, payments appeared to be minimal due to low household incomes. Admission fees, a high entry point for corruption in many schools countrywide,³⁶ did not play a role here.

The costs incurred by households were:

- Facility fees: Around 62.4% of the households paid facility fees to the school in 2008. The average fees per child were Rs. 59.17 with a minimum of Rs. 10 and a maximum of Rs. 500.
- School Development Society fees: Only 14.8% paid an average of Rs. 57.17 with a minimum of Rs. 2 and a maximum of Rs. 300.
- Examination and question paper fees: 95% of the students paid fees for school exams and question papers on an average of Rs. 78.10 with a minimum of Rs. 15 and a maximum of Rs. 600. These fees were illegal and should not have been charged.³⁷
- 96% of the households said they spent money on stationery. Parents spent an average of Rs. 1,926 on stationery, with a minimum of Rs. 50 and a maximum of Rs. 8,000. This appeared to be a high cost that could not be justified in the light of the government's quality input grant to schools to enable principals to provide all stationery necessary for classroom teaching. This grant is meant to be utilized for the purchase of the basic requirements of students – without burdening parents – such as stationery, other than books for practical work in the classroom and also extra teaching aids.

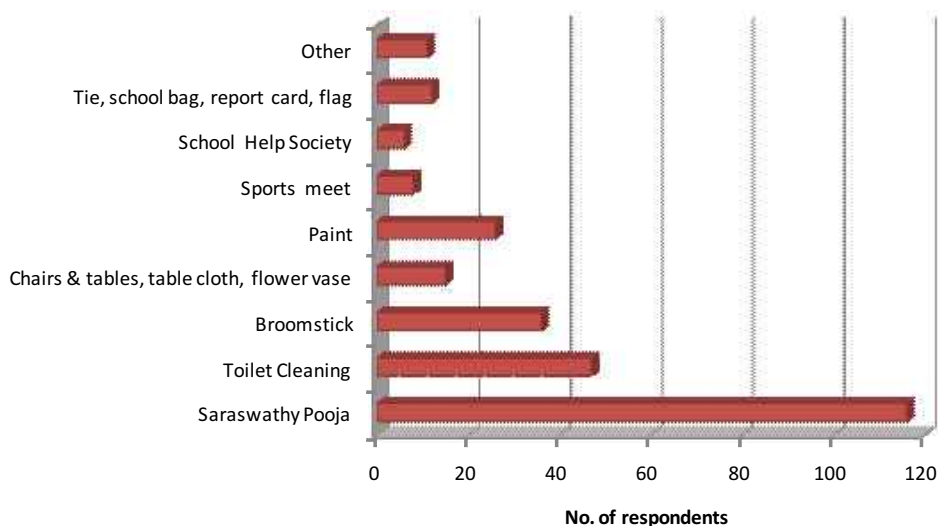
36. The average admission fee per child was revealed as Rs. 3,977.09 in a study carried out by TISL in 2008. Transparency international Sri Lanka: Corruption in Education in Sri Lanka, Colombo 2009

37. Circular 2006/20 (23-05-2006) stipulates that no fees other than facility fees and SDS fees can be charged from parents

- Other charges: 66.2% of the children paid money for events such as Saraswathy poojas, drawing day, first aid, toilet cleaning, help society, labourers' payment, sports meet, school trip and the purchase of progress report, flag, broom, flower vase, table cloth, chair, cement, paint, table, scholarship book, tie etc. The average amount paid per child for 2008 was Rs.116.17 with a minimum of Rs. 5 and a maximum of Rs. 1,000.

However, officials denied that facility and examination fees were charged from the students.³⁸ It is noteworthy that only the facility and SDS fees were legally allowed.

Figure 16: Payment for other purposes by households



On the positive side, 99% of parents said they received the school uniform free, 98% the textbooks free and 78.7% that their child received breakfast free.

Bribes and unauthorized payments appeared to be rare. Eighty per cent of the households said they had not heard of anyone who had been asked to make any unofficial payment to the principal/authorities during 2008. At the same time, 94% said they did not give gifts to the teachers and principals in 2008.

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However, the schools did collect money (ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300) when admitting children to Grade 1. The payments had been for painting, scholarship book (Rs. 500), temple festival, sports meet certificate, examination fees, report card and punishment fine etc. Donations in-kind were also made, with many households revealing that they gave a chair or a desk when they admitted their children to school. A plastic chair costs Rs. 450 and a table Rs. 600.

Officials said that one principal had collected Rs. 10 from each student to bring textbooks from the Zonal Office to the school because the allocated transport allowance was not adequate.³⁹

The person who is hired to clean the toilets comes only two days a week (Monday and Friday). The students are cleaning the toilets on the other three days during class time. The school is paying only Rs. 2,500 to the person who is cleaning the toilet but collects Rs. 10 from each student per month. As there are around 800 students, the school is collecting a total of Rs. 8,000 from the students. They do not show the accounts to parents. We don't know what is happening to the rest of the money - ***Parent of a Grade 10 student in Gonagalle***

Although these amounts appeared to be small for a service that should be provided free of charge, when taking into account the average income of the most deprived segment of society, plantation families, it is clear that it is a burden to them.

On the other hand, interviews revealed that resources allocated for stationery ('quality inputs') are sometimes not spent by the schools due to low financial management capacities. Therefore, an effort needs to be made to ensure that government allocations are used as intended and principals know how to use and account for these allocations.

Extortion appeared to be a problem, with several households reporting that they feel compelled to make payments, give donations or contribute through shramadana. Given the local power structure and the dependency on the school, households do not have the bargaining power to protest and may fear repercussions on their children.

39. Feedback from the Zonal Director and officials on February 24, 2010

Every morning the principal asks the students, “What curry do you have at home today? Who will bring food tomorrow?” Then only does she start teaching - **Parent of Meedumpitiya No. 1**

If the students don't give the required money, teachers punish them. That's why my child doesn't like to go to school - **Parent of Sri Ganesha T. V.**

The teacher scolded my son and asked him, “Are you coming to school to beg from others?” because I couldn't give money for the Saraswathy pooja - **Parent of Gonakela T. V.**

If parents don't do shramadana, they have to pay Rs. 100 or they will punish the students - **Parent of Gonakela T. V.**

If I am not able to do shramadana they send my child home - **Parent of Cannavarella No. 1 T. V.**

Teachers hit the children because they don't give money for the Saraswathy pooja - **Parent of Wewekele T. V.**

We paid money to paint the school and did the work too. - **Parent of Cannavarella No 2 T. V.**

Financial Transparency

Transparency is a deterrent to corruption and a feature of good governance. Transparency in school finance means that teachers and parents are aware of the resource allocations to their school. Such awareness helps to control abuse and misappropriation. Similarly, parents' participation in school planning and monitoring of expenditure will help set the right priorities.

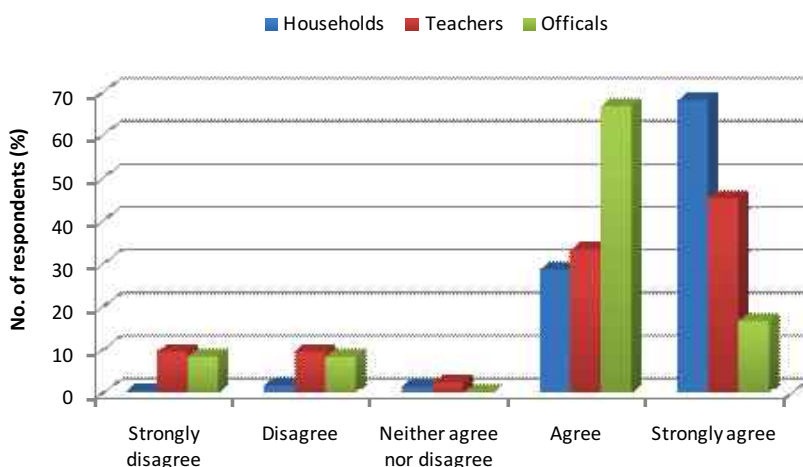
Two subsidies are allocated to schools: Quality input allocation for the purchase of educational material based on the number of students per school and the Education Sector Development Framework Programme under which schools can apply for a student, teacher or school-based grant ('high order process'). Under this programme, schools submit an annual project plan to the Director for Educational Development at the Zonal Office, who approves and forwards it to the Provincial Education Department and then to the MoE. Payments are made directly to the schools' bank accounts.

Seventy-five per cent of the households, 81% of the teachers and 75% of the officials said that the principals had the main responsibility of ensuring that allocations to the school were spent correctly.

Principals play a major role in handling school finances and as such should have adequate financial management skills. Forty-eight per cent of the households were satisfied with the way the principals handled the school budgets but 26.4% were not. Fifty-five per cent of the teachers and 41.71% of the officials agreed that principals were not adequately trained to handle school finances.

Sixty-nine per cent of the teachers and 83.3% of the officials said financial records were hand written but stakeholders appeared to be largely uninformed about resource allocations to schools. Ninety-three per cent of the households were unaware how much resources were allocated to their child’s school in 2008, 78.1% said that the finance report of their child’s school was not displayed for public viewing and 51.2% that the principal never submitted the school expenditure statement at the SDS meeting.

Figure 17: It would be good if school expenditure reports were submitted to the parents



Sixty-four per cent of the officials never reviewed school financial accounts and only 36.4% reviewed an average of seven schools in 2008. If they found any irregularities they held a disciplinary inquiry, informed the Zonal Office, advised them, conducted preliminary investigations and resorted to legal procedures.

When asked about responsibilities and the chain of command, the respondents made contradictory statements. With regard to who took decisions on how to spend the quality input grants received from the MoE, 37.7% of the teachers and officials said it was the Zonal Director but 26.4% said it was the principal.

Overall, lack of financial transparency appeared to disempower the local community and the teachers from holding the principals accountable in the use of resources.

Financial transparency appeared to be slightly greater at divisional level as the Zonal Director had to submit his annual budget to the Provincial Education Department. However, only 58.3% of the officials were aware of the budget.

Decision-making at school and zonal levels

There seemed to be a lack of awareness about the financial planning process and thus little participation. The Education Sector Development Framework Programme, however, requires the annual project plan to be developed in consultation with the School Development Society (SDS). The survey revealed that participation was not high: 47.2% of the teachers and officials said that the principal consulted the teachers while 20.8% said he/she consulted the SDS. However, 89.8% of the households responded that the principals did not consult them and expressed the view that if he/she did, the needs of the students could be clearly identified.

Meanwhile, 97.8% of the households agreed that parents should get more involved in school management. Low levels of participation in the planning process increased the risk of “false” priorities being set which could result in the planning process being more vulnerable to abuse.

The low level of participation was also seen as a problem by the Zonal Director who said that parents and teachers rarely complained to the zonal office because they felt they would be compromised. He pointed out that if problems, including those about administration, were not reported to him he could not redress them. This passivity was attributed to some parents still being under the impression that plantation managements and not the government ran the schools and not realizing that they had a say.⁴⁰

40. Feedback from the Zonal Director and officials on February 24, 2010

However, power relations are such that parents may be afraid to speak out and complain about problems. Many case studies indicated how parents felt threatened and intimidated and children reportedly refused to go to school.

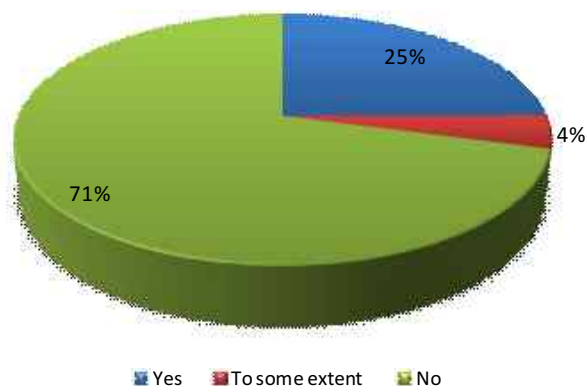
We are scared to complain about the teacher to the principal because they will treat my children differently - **Parent of Gonakela T.S.**

Students don't tell us any problem at the school because they are afraid - **Parent of Canaveralla No. 3**

If students don't give money for tables and chairs they are scared to go to school because teachers punish them - **Parent of Gonakela T.M.V.**

Teachers complained about the lack of interest of parents in furthering their children's education. However, the survey found that teachers did not mix much with the community and may be ignorant about the family background of the students and thus unable to address special needs and also tailor their teaching accordingly. Seventy-one per cent of the households said that teachers never visited their community, showing a gap between teachers and parents.

Figure 18: Do teachers visit the local community and mix with parents? (Households)



Under the political system, Provincial Council members and Members of Parliament (MP) are elected to represent the people's needs and priorities at provincial and national levels respectively. However, a majority of respondents (56.5%) said that the area MP did not help their school in 2008. Twenty-three per cent of the households said they did not know anything about it while 18.1% said the MP helped the school to put up new buildings and toilets and provided computers, school bags and stationery.

School Development Societies and parents' support for education

The SDSs with a president, a secretary, a treasurer and a membership consisting of parents, teachers and principals have the potential to play a vital role in school management and setting priorities for school development. Nearly 57% of the households and 97.6% of the teachers said that there were SDSs in their schools, while 50% of the officials said they existed in all plantation schools in Passara. But 50% were of the view that they were only in some plantation schools in the area.

Although 56.1% of the teachers, 75% of the officials and 52.8% of the households were of the opinion that SDSs were useful in the management of schools, 23.8% of the teachers, 8.3% of the officials and 27.8% of the households said they were not useful. According to 31.7% of the teachers, the SDSs met once every two months and nearly 76.6% of the households had participated in the SDS meeting in 2008 while 22.9% had not due to time constraints and not being invited.

Meanwhile, 74.7% of the households thought their opinion was important to the SDS and 41.1% said that decisions were taken in a transparent manner, with only 16.6% disagreeing.

The teachers were of the view that SDSs mostly provided support with regard to labour, small repairs and when organizing school activities. The overall impression was that SDSs, though they were involved in collecting funds or providing a physical presence, played a limited role in planning or setting priorities. The view was that their contribution could be increased in this sphere.

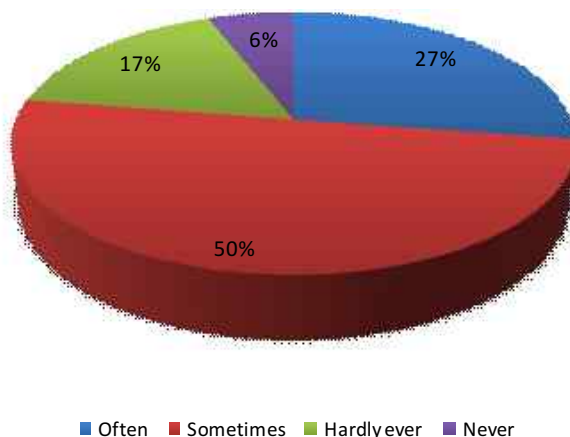
There appeared to be a general lack of interest among households in the education of their children. This negative or unsupportive attitude was seen as a major problem by the teachers and officials and was attributed to the high

drop-out rates. Seventy-eight per cent of the teachers said that only some or few students got encouragement by their parents to continue their education and 76.2% responded that few or none of the parents came to school as they did not realize the importance of education. Enumerators observed that satellite dishes were aplenty in most line rooms, while basic furniture and nutrition were not given much importance. Alcoholism was reported to be rampant, with liquor stores located close to schools selling 'kasippu'. Several cases of sexual abuse and rape leading to pregnancies, illness and dropping out of school by female students were reported by teachers.

Local organizations were seen expending resources on kovils but not on improving education. Another explanation for the disinterest of parents in education was the decade-long uncertainty of gaining citizenship that provided little incentive to educate their children due to fears of what the future held.

Officials said that there was poor interaction between households and teachers which resulted in many problems.⁴¹

Figure 19: How often do you visit the school? (Households)



However, 50.2% of the households said they visited the schools sometimes to collect their children's progress reports, attend parents' meeting, Shramathana or others. Meanwhile, 48.9% of the households and 45.2% of the teachers and officials said that principals called a meeting once a term to discuss school issues with parents but 33.1% of the households and 45.2% of the teachers and officials said it was random and depended on circumstances.

41. Feedback from the Zonal Director and officials on February 24, 2010

I am concerned about the students' health and cleanliness. I myself wash their clothes sometimes and bathe them. Parents are not interested in the school -
Teacher of Wewekele T. V.

I personally go to the students' houses and bring them to school in the morning. But half the parents do not bother about their children's education -
Teacher of Passara No. 4 T. V.

The school arranges meetings only to collect money. They don't discuss anything about education -
Parent of Gonakela T.M. V.

In conclusion, communication between households and schools appeared to be low. A concerted effort would be needed to enable plantation workers to participate more fully in society and take a pro-active interest in their children's education.



4. Conclusion

The plantation population is historically, socially and economically disadvantaged and education is an important instrument in improving this situation. However, students in plantation schools do not seem to benefit from education as much as they should.

This survey examined not only the school infrastructure and the deployment of resources in Passara but also the impact of poor governance on the quality of education. While many problems were identified, recent efforts to improve the quality of education also need to be acknowledged.

The lack of interest and support of parents was seen as a major impediment to school attendance and performance, with a major factor being the absence of

mothers who had sought employment in the Middle East as housemaids. The survey found that many social ills such as alcoholism, fatalism, low self-value and low awareness of rights befell the households when the mothers went abroad for work. While it is the choice of the families to seek employment abroad, a policy should be in place to alleviate the negative consequences of such migration on education and child welfare.

Poor governance, meanwhile, led to waste, mismanagement, inefficiency, neglect and corruption which in turn affected teacher management and school finance and infrastructure. Such poor governance was doubly hard on the plantation population due to their low social status and bargaining power.

Textbooks, school uniforms and breakfast were provided without disruption, providing an incentive for learning and attending school. On the other hand, lack of water and sanitation in the plantation schools may have affected student motivation to come to school. The conditions in schools were aggravated by the lack of public transport affecting not only students but also teachers and officials, causing absenteeism, non-attendance and poor supervision. Teachers faced further hardship without quarters.

A recurrent thread that emerged from the survey was the ineffective and inefficient spread of resources taking into consideration such issues as remoteness and size of schools.

Political influence in teacher transfers and promotions was seen to have a negative impact on the quality of teaching. Deployment was also questionable, with preferred schools having a surplus of teachers and remote schools a dearth. The granting of leave and temporary transfers to teachers, sometimes disregarding regulations, exacerbated the situation. The transfer system appeared to be vulnerable to corruption, with teachers being able to obtain transfers and appointments to preferred schools through political influence.⁴²

Inaccuracies in records hampered the analysis of data. For example, the Zonal Office records indicated that two-third of the teachers had undergone training, but the majority of teachers interviewed having been picked randomly said they had never been trained. Unreliable data are a major impediment in formulating plans to improve education in plantation schools.

42. H. Aturupane: *The Pearl of Great Price* (2009), p 23

The difficult circumstances under which the local education authorities operate should also be acknowledged: No computerization, low level of skills and poor co-ordination make them more vulnerable to inaccurate and outdated data.

Discrimination was a common complaint by the survey respondents, manifest in the non-issuance by the MoE of documents, especially employment contracts and circulars, in Tamil. This contravenes the Constitution and the National Language Policy and needs urgent rectification.

Other complaints were that teachers discriminated against students and principals and authorities against teachers on the basis of caste.

Payments by parents for the education of their children appeared to be low compared to what parents in other parts of Sri Lanka pay. However, even small amounts can be very significant for poverty-stricken households. Some payments are also not legal, even though they may ultimately benefit the school. Therefore, a consistent effort is needed to make sure that plantation schools get the resources they need for their infrastructure such as buildings and teaching materials, and for daily maintenance and functioning.

School finance did not appear to be transparent, with the lack of consultation of both teachers and parents in planning resulting in the right priorities not being set. This pointed to the need for capacity building of the authorities and principals to learn the techniques and benefits of consultation and improve financial management at school level.

On the positive side, the education authorities have now initiated a training programme to redress the qualification gap and it is hoped that measures have been taken to send replacements for those attending the training.

Urgent intervention, however, is needed to uplift the standard of education in the plantation sector. The regulations and programmes in place to improve the quality of education in the plantations should be implemented in their true spirit in co-operation with parents and civil society.



5. Recommendations

To the government and authorities:

1. All untrained teachers should be given appropriate training and the recent initiative seems to be a step in the right direction.
2. The appointment of cronies should be halted and all appointments to the SLEAS and teaching positions be based on qualifications and merit. The Teacher Transfer Policy and other regulations should be adhered to.
3. School mapping should be based on principles of efficiency, so that scarce public resources are allocated more effectively. Schools with a handful of students should be scrutinized and places in other schools allocated to them to gain maximum benefit from these resources.

4. Teachers in plantation schools should be given incentives such as secure quarters, safe roads, adequate classroom facilities, prospects of promotions as well as training opportunities to encourage them to perform their duties well and remain in service.
5. Disciplinary action should be taken against unethical behaviour or failure to adhere to rules. Supervision should be systematic.
6. Circulars and other regulations should be available in both Tamil and Sinhala.
7. A code of ethics should be formulated and implemented to ensure professional behaviour among teachers.
8. The financial management skills of principals should be strengthened.

To the principals and teachers:

1. Principals should display the school accounts on the notice board and present them at meetings with the parents.
2. Principals should prepare the annual project plan with the participation of the parents.
3. Teachers who are the role models for students should be both ethical and professional. While considering teaching to be a vocation, they should maintain a good rapport with students and parents.

To the parents and CBOs:

1. Parents should be aware of their rights and responsibilities while maintaining a good relationship with teachers and principals.
2. They should cut out unnecessary expenditure and spend more on their children's education while ensuring an environment conducive to study at home.
3. CBOs should educate parents on their role and assist in establishing a stronger link between parents and teachers.

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Appendix I - Sample Frame

No	School name	Medium	Grades	Population*		Sample	
				Teachers & Principal	Students	Teachers & Principal	Students
1	B/Namunukula V.	S	Gr 1-11	19	125	4	13
2	B/Cannaveralla No. 3 T.V.	T	Gr 1-11	12	359	3	37
3	B/Gonakela T.M.V.	T	Gr 1 -13	39	889	9	91
4	B/Passara No. 2.T.V	T	Gr 1 - 5	4	58	1	6
5	B/Meedumpitiya No. 1 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	7	32	2	3
6	B/Demmeriya No. 1 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	3	32	1	3
7	B/Demmeriya No. 2 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	2	19	0	2
8	B/Demmeriya No. 3 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	4	94	1	10
9	B/Agarathanna T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 9	13	166	3	17
10	B/Ury T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	5	90	1	9
11	B/Cannaveralla No. 1 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 9	8	161	2	17
12	B/Cannaveralla No. 2 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	7	92	2	9
13	B/Wewekele T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	3	90	1	9
14	B/Meedumpitiya No. 2 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	5	40	1	4
15	B/Sri Ganesha T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 11	19	291	4	30
16	B/Passara No. 4 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	4	29	1	3
17	B/Dayanawaththa T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	4	62	1	6
18	B/Elteb No. 1 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	8	155	2	16
19	B/Thannuge T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	3	21	1	2
20	B/Elteb No. 2 T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	6	91	1	9
21	B/Galbokke T.V.	T	Gr 1 - 5	2	20	0	2
	Officials			50		10	
	Total			227	2,916	50	300

*Figures based on records of the Zonal Education Office

Appendix II - Description of Sampling Method

- i. The Passara Zonal Education Office is responsible for both the Passara and Lunugala divisions in the Badulla district. On the recommendation of the District Secretary only the schools within Passara division were selected for this study.
- ii. As shown in the table below, there are 48 schools in the Passara division, with 23 Tamil medium schools and 25 Sinhala medium schools.

Medium	Passara division	Lunugala division	Total
Tamil	23	17	40
Sinhala	25	19	44
Total	48	36	84

- iii. For the purpose of this study, plantation schools are defined as schools which were earlier under the plantation management but had been taken over by the government. The study focuses on plantation schools in the Passara division, the selection shown in the table below. Twenty-one of the 48 schools were identified as plantation schools and comprised one Sinhala medium and 20 Tamil medium schools.

Medium	Plantation schools	Non-plantation schools	Total
Tamil	20	3	23
Sinhala	1	24	25
Total	21	27	48

- iv. All 21 schools were selected as the sample frame.
- v. Three hundred households were selected for the sample because this was what was affordable through the grant obtained. The sample was proportionated according to the student population in the 21 plantation schools in the Passara division as follows: [(Number of students in the respective school/Total student population in the 21 schools) × 300]

- vi. In addition, a sample of 50 teachers, principals and officials was selected, according to the number of teachers, principals and officials in the plantation schools in the Passara division: [(Number of teachers & principals in the respective school/Total teacher & principal population in the 21 Schools) × 50]*
- vii. Teachers and principals were selected randomly in the respective schools, using the school register.
- viii. Students in the respective schools were selected using stratified sampling based on grades and gender. The basis for selection was the students' register.
- ix. For each student selected, a household was visited and an interview conducted with the parents or guardians present.

*Limitation – All officials at the Zonal Education Office were interviewed. Officials were asked to refer only to the Passara plantation schools in their responses. However, as these officials are responsible for schools in both Passara and Lunugala, they may have inadvertently included their experiences with regard to those schools as well.

Lessons from Passara

A report on people's views and experiences on the quality of education in the plantation schools of Passara

Transparency International (TI) is the global civil society organization leading the fight against corruption. Through more than 100 chapters worldwide and an international secretariat in Berlin, Germany, TI raises awareness of the damaging effects of corruption and works with partners in government, business and civil society to develop and implement effective measures to tackle it.

Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) started operations in 2002. It functions as an autonomous chapter of TI with its own local strategies and priorities.



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