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# **Educational Progress among the Indian Tamil Minority in the Plantations of Sri Lanka\***

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This chapter is of relevance to the current volume for two reasons. Indian Tamils who were brought to Sri Lanka by the British to work on the plantations were usually very poor economically and of very low caste ascription. Their achievement of Sri Lankan citizenship rights and their participation in the national education system has been the outcome of a long process of political struggle in which the dimensions of caste, language, economic status and ethnicity are intertwined. Second, the story of progress outlined in this chapter is of interest to those who work within the global movement of *Education for All* and who seek an understanding of the myriad factors that lie behind educational progress—and decline—in different periods of time. Educational progress is neither a straightforward outcome of international or national declarations nor is it a simple consequence of industrialisation and modernity. Moreover, the route to educational progress is not linear. It can progress, decline and stagnate. While the case offered in this chapter cannot be generalised across time and space, it draws attention to the range of factors at work and the changing dominance of these over time. These serve to open up and extend the international analysis of education progress.

Tamils in Sri Lanka are of Indian origin and speak Tamil, a Dravidian language. They are an important minority and may be divided into at least two distinct groups. The first, the Sri Lankan

Tamils are concentrated in the North and the East of the island. Their ancestors migrated to Sri Lanka over 2000 years ago. They comprise about 12 per cent of the population. The second, the Indian Tamils are concentrated in the south-central 'up country' highlands. Their ancestors came to Sri Lanka when the British established an export-oriented economy based on coffee, and subsequently tea and rubber. Indian Tamil labour for the estates was recruited by estate owners from among Tamils living in the areas of the Madras presidency. Indian Tamils comprise about 5 per cent of the population and the majority reside inside tea and rubber plantations. By contrast with Sri Lankan Tamils, the Indian Tamils are drawn disproportionately from low-caste groups. It is this second group, the Indian Tamils who form the subjects of this chapter.

The plantation sector has been a key component of the economy since the 1830s when the British Colonial government encouraged large scale clearances of land for the cultivation of coffee, followed in the 1880s by tea. Plantations—or estates—are defined as geographical areas 20 acres or more in extent with 10 or more resident farmers. Tea, rubber and coconut are grown inside plantations and are an important component of Sri Lankan exports. This chapter focuses on educational progress and change among the Indian Tamil minority who reside inside the plantations.

## THE BROADER LITERATURE ON EDUCATION, PLANTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Despite the widespread extent of plantation economies and communities, analysis of educational progress in plantations is scarce. Analyses tend to focus lack of progress and employ structural explanations of continuity rooted outside the education system. Thus Marimuthu (1971) describes the education of the children of plantation workers in Malaysia as serving a custodial function, failing to facilitate social mobility and serving effectively as a means of social control. Writing about the nature of the plantations in the Caribbean Beckford (1983) emphasises their all-embracing nature. The plantation is not just a system of economic production; it is also a community and a system of social reproduction. Since plantations

do not require skilled labour, only minimal education provision is necessary for this social reproduction. And in his comprehensive account of the political economy of plantation economies the political scientist de Silva notes that

education was not part of plantation culture; it was neither technically necessary nor did it have any survival value. For labourers' children, education is a means of emancipation, but to the planter it is a potential threat to the labour supply. (de Silva 1982: 346)

These and many similar analyses of education in plantations highlight the reasons why educational progress does not occur, rather than why it does. Such analyses are useful in understanding the enduring aspects of education, resistance to change and the maintenance of the status quo. But a long view of history indicates that education has changed in many plantation settings, albeit often rather slowly, and that this progress cannot be explained simply by changes in the nature of the plantation production system.

A different theoretical account of educational change and progress is offered by the work of Archer (e.g., 1979, 1981). Archer's work is important for its analysis of interactions between human agency and structure through 'educational politics'. For Archer, social (and one might add economic and political) forces or structures do not impinge on education directly. Rather, they are transacted by groups and individuals

... concrete processes of social interaction are what cross the boundary of education and society. Outside influences do not flow into the system by an equivalent of osmosis... they have to be transacted. (Archer 1981: 31)

In Archer's model of educational expansion education retains a degree of autonomy from other sub-systems in society. It comes to be established and to expand only through a combination of structural and interactional elements. 'Corporate' and 'primary' actors are central players in the social interaction necessary for change, but their relative importance can vary from educational phase to phase. In *The Social Origins of Educational Systems* (1979) Archer analyses three phases in the emergence and expansion of educational systems in England and France. In the *take-off* phase, in both England and France, conflict between corporate groups (e.g., religious groups)

for control of education was of paramount importance. Primary actors behaved atomistically, and showed a general indifference to education. In the *growth* phase, conflict gave way to corporate negotiation and schools moved from private to public ownership within a national system. Primary actors engaged in co-action rather than atomistic action. Educational indifference was replaced by a consensus that education had value and positive occupational and political advantages. In the *inflation* phase, the education system took on a life of its own, much change was endogenous and induced by members of the education profession. As the system continued to expand, co-action between primary actors began to be replaced by micro-level interaction and competition between actors.

Both corporate and primary actors engage in what Archer terms 'broad' educational politics, the conscious and semi-organised attempts to influence

the inputs, processes and outputs of education, whether by legislation, pressure group or union action, experimentation, private investment, local transaction, internal innovation or propaganda.(Archer 1981: 29)

Broad politics are central to an understanding of the dynamics of change over time at the system level because social (and, one might add, economic and political) structures work through them. Archer distinguishes broad educational politics from two other types of educational politics—the 'high educational politics' of interpersonal relations at governmental level and the 'politics of aggregation', the sum of unorganised actions of primary actors, which may or may not translate into interest group or corporate action.

This chapter draws on concepts offered by each of the theoretical perspectives. Archer's conceptual framework provides an ambitious model for the analysis of the origins and expansion of national education systems. While she does not focus on the origins and emergence of education provision among minority groups several of her concepts and propositions have *a priori* application. The role of human agency and interaction, not as residuals of social structure but as autonomous influences on change, and the power-relations of the interactions of 'broad' and 'high' politics will feature strongly in the following account of progress among the Indian Tamil

community in Sri Lanka. But as we will see, progress emerges out of tensions between factors that both facilitate and impede progress. The socio-economic reproduction explanations of education, outlined above, will provide important complementary insights into the behaviour of estate superintendents who were responsible for educational provision in the estates until the state took over the schools from the mid 1970s.

### LITERACY IN SRI LANKA

The following statistics provide some idea of the educational progress that has taken place in Sri Lanka generally and in the estate sector. In 1911 the literacy rate in Sri Lanka was 31.0 per cent; in the plantations it was 12.3 per cent. Across the twentieth century literacy rates improved dramatically for all sectors of society, including among those living in the estates. Table 3.1 shows the literacy rates for males and females in the estate, rural and all sectors between 1986–87 and 2003–4.

TABLE 3.1 Literacy rates by sector and by male/female

	Rural	Estate	All sectors
1986–87	89.5	68.5	88.6
Male	92.8	80.0	92.2
Female	86.5	58.1	85.2
1996–97	92.3	76.9	91.8
Male	94.4	87.2	94.3
Female	90.4	67.3	89.4
2003–4	92.8	81.3	92.5
Male	94.7	88.3	94.5
Female	91.1	74.7	90.6

Source: CFSES report, 2003–4, cited in World Bank, *Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment*, 2007.

Between 1986–87 and 2003–4 literacy rates in the entire population grew from 88.6 per cent to 92.5 per cent. Rates for men were higher than for women with the male rate growing from 92.2 per cent to 94.5 per cent and for women from 85.2 per cent to

90.6 per cent. Overall rates among those resident in estates grew from 68.5 per cent to 81.3 per cent. Male rates grew from 80.0 per cent to 88.3 per cent. But it is the increase among females, from 58.1 per cent to 74.7 per cent, that has been particularly striking. Despite these clear improvements the literacy rates among the estate population still lag behind that of the non estate rural population, by more than 10 percentage points. Estate males lag 6 and estate females 16 percentage points behind the respective rural rates.

This chapter focuses less on continuing divergences between those who reside in estate, rural and other sectors and more on the progress over time among the estate community.

## PHASES OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Educational progress between 1840 and 1994 has been divided into five phases (Little 1999).

1840–1869 diffuse inception of line and mission schools

1869–1900 slow growth of line schools and mission schools

1900–1948 widespread establishment of estate schools

1948–1977 slow consolidation, even decline, of low quality estate schooling

1977–1994 state takeover and widespread expansion of enrolments

### Phase 1 1840–1869: Diffuse Inception of Line and Mission Schools

The first plantation crop produced in Sri Lanka was coffee. Coffee planters employed local Sinhalese labour to clear the land. Thereafter labour requirements were seasonal. Planter's early attempts to use the labour of up-country Sinhalese living in the Kandyan region failed and Tamil workers were imported from India and recruited by *kanganies*. The 'push' for many of the Indian Tamils was the avoidance of starvation during periods of famine in South India. Male labourers, mostly illiterate, migrated seasonally between the coffee plantations in Ceylon and their villages in the south of India. The lives of these men were harsh, their culture impoverished. Yet it was under these conditions that the rudiments of education in

the plantations began. The impetus for education appears to have arisen from sources inside and outside the plantations. There appear to have been three main agents of change:

- (a) **Kanganies:** The labour kanganies were the labour recruiters and labour supervisors who lived inside the plantations. They were also moneylenders and debt collectors. The kanganies established night schools for the labourers, probably for two purposes—to reinforce their control over the labourers, and to conserve the values of the labour community. These schools were held on the verandahs of the lines of simple dwellings and were known as ‘line schools’ (Gnanamuttu 1976: 15).
- (b) **Missionaries:** External influence came from the efforts of individual missionaries, whose work in the plantations was an extension of their religious work elsewhere in the island and of the corporate work of their churches globally (de Silva 1965).
- (c) **A Few Planters:** Limited historical evidence suggests that a handful of individual planters established schools in this early period. The names of prominent planters—Ferguson, Bird, Tytler and Wall—appear in historical records associated with the *ad hoc* establishment of schools. And one or two not so prominent planters—for example Finnimore and Simmons—resigned their posts to become religious missionaries working among the labourers (Gnanamuttu, 1976: 17–18)

Alongside these agents who facilitated educational provision were influences that inhibited the establishment of schools. These were primarily economic. The colonial export economy was expanding and needed a growing supply of unskilled, docile and low paid labour. Labour was seasonal and although many of the men were illiterate, their purpose in being in the plantations was to labour, not to learn. Education and literacy were perceived by planters to represent a threat to the supply of labour. These are the classic explanations of economic and social reproduction offered by writers such as De Silva (1982) and Beckford (1983).

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### Phase 2: 1869–1900: Slow Growth of Line Schools and Mission Schools

During the period 1869–1900 coffee gave way to tea. In contrast to coffee, tea requires labour throughout the year and it was during this period that labour became more settled and more female. Women and children were encouraged by the colonial authorities to migrate and augment the labour force.

Labour kanganies became more active in the provision of line schools within the estates and the missions more active in the provision of schools in the towns surrounding the estates, attracting to their schools children from the kangany and the staff grades, and, occasionally, the son of a labourer. Missionaries also expanded the number of schools run inside the plantations.

The economic influences that had inhibited education in the earlier period continued throughout this phase. The plantation production system needed an uneducated, docile, low paid guaranteed supply of labour, and the colonial export economy continued to expand. More men, women and children migrated to live inside the plantations. Women were employed as tea pickers. Children were frequently employed, but their labour was not required full-time. Rudimentary schools provided custodial care for children.

Beyond the plantations, the colonial state government responded to a growing social demand for education. Increased social demand emanated from a growing awareness among the middle classes in Ceylon of developments in England and from religious revivalist movements within Ceylon. The state supported



education through a financial grant-in-aid scheme to missionary and private organisations. Although this would have only a modest spin-off within the plantations, where the major expansion in schooling continued to be led by the kanganies, the expansion of schooling beyond the plantations would establish educational benchmarks and eventually aspirations for the plantation community. The schools established by missionary organisations in the areas surrounding the plantations established an avenue of opportunity for plantation children, especially for the children of the mid-level supervisory staff. Thus, a degree of co-action between the colonial state and missionary bodies resulted in an expansion of education in the country at large, from which there was some small benefit for the plantation community.

### Phase 3: 1900–1948: Widespread Establishment of Schools in Plantations

Over the next forty years, the establishment of schools in plantations became widespread. At the beginning of the twentieth century a number of influences coalesced to promote literacy and education in Ceylon in general and in the plantations in particular. The Ceylon census report of 1901 indicated that less than a quarter of elementary school-age children were attending school. There were enormous gaps in the literacy rates of Europeans and Burghers on the one hand, and Sinhalese and Tamils on the other; between males and females, and between those living in urban and rural areas. Tamil plantation labourers were singled out for attention. In 1903 the lack of educational facilities in the plantations in Ceylon became the subject of a political debate in the parliament of the United Kingdom. Questions were raised in Westminster of the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Hansard, 6 April, 1903 and 4 May, 1903). Under pressure from Westminster the colonial governor sought to influence the group perceived to hold the greatest sway with respect to the education of children in the plantations—the planters. Tea at this time was yielding a healthy economic surplus for both the private companies and colonial government revenue. Almost all the tea crop was exported to Britain and almost all stages of the

production, processing and marketing were controlled by British interests. In such an economic climate the colonial governor felt able to raise questions about the conditions in which labour lived and worked. But by now the planters were acting in a co-ordinated manner and expressing their views and concerns via the planter's association. While a handful of individual planters continued to give active support to a handful of schools most were content to offer passive support for the actions of the kanganyas who ran the line schools. The planters were characteristically resistant. Despite the profits from tea and the offer from the colonial government of grants in aid for education, they fell back on two concerns—the start-up costs of a school, and the potential threat to the supply of child labour.

A second influence was informed by financial considerations of a different kind. Although tea was generating a healthy economic surplus, the colonial government was becoming increasingly concerned about the costs of a countrywide expansion in education (Hansard 1900, quoted in Jayasuriya 1979). Financial responsibility for elementary education had already been devolved to local government authorities in British India, and this was a practice which the Ellis report in 1901 and the Wace report in 1905 would endorse for Ceylon. In 1906 and 1907 a series of government ordinances established guidelines for the provision of elementary schools in town and rural areas. Because of the rather separate nature of labour in the plantation community, and perhaps, more importantly, the political and economic strength of the planters, the 1907 rural schools ordinance contained separate and less restrictive clauses pertaining to estate education.

Although education at this stage was not compulsory for children residing in plantations, it had finally been incorporated into a system of norms and expectations which would gradually become more binding over time. Where educational provision in the estates had been a matter for an individual kangany, planter or religious agency during the nineteenth century, it would become a matter of colonial state ordinance in the twentieth. Successive ordinances were introduced in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s and the numbers of 'officially recognised schools' would grow from 43 in 1904 to 968 in 1948.

During this period the trade union movement was established and political franchise extended. These would both have direct implications for education in subsequent phases. The first trade union in the plantations was established in 1931. Unsurprisingly, the union met with the resistance of planters. Its demands for improvements in wages coincided with the onset of the global economic depression and retrenchment of plantation workers. It collapsed after only two years. The second, the Ceylon Indian Congress Labour Union (CICLU), later to become the Ceylon Worker's Congress (CWC), attracted a large membership during the 1940s and contributed to the success of politicians representing plantation labourers in the 1947 elections ((Jayewardene 1972: 337–54; Nadesan 1993: 136, 149–50)).

Political franchise was extended to most sections of the Sri Lankan population in 1931. Some sections of government and the electorate questioned the political rights of plantation labourers, many regarding them as a migratory population having no abiding, long-term interest in the nation of Ceylon. Despite some restrictions on their numbers able to vote, plantation Tamils proved a significant constituency in the first election after independence.

#### Phase 4: 1948–1977: Slow Consolidation of Low Quality Schooling in Plantations

During a fourth phase of educational development, between 1948 and 1977, promises of government takeover were frequently made but infrequently followed up. The number of registered estate schools peaked at 968 in 1948. From then on enrolments remained remarkably stable and the number of schools began to decline. Many plantation Tamils were repatriated to India during this period. The percentage of Indian Tamils in the total population declined from 11.7 per cent in 1946 to 9.4 per cent in 1971 and 5.6 per cent by 1981. Constant enrolment in those schools which remained open is not inconsistent with an extremely slow rise in enrolment ratios across the period 1946–1981, though there may well have been a real decline in ratios between 1946 and 1971. This phase may be regarded as a period of extremely slow consolidation, or even decline.

The free education act of 1945, which had carried enormous significance for the enfranchised masses of the Sinhalese and also

the Sri Lankan Tamil communities had less impact on the plantation Tamil community. Although the 1947 ordinance had prescribed that the state would be responsible for establishing new schools in plantations, there is no evidence of the state establishing any new schools on the estates under the provisions of this ordinance. Between 1948 and 1951 a large number of schools were closed down or amalgamated, and 24 were taken over between 1948 and 1955. Several questions were raised in parliament about takeover and many reports written over the period up to 1970 but no action was taken.

A major obstacle to the integration of estate schools into the emerging national system of education was language. The Sinhalese who supported integration recommended that Sinhala be taught as a compulsory language, or that rural Sinhala and plantation Tamil children be taught together in the same school, with Sinhala as the medium of instruction. Plantation Tamils were keen on the integration of their schools into a national mainstream but wished the schools to be maintained as separate institutions or streams, in which children learned through the medium of Tamil. This position has prevailed.

The issues of integration and language were linked with the broader issues of citizenship and franchise. At the first post-independence election the Indian Tamil community won seven seats and joined the opposition. Shortly afterwards, large numbers of those previously enfranchised were effectively disenfranchised by the Indian and Pakistan Citizenship Acts of 1948 and 1949. Agreements between the governments of Ceylon and India in 1954 and 1964 to repatriate agreed numbers of Indian Tamils without Ceylon citizenship created a situation of extreme uncertainty for the plantation Tamil community.

Many of those who applied for repatriation to India would wait many years for their papers to be processed and their passages secured. During this time families did not know whether their futures lay in India or Ceylon. The value of education, even a primary education, to a community whose future remained unsettled, was in some doubt.

So, if the period 1900–1948 was a phase in which political influence exerted from outside the country led to a considerable

expansion of plantation schools, the period from independence to 1977 saw political influence take its toll in an opposite direction. Plantation revenues were required to finance new economic strategy and welfare among the Ceylonese population outside the plantations. The plantation labourers' economic subsidy to the rest of the economy and society was matched by little political compromise by the national government. Plantation labour unions, the only corporate channel for the collective expression of labourers' demands, lacked substantial political power to achieve effective compromises. Declining terms of trade for plantation crops and the dawn of nationalisation of plantation assets led to disinterest on the part of both planters and the newly independent government to invest in the welfare of a substantially disenfranchised minority population.

#### Phase 5: 1977–1994: State Takeover and the Widespread Increase in Enrolment

During this period educational progress may be attributed to the interaction of six main influences:

- The first was the takeover of plantation schools by the State. Takeover was a process that started in the 1950s, and became an election issue in the manifesto of the United Front in 1970. Takeover gathered momentum in the mid to late 1970s, but the full implementation of the policy has taken time. It has taken until today for the state to take over almost every plantation school. The policy of takeover of the schools from the estate management provided a legal framework within which the expansion of enrolment could proceed.
- A second factor which contributed, perhaps a little more indirectly, was the economic decline of the tea and the growth of a labour surplus during the 1980s. This factor touches on a recurring issue in the plantations, that of labour supply. During the 1980s employers had a guaranteed labour supply, there was little need to employ children, and unemployment was beginning to surface as a problem in some estates. It was clear from interviews with superintendents that they preferred to see children enrolled in

schools rather than roaming around the estates. Moreover, the fact that the schools had been or were about to be 'taken-over' meant that employers were no longer responsible for the costs of schooling and could afford to adopt a more relaxed attitude to the question of education of the plantation labourers' children.

- A third influence was citizenship, combined with a rising social demand from plantation labourer parents. The gradual resolution of the citizenship question for stateless persons contributed to a strengthening of the social demand for education from estate workers for their children. Many families could now look forward to a future as citizens of Sri Lanka. A growing number of young people were gaining jobs through education. These young people provided role models for estate parents and their children.
- An influx of teachers of plantation community origin in the mid 1980s was an important fourth influence. In the mid 1980s the Ministry established a scheme called the Plantation Sector Teacher's Programme which encouraged young persons with GCE O level qualifications to become teachers in the plantation schools. Similar schemes followed and contributed to an increase in the number of teachers in the estate schools from 1146 in 1984 to 4843 in 1994.
- The availability of foreign funds for development assistance (from multi-lateral and bi-lateral European agencies) has supported the building and re-habilitation of schools and crèches and comprehensive for improving the quality of teaching and learning. These programmes were well planned, regularly monitored, periodically evaluated and well-managed by the Ministry and district and provincial departments of education.
- The final, but by no means the least influence in recent times has been the broader political and ethnic crisis and the specific position of plantation Tamils within it. This part of the analysis will come as no surprise to those who understand the political tapestry of Sri Lanka. But external audiences are often puzzled by a story of progress among an ethnic minority. How and why, they ask, was increasing state and external donor intervention in plantation schools possible during a period (i) in which the Sri Lankan state had been accused internationally of human rights violations

against minority Tamils; (ii) in which there has been open warfare between Tamil extremists and the state security forces; and (iii) in which thousands of young and educated Tamils and Sinhalese died. Moreover, they ask, why would a government encourage investments in plantation people's welfare when the economic contribution of the plantations was waning?

The answer lies in the political position of the plantation Tamil community within the broader conflict. Politically, the vote of the plantation community was important in the deliverance of the United National Party to power in 1977 and their maintenance of power up to the mid 1990s, and important also to the Peoples Alliance in the mid 1990s. Both the major political parties have grasped the importance of the plantation minority, its political party cum trade union, the CWC, and its unrivalled leader, the late and charismatic Mr Thondaman. Rather than joining the call for Eelam, Mr Thondaman chose instead to work within the framework of government to promote the interests of the plantation community. Seizing every opportunity to wring concessions from the state, he promoted education, housing, income generation, the resolution of the citizenship issue and a general upliftment of the community. Political agency and political forces more generally provide a major part of the explanation for increased access to education among the plantation community over the past two decades.

## CONCLUSION

The long view of progress in education among the Indian Tamil estate community of Sri Lanka has indicated that the dominance of economic, political and social influence on it varies from phase to phase. In the mid nineteenth century the cultural needs of the plantation labourers to maintain contact with kin in India, the religious goals of missionary organisations and philanthropic pressures on a colonial government influenced the establishment of a network of schools offering rudimentary education. In the early to mid twentieth century political influence from Westminster and from India pushed for improvements in the working conditions of labour. Combined with political developments in Ceylon generally

(e.g., the growth of political franchise, the growth of trade unionism) and an expansion of education in rural and urban areas, this contributed to the expansion of education in the plantations. In the late twentieth century the politics of plantation trade unions, combined with the economic decline of the plantation industry and the generation of a labour surplus, created a major influence on educational expansion.

Similarly, this long view of educational expansion has also highlighted the economic and political factors that have hindered and impeded it. Like the factors promoting expansion in education, the relative importance of those that have impeded it varies from phase to phase. Although the main factor impeding education expansion has been economic—the low skill requirement of plantation labour—the politics of ethnic relations has also played a major role. Where political influences may have promoted educational progress in the period between 1900 and 1948, they largely inhibited it in the period after independence up to 1977. The growth of anti-Indian sentiment and Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism retarded significant educational development in the plantations between 1948 and 1977. Subsequently, and somewhat paradoxically, these political influences of resistance metamorphosed into political influences for change in the period 1977–1994, as the political and ethnic crisis in the country escalated and opportunities emerged for political agency from within the plantation community to promote educational expansion and social development more generally.

Generalising across the entire period the balance sheet of influence suggests that the main direction of economic influence has been to restrict rather than expand education in the plantations. By contrast, the main direction of political influence has been to expand rather than restrict education in the plantations.

In so far as they focus on stasis, rather than progress, the reproductive models of education in plantations presented hitherto are confirmed by the analysis presented in this chapter. The major imperative for stasis has arisen from the characteristics of the production system in which plantation communities labour. Reproductive models of education also suggest that when change does occur it arises from a contradiction between an economic



dynamic and an educational system that tends to stabilise class relations. The analysis of the emergence and expansion of education in the plantations of Sri Lanka presented in my analysis departs from this position and suggests that education emerged and expanded largely in spite of, not because of, contradictions between the production system and educational provision in the plantation. The plantation production system and its need for educated labour has changed little over time. What has changed is the extent to which the people who labour inside a plantation have become members of a society that extends beyond its boundaries. The extension of political franchise, the growth of trade unions, political citizenship, compulsory education ordinances, and state legislation on school ownership are the 'broad politics' that provided an environment within which education could expand within the plantations. Alongside these broad politics were the 'high politics' of interactions between key political actors at particular moments in Sri Lanka's economic and political history.

## NOTES

\* This chapter is based on a book I wrote during the 1990s titled *Labouring to Learn: Towards a Political Economy of Plantations, People and Education in Sri Lanka* (Little 1999). The main question addressed is: how and why did educational participation increase among the minority Indian Tamil community in the plantations of Sri Lanka?)

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