

ABSTRACT

Lindberg, J. (2005) *Education for all in times of global transformations. Aspirations and opportunities of poor families in marginal areas of Sri Lanka*. Publications edited by the Departments of Geography, Göteborg University, Series B, no 108, 304 pages, ISBN 91-86472-51-8

This study is concerned with the educational opportunities of poor families in marginal areas in times of global transformations. The point of departure is the fields of tensions between the kind of education these families perceive themselves to need in order to lead lives they value, and the kind of educational opportunities that are accessible to them. The study is motivated by a renewed interest in education among policy-makers, which seems to lead to quantitative expansions of enrolments in basic education in many parts of the South, and by a "new" dilemma of educational planning in times of global transformations. The empirical focus of the study is on poor families in marginal parts of Hambantota District, in southern Sri Lanka.

The main aim is to better understand how educational opportunities of poor families in marginal areas are affected in times of global transformations. A subsidiary aim is to better understand how the accessibility of educational opportunities relates to processes of social exclusion and inclusion. In order to fulfil these aims, two sets of research questions are addressed. The first set of research questions concerns attitudes among poor families in marginal areas: what role do these families perceive education to have in leading lives they value and how are their educational aspirations affected in times of global transformations? The second set of research questions regards the accessibility of educational opportunities in marginal areas: what kind of opportunities are accessible to these families and how is the accessibility of educational opportunities affected in times of global transformations?

Apart from going through a wide range of secondary material to provide a comparative background, the main research method has been semi-structured interviews, particularly with parents. In addition to parental interviews, students have been invited to write essays, local key informants (especially school personnel) have been interviewed, and statistics have been collected regarding the whereabouts of schools, teachers and students, and regarding student and teacher attendance rates. Finally, semi-structured interviews have been conducted with informants at the national level.

One main conclusion is that there is an ongoing process of stratification of educational opportunities in Sri Lanka. Three stratifying mechanisms are identified in the education network, each of them strengthening the need for particular sets of unequally distributed resources in the quest to move from inferior to superior segments of schools. This stratification has implications for processes of inclusion and exclusion both on its own and in relation to the perceived increasing need for education among the families. Finally, there seems to be significant connections between attempts of policy-makers to counter aggregate exclusion from global flows of investments and the exclusion of poor families in marginal areas from capabilities deemed to be necessary for leading lives they value, and have reason to value.

Keywords: educational opportunities, educational aspirations, stratification, social exclusion, dilemma of educational planning, global transformations, Sri Lanka, Hambantota District, Sooriyawewa

ISBN 91-86472-51-8

ISSN 0346-6663

© Jonas Lindberg
Printed by Kompendiet
Göteborg 2005

Distribution:
Department of Human and Economic Geography
PO Box 630
405 30 Göteborg, Sweden