

AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF ECONOMIC DISPARITY ON THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN SRI LANKA: A CASE STUDY OF TWO RURAL AND SUBURBAN SCHOOLS IN KANDY DISTRICT

Ven. Polonnaruwe Kashyapa¹ and A.K.M. Shivangi^{2,*}

¹*Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka.*

²*Department of Economics, Rajarata University of Sri Lanka.*

*Corresponding author (Email: ssh2020441@ssh.rjt.ac.lk)

ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental factor in a country's development and a well-structured educational system can significantly support national progress. In Sri Lanka, economic disparities between rural and urban areas have led to unequal access to quality education and resources, posing a major challenge that requires immediate intervention. This study provides actionable recommendations for reforming Sri Lanka's education system to mitigate the effects of economic inequality. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research combines quantitative and qualitative interviews involving 20 teachers and 20 parents and interviews with school administrators and education experts. Secondary data sources included government reports, academic literature, and school performance records. Thematic and statistical analyses revealed significant gaps in educational access and quality between urban and rural schools. Schools in low-income areas often lack essential resources, qualified teachers, and adequate facilities, which leads to lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates. Additionally, dependence on private tutoring exacerbates these inequalities, as many rural families cannot afford extra instruction. Interviews with educators and policymakers further highlighted issues such as limited funding, an outdated curriculum, and a competitive educational environment that hampers collaboration. These factors perpetuate a cycle of disadvantages for students from low-income backgrounds. This study underscores the urgent need for substantial educational reform in Sri Lanka. Equitable funding, enhanced teacher training, curriculum updates aligned with job-market needs, and a more collaborative educational environment are recommended to create an inclusive system that supports all students. Addressing these disparities is not merely an educational policy matter; it is essential to foster social equity and drive economic advancement in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Economic disparity, educational access, educational reform, low-income families, quality education