

Dialogue on Social Science Research-Policy Nexus

Organized by the
National Committee on Social Sciences of the
National Science Foundation

Date : 12th - 13th August 2010
Venue : Auditorium, NSF

PROGRAMME

Day 1



- 9.00 am *Registration*
- 9.30 am Welcome Address by Chairperson / Director, NSF
- 9.35 am **Introductory Remarks**
Prof. Siri Hettige
- 10.00 am *Tea*
- Plenary Session**
- 10.30 am **Keynote address**
Social policy human capital and economic development
Dr Nimal Sanderatne
- 11.00 am Discussion
- 11.15 am **Challenge of economic policy making in the context of ongoing global economic crisis**
Prof. Sirimevan Colombage
- 11.45 am Discussion
- 12.00 noon *Lunch*
- Technical Sessions**
- 1.00 pm **Review on health policy issues**
Dr Ravindra Rannan-Eliya
- 1.30 pm Discussion
- 1.45 pm **Translating education policy into action in Sri Lanka**
Prof. Chandra Gunawardena
- 2.15 pm Discussion
- 2.30 pm **Improving relevance of quality undergraduate education in Sri Lanka**
Prof. L.L. Ratnayake
- 3.00 pm Discussion
- 3.15 pm *Tea*

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Day 2

Technical Sessions (Cont.)

9.00 am	Cultural diversity and national identity in Sri Lanka <i>Prof. Gananath Obeyesekere</i>
9.30 am	Discussion
9.45 am	Review paper on poverty alleviation programme- 'Samurdhi Programme' <i>Dr Ramani Gunatilaka</i>
10.15 am	Discussion
10.30 am	<i>Tea</i>
11.00 am	Science and national development in Sri Lanka <i>Prof. S.N. Arsecularame</i>
11.30 am	Discussion
11.45 am	Achievements and issues in the plantation sector <i>Dr A.S. Chandrabose</i>
12.15 pm	Discussion
12.30 pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.30 pm	Issues of urban development <i>Dr Jagath Munasinghe</i>
2.00 pm	Discussion
2.15 pm	Problems and prospects of waste disposal in urban areas <i>Dr Ajantha Perera</i>
2.45 pm	Discussion
	Final Session
3.00 pm	Recommendations and conclusions
4.00 pm	<i>Tea</i>

Keynote address

Social Policy, Human Capital and Economic Development

Dr Nimal Sanderatne

Abstract

Development is not solely about economic growth, however important economic development is for human development. Development is much more than the increase in national output and per capita incomes. It is concerning the development of an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. Development is the process by which people are given the opportunities for their full development and expanding the choices people have, improving their quality of life to lead lives that they value. It is therefore much more than economic growth. Economic growth is however a very important means of achieving the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number'.

Social policy is an important intervention in assisting this goal. This is especially so with respect to "the people left behind". Social policy is generally defined as government interventions in education, health, social security, food security and other welfare measures. However, it is a mistaken view that human development is achieved solely or primarily through government interventions. Private initiatives, community actions, international assistance and household and personal efforts play an important role in developing human capital. The stock of accumulated social and human capital too influences the development of human capital. Social policy and social initiatives have an important bearing on the development of human capital that is desirable for its own sake as well due to its contribution to development.

Human capital is conceived of an input to development. There is no doubt that improvements in health, education and social security contributes to economic development and other aspects of human development. However important human capital is towards economic and social development, the development and enrichment of humanity has a rationality of its own irrespective of its contribution to development. Therefore improvements in education, health and the enrichment of the human personality have a direct importance quite apart from its contribution to development.

Challenges of Economic Policy Making in the Context of the Ongoing Global Economic Crisis

Prof. Sirimevan Colombage

Abstract

The current global economic crisis is considered the worst turmoil since the Great Depression of the 1920s. The financial fallout in the US rapidly spread throughout almost the entire world during 2008-2009 adversely affecting employment and livelihoods. The global economic situation was worsened by several other crises including exorbitantly high world food and energy prices in 2008 reflecting the neglect of food agriculture and the failure to regulate speculative energy markets. The resulting sharp downfall of world economic output and rising unemployment in developed countries led to a contraction of world trade causing adverse consequences on the rest of the world, particularly developing countries. In the case of Sri Lanka, the impact of the global crisis was not initially felt due to several factors including the foreign exchange restrictions on the capital account of the balance of payments and non-exposure of local banks to complex global financial transactions. However, as the turmoil intensifies over time, the Sri Lankan economy severely felt the adverse effects. The objective of this paper is to analyze these implications, and to evaluate the policy responses. The GDP growth rate of Sri Lanka began to decelerate in the second quarter of 2008, and continued until the second quarter of 2009. The export sector setback that was experienced since the third quarter of 2008 caused balance of payments problems. This was further aggravated by a capital flight. The inflation rate rose to a peak level in 2008 largely as a result of the rise in food and energy prices. The government adopted a variety of policy actions to respond to mitigate the adverse effects of the global economic turmoil. These included monetary and fiscal policies, and exchange rate interventions. But the authorities had limited space to use such policy instruments due to the domestic macroeconomic imbalances that prevailed even before the crisis. The Central Bank injected foreign exchange to the tune of \$ 1 billion in fourth quarter of 2008 to defend the exchange rate. It also took action to bring down the market interest rates. The fiscal management was extremely challenging during the crisis period. The government introduced a stimulus package to assist the industries affected by the recession. Several fiscal policy measures were also taken to ease the burden on consumers and to stimulate demand. A major challenge currently faced by the policy makers in the midst of the global recession is to stimulate domestic economic activity while restoring macroeconomic stability. In this context, certain policy actions implemented to deal with the crisis had inimical effects on the economy. For example, the foreign exchange injection to the market by the Central Bank prevented desirable exchange rate depreciation, and thereby eroded an improvement in export competitiveness. Therefore, high priority needs to be given to correct the macroeconomic fundamentals so as to facilitate export-led economic growth.

Translating Education Policy into Action in Sri Lanka

Prof. Chandra Gunawardena

Abstract

Educational policy may be viewed as a response to broader social, cultural, educational and political change and also as a prescription to change which has to be implemented. Education as a policy area constitutes a major responsibility for the state and policymaking by its nature is essentially a political activity. This paper will review policies formulated and action taken in general education during three periods of educational history in Sri Lanka: From 1972 to 1977; from 1977 to 2000 and from 2000 to date, drawing from documented studies and reports.

In Sri Lanka, the major policies in education targeted democratization of education and elimination of regional and socio-economic inequalities, improvement of the quality of education and from around sixties, meeting the needs of the economy. The implementation of educational policies during the period immediately following independence had a substantial impact as reflected in social indicators such as literacy, and the percentage of those who had no schooling in the population and a reduction of urban-rural disparities in participation in education as well as between girls and boys. Attempts at making education relevant was targeted through introduction of vocational-oriented subjects into the secondary curriculum, and job-oriented courses at university level were less effective, mainly due to lack of consistency when governments changed and inadequacies in coordination between education and economy. The establishment of the National Education Commission in 1991 placed the responsibility for educational policy on the Commission which has formulated policy based on suggestions made by the public, recommendations by expert committees and outcomes of research. A major concern is that while excellent policies are being formulated, effectiveness of implementation is low, mainly due to lack of proper coordination, supervision, monitoring and evaluation by responsible authorities.

Improving Relevance and Quality of Undergraduate Education in Sri Lanka

Prof. L. L. Ratnayake

Abstract

Since 2002/2003 the Government has made higher education reform a priority and tried to develop a long-term strategy to respond to national concerns that the higher education system is failing to provide the modern skills required for Sri Lanka's development. This reform included rationalization and restructuring of university and non-university institutions, improving public-private partnerships, introducing accreditation mechanisms and cost-recovery strategies, supporting innovative faculties to enhance educational quality, and increasing access when the major quality issues are resolved.

Since 2009/2010 Sri Lanka is a country with a per capita income of approximately US\$2,000, with a population of around 20 million people. Basic human development levels are high, with a primary education completion rate of. The higher education sector has about 390,000 students enrolled in 15 universities, 11 Advanced Technological Institutes (ATIs) and about 12 private degree awarding institutions.

The economic growth of Sri Lanka has been driven mainly by private sector led expansion of services and industry, after the country adopted a liberal and pro-market economic policy framework three decades ago. The long-term future growth of the economy will depend on human capital intensive services and industries such as banking and finance, insurance, information technology, telecommunications, and hospitality and leisure services. In this context, Sri Lanka's transition from a low-income country to a middle-income country in the global knowledge economy of the twenty-first century will depend critically on the country's intellectual and human capital. The ability of people to think and act creatively, work industriously and productively, and innovate and adapt available technologies to strengthen economic activities is vitally important in the modern world. Sri Lanka urgently needs a higher education system that can produce skilled, hard-working and enterprising graduates, and research and innovation capacity capable of promoting dynamic economic development.

The higher education sector has performed below its potential in the past. Sri Lanka invests less in higher education than comparable middle-income countries, or developing countries as a whole. The sector also faces a number of urgent challenges. These include the production of graduates who are employable in the private sector, especially graduates with good English language and ICT skills; the moderate quality of courses and programs in the majority of higher education institutions (HEIs); inadequate quality assurance mechanisms for the full public and private higher education sectors; the large proportion of students (nearly 60 percent) enrolled in external degree programs with minimal academic support.

Achievements and Issues in the plantation sector in Sri Lanka

Dr A.S.Chandrabose

Abstract

The public policies of the successive governments, implemented after the independence, have facilitated considerable achievements in the plantation sector. Major policies implemented by the governments include the land reforms of 1972 and 1975, nationalisation and subsequent privatisation of the British owned plantation companies in 1992, provision of citizenship and expansion of national school education system to the plantation community. Though the country achieved tangible affluence through ownership of land and generated net income from the exports of plantation crops during this policy period, it is observed that such policies have not brought substantial impact on the plantation community. They are still considered as the most backward community in the country. Low levels of literacy rates, higher percentage of poverty, poor housing, and poor health conditions are characteristics that remain a common phenomenon in the plantation sector.

Tea and Rubber are the major plantation crops and they are providing employment for around 0.5 million workers which include those involved in management of the plantation sector as well. The crops contributed 2.2 percent to the GDP in 2009. Value of tea exports was around Rs.1.3 billion which was 16.7 percent of the total export earnings in 2009. Production of tea has been relatively stable during the past decade which recorded an average of 303 million kg during 2000/02 and 304 million kg during 2007/09. The total rubber production, however, has increased by 31.4 percent from 87.6 million kg to 127.3 million kg between 2000/02 and 2007/09. Of the 222,000 hectares under tea cultivation, around 40 percent accounts for tea smallholdings. Around 80 percent of these tea smallholdings has high yielding varieties and contributes around 65 percent of the total tea production in the country. The tea smallholders have benefited from the distribution of land which was acquired under land reforms of 1975. There are around 220,000 tea smallholders in the country.

The programmes for nationalisation of foreign owned plantations were linked with the need to increase productivity as well as employment in the plantation sector where there had been a declining trend in the productivity and very slow increase of employment in the tea sector from the 1960s. There were also social objectives such as redistribution of agricultural land among the landless peasants living in the plantation areas. It should be noted that immediately after the implementation of the programme there were several schemes introduced to distribute marginal tea lands to the villagers and to create employment to the village youth in the tea sector.

According to the Consumer Finance Survey 2006/2007 plantation community has the lowest level of literacy and educational attainments. Illiteracy rate at national level is only 8 percent in 2006 but it is about 25 percent in the plantation community. The World Bank

recently carried out a study on the economy of Sri Lanka and concluded that the poverty level is very high (32%) among the estate community. However, national level poverty reduction programmes have thus far not reached the plantation community.

It is useful to note that the plantation sector is of unique character as far as the labour force is concerned. It is a highly labour intensive sector and requires labour throughout the year, and the nature of work needs the involvement of both male and female labour. However, the availability of labour force is subject to fluctuation. The recent study conducted in the tea sector found that labour force exclusively involved in the estate jobs is only 53.06 percent. The Labour force partly involved in estate jobs and that of fully involved in non-estate jobs are 17.86 percent and 29.08 percent respectively.

The government of Sri Lanka has recently initiated certain measures to develop educational facilities for the estate workers. German Technical Cooperation, which helped to establish Institute for training teachers for the plantation sector in 1994, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the World Bank and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), are some of the institutions that provided funds for the improvement of educational infrastructure facilities to the community. The SIDA for instance, provided grants to construct 440 out of 800 estate schools during 1986-97 periods.

Indeed, schools have been expanded and secondary level of education has also improved significantly. However, passing rate from GCE O/L is significantly low in the plantation sector. According to the census of 2006 by the Ministry of education only 36 percent of the students who sat for the GCE O/L have qualified to enrol the GCE A/L classes. This is far below the national average which is 51 percent in the same year.

The workers in the plantation sector are not merely depending on estate works. Around 44 percent of them have become either temporary or casual workers in the plantation sector. Moreover, the total workers in pay roll in the tea sector is only 59 percent of the total labour force and 65 percent of them are above 40 years of age. At present the workers in the age group of 18 to 25 years of age constitute only 9 percent of the registered labour force in the estate sector. Migration for employment to the Middle East countries is a common feature among the younger generation including the married men and women. According to the available information 10 to 15 percent of the plantation women have already migrated to the Middle East.

The daily wage includes the basic wages and other allowances which have been continuously altered over the past and they receive low levels of income from the estate jobs. The average wage income for a worker is around Rs.5000 (per month?). It should be noted that the determination of the daily wages and other allowances were decided by the wage board through tripartite agreement until 1996. However, at present it is determined between a few trade unions and the Employers Federation through 'collective agreement' and it has raised controversial issues amongst the plantation workers

About 75 percent of the workers are still living in the line rooms which were constructed during the British time. Several attempts have been made to provide an individual house

for the worker families. The establishment of Ministry of Estate Infrastructure in 1994, Plantation Housing and Social Welfare Trust (PHSWT), the creation of Public Utilities and Estate Housing, the Ministry of Housing and Construction etc. were intuitions established with the prime objective of improving the quality of the life of the plantation workers including better housing. All attempts to provide housing to the estate workers reached only 24 percent of the estate workers in the country by 2006.

Divisional Secretariat (DS) is an important public administrative institution in Sri Lanka. Delimitation of DS has been frequently taking place to expand services to previously un-reached communities in several districts. There are DS divisions for disadvantage communities. Hence, an average population of 40, 000 has been covered by a DS in the country. However, access to state services to the plantation workers through this institution is very much limited. The plantation workers are largely concentrated into DS of Nuwar Eliya and Ambagamuwa and each division consists of a population about 200,000. As a result, it has become increasingly difficult to have access to state services such as obtaining National Identity Card (NIC) and benefits under the programmes to eradicate poverty. The report on Millennium Development Goal reveals that nearly 30 percent of estate sector households are poor but only 13 percent of the households interviewed reported receiving cash transfers from the government welfare programmes. At national level such assistance are extended to more than 75 to 85 percent of the poor income groups. Therefore, there is an urgent need to bring an appropriate delimitation to the administrative institutions to the plantation areas to provide efficient services to the Indian Tamil community in order to reach the institutions for services with minimum constraints.

Economically the plantation is remaining as an important sector in the country. However, the national activities for social development has not sufficiently reached to the plantation sector, which means the estate community remains isolated and unable to be a partner in the mainstream development programmes. Hence, appropriate plan of action is needed to bring them in to the national plan.

Issues in Urban Development: Inter and Intra domain gaps in Research & Policies

Dr. Jagath Munasinghe

Abstract

Within the conceptual framework of a basic rational model of Research-Policy relationship, this paper discusses the gaps apparent in urban development sector in Sri Lanka pertaining to forward links between research and research, research and policy, policy and policy, and policy and research. These gaps are discussed relating to three main areas of issues, namely: urban management, urban transport and adaptation to climate change impacts, which presently challenge the affairs of urban development sector. The causative factors behind these gaps are considered as the incoherence in the knowledge, inhibited practices, incompatible agendas and inadequate reassessment. The paper suggests three general possibilities that would enable to overcome these gaps. The first is to establish a general national policy to prioritize research areas in the field. The second is the vitalization of broader research-policy communities, involving research experts, political figures, bureaucrats and technocrats to internalize many capabilities from different parties into stronger nexus between research and policy. The third possibility is the encouragement of academic and other institutes to increasingly undertake priority areas of research through incentives and other measures.