

# An Assessment of the Impacts of Sri Lanka's Programme for School Improvement and School Report Card Programme on Students' Academic Progress

HARSHA ATURUPANE\*, PAUL GLEWWE\*\*, RENATO RAVINA\*\*,  
UPUL SONNADARA† & SUZANNE WISNIEWSKI‡

\*World Bank, Colombo, Sri Lanka, \*\*University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, USA, †University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka, ‡University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, USA

*(Final version received April 2014)*

**ABSTRACT** *This paper examines two education programmes in Sri Lanka: the Programme for School Improvement (PSI), which decentralises decision-making power, and the School Report Card Programme (SRCP), which was designed to provide parents and other community members with information on the characteristics and performance of their local schools. Using a difference in differences identification strategy, it finds the following results. First, the PSI programme significantly increased Math and English reading test scores among Grade 4 students, but not first language (Sinhalese or Tamil) test scores. However, PSI has had no effect on any test scores of Grade 8 students. In contrast, the SRCP had no significant impacts on any test scores in either grade, and further inquiries revealed that the SRCP was never really implemented. Second, the paper examined the impact of both programmes on teacher and school principal variables. Overall, few effects were found, and in some cases effects were found that one would associate with reduced school quality. On a more positive note, the PSI programme does appear to have led schools to form School Development Committees (SDCs), as the programme stipulates, to establish a list of school priorities and to implement projects funded through local fundraising.*

## I. Introduction

Sri Lanka has long outperformed other comparable developing countries in its educational attainment, as reiterated in a recent World Bank (2005) report. Although, that report also raised concerns that the quality of education in Sri Lanka is inadequate, in the sense that students' learning is falling short of the goals set by the official curriculum. The Sri Lankan government has recently undertaken several initiatives to improve the quality of education in Sri Lanka (see Ministry of Education, 2007). One of them is the Programme for School Improvement (PSI), which provides a mechanism for collaboration between schools and the communities in which they are located through the appointment of school management committees, with representation from education administrators, school principals and teachers, and members of the local community. Such programmes are often referred to as school-based management, or decentralised education. A second, more limited, initiative is the School Report Card

---

*Correspondence Address:* Dr. Paul Glewwe, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, 1994 Buford Ave., St. Paul, MN 55108, USA. Email: [pglewwe@umn.edu](mailto:pglewwe@umn.edu)

An Online Appendix is available for this article which can be accessed via the online version of this journal available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2014.936396>