

Paradigms in Sri Lankan English Education; with Special Reference to Plantation Sector Indian Origin Communities

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Abstract – This paper reviews the patterns in Sri Lankan English Education in relation to the Indian origin communities living in the plantation sector for the past 200 years. A distinct marginalized community that was initially brought to the country by the British colonizers from South India in the early 1900's to work initially in coffee and then in tea plantations remains still marginalized. English language education which was introduced to Sri Lanka with the arrival of British rulers in 1796 transmuted to the present status as a link language. Scholarly works written on the development of English education in Sri Lanka failed to amplify on the development of English language education among the Indian origin communities in the plantation sector. This research addresses this gap by attempting to document how the contemporary socio-political standpoints impacted on English language education in the Indian origin communities. By analysing the limited literatures and interviewing prominent Tamil academics and also some politicians of this community for their political standpoints, this research tries to outline the evolution of English language education in the above community. This paper concludes successive educational reforms before and after the independence had trivial impact and the key transformation in English education occurred after the government takeover of estate school in 1987.

Keywords: English, Education, Plantation, Indian, Sri Lanka.