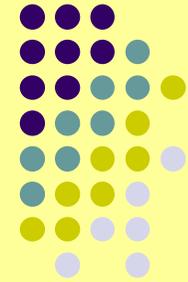


The Politics and Progress of the 1997 Education Reforms in Sri Lanka

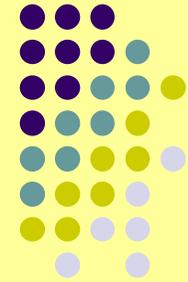


Paper presented at the
Symposium on *The Politics of
EFA Policy Formulation and
Implementation* at the UKFIET
conference Sept 15-17 2009

Angela W. Little



Political Will



- Development agencies regularly appeal to ‘political will’ as a key requirement for progress towards EFA and the MDGs.
- Research Questions

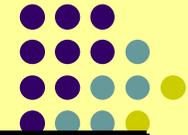
What is Political Will and where/how does it operate?

How does Political Will interact with the Non Political Dimensions of Reform?

- **Case study** Sri Lanka 1997 General Education Reforms

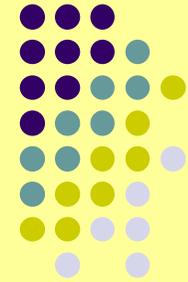
EFA achievements, high levels of political will and donor support for EFA policies and plans have been strong features of Sri Lanka’s 1997 policy reforms. **But implementation has not ‘plain sailing’**

Policy Environment



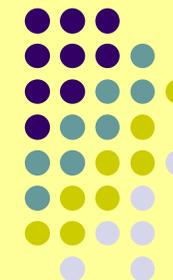
	1930-1970	1970-1990s
Political Drivers	Nationalism	Youth Unrest
Policy Machinery	Public debate, transparency of policy	Less debate, loss of transparency, political whim, donor influence
Regime Tensions	Colonial vs National	Left vs Right
Bureaucratic leadership	Independent Public Service appoints	Cabinet appoints
Education Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Uneven access ⑩ Private, public, 'central schools' and others ⑩ Media: English, Sinhala and Tamil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⑩ Uneven quality ⑩ International/private National, provincial ⑩ Media: Sinhala, Tamil, resurgence of English <p style="color: red; margin-top: 10px;">▲ Increasing politicisation of implementation ▲</p>

What is national political will?



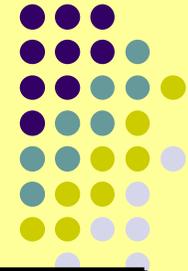
- Public commitment to the need for policy and plans from highest political authority and continued interest in 'results'
- Establishment and personal leadership of Task Force when bureaucratic progress of the Bureaucracy is slow
- Close formal and informal relations between politicians, senior policy makers and implementors
- Financial commitments

Access Reforms



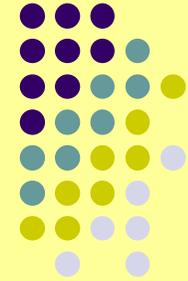
Reform	Outcome	Drivers	Inhibitors
Equitable distribution of 'excellent' junior and senior secondary education	Few gains	National political will ⑩ Politicians ⑩ Technicians Donor support	Local political 'interference' in selection of schools Community perceptions 'refuge of the poor'
School rationalisation	Few gains	National political will ⑩ Politicians ⑩ Technicians Donor support	Local political and community resistance Cost and disruption

Quality reforms – primary



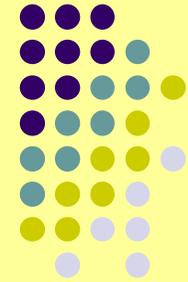
<p>Primary Education</p> <p>Curriculum and Pedagogy</p>	<p>Some gains.</p> <p>Uneven implementation</p>	<p>National political will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⑩ Politicians⑩ Technicians <p>Pilot in President's constituency</p> <p>Donor support</p> <p>Awareness programmes</p> <p>Financial planning</p>	<p>Local political interference in transfers of officers and teachers</p> <p>Backwash from G5 scholarship exam ► National schools</p>
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Quality reforms – junior secondary



<p>Junior Secondary</p> <p>Curriculum and Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•New subjects•Activity and project based	<p>Few gains</p>	<p>NIE action</p> <p>Donor support</p>	<p>Weak technical leadership</p> <p>Over burdened curriculum</p> <p>No pilot</p> <p>Poor relation caught between 'foundational' primary and 'high stakes' senior secondary</p>
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Conclusions



- National political will manifests through public commitments, financial support, and close formal relations between politicians, policymakers and technicians
- The components of EFA policies have diverse implementation drivers and inhibitors, political and technical
- National political will accompanied each of the successful reforms, but did not guarantee all
- Local political wills manifest through informal networks between politicians, teachers and community members

Political Will is a double-edged sword

