



# Premium on English language has led to boom in intl. schools in Sri Lanka: UNESCO report

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**From left: Ministry of Education Former Additional Secretary Dr. Madura M. Wehella, National Educational Commission Chairman Prof. Harischandra Abeygunawardena, Dr. Nisha Arunatilake, Dialog Axiata PLC Senior Manager – Social Innovations Asith de Silva, Gateway Group Chairman Dr. Harsha Alles at the discussion on 'Non-State Actors in Sri Lanka's Education Sector' Pic by Nisal Baduge**

- However, only seven out of 389 intl. schools are registered as private businesses
- Percentage of households spending on private tutoring has significantly increased
- 98% of teachers in public schools equipped with the necessary qualifications, whereas in private schools, only 68 percent meet the standard qualification requirements

**By Shabiya Ali Ahlam**

As highly competitive education systems and labour markets have led to a significant boom in private tutoring and the growth of education technology companies in the South Asia region, a report from UNESCO says a premium on English language education has driven a rise in international schools in Sri Lanka.

Currently, the international school system does not come under the purview of the Ministry of Education.

According to the latest Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO, only seven of the 389 international schools in Sri Lanka are registered as private businesses. As a result, parents lack the means to report teachers, corporal punishment or fund misuse.

Given, that expansion of access through non-state provision has not been equitable. As a result, children from wealthier households and urban areas (68 percent) are more likely to attend private preschool than children from rural (48 percent) and tea plantation (44 percent) areas, the report said.

Meanwhile, the report noted that the percentage of households spending on private tutoring increased between 1995/96 and 2016 from 41 percent to 65 percent among urban households and from 19 percent to 62 percent among rural households.

The report also said teachers in public schools have better qualifications and higher salaries. Latest statistics reveal that 98 percent of public school teachers are either graduates or have received training from teacher training colleges, whereas in private schools, only about 68 percent have the necessary qualifications.

South Asia is now the region with the strongest presence of non-state actors in education. These stakeholders have become visible for their role in education beyond provision.

"Improved trust in government is a key means of ensuring equitable education of good quality and fruitful engagement by non-state actors. At the same time, improvement is also needed in non-state education institutions' financial transparency and inclusivity," the UNESCO report highlighted.

It stressed that improved information and citizen engagement are the critical foundations for holding state and non-state actors to account. Well-designed partnerships between state and non-state actors within a facilitative regulatory framework, supported by political will, can

help optimise the functions of education as a public good, it further pointed out.

The report stressed that improved coordination among actors in early childhood, technical and vocational institutions, and between government agencies, civil society and the private sector is essential.

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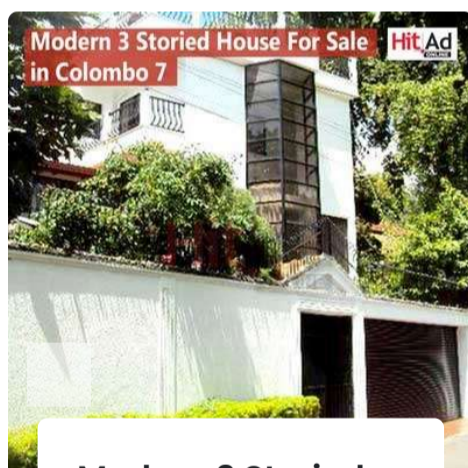
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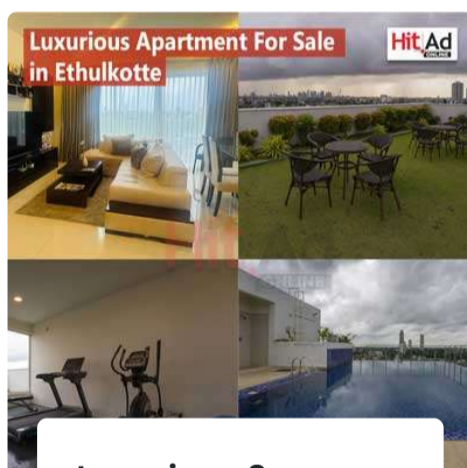
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