

Education as a vehicle for professionalisation and social mobility: A comparative and critical review of the process and outcomes from a biographical perspective

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Education is a vehicle for professionalisation and social mobility available to youths in developed as well as developing societies. Some youth from rural- socio-economically less advantaged backgrounds, are motivated to follow this path, and cross not only class and identity boundaries, but also geographical and cultural ones. Material, professional, and migratory ambitions form key driving forces among some of the youths. Obviously, this sort of upward movement is a familiar theme to those from the rural, southern districts of Sri Lanka. Notwithstanding the obstacles and challenges faced, many youths succeed in their endeavours to achieve educational and professional success.

As they move through this process of acquiring new knowledge, skills and competencies, what do they gain? What do they lose? What challenges do they face when moving through time and space, and how do they overcome these? Are there any set solutions to the challenges posed? Using a transnational and biographical approach, this paper presents author's critical reflections on these topics. The paper will be of interest to those who have gone through the journey as well as those who are about to begin.

Key words: Education; Professionalisation ; Social mobility; Biographical perspective; Career ambitions