SOCIAL COHESION AND DIVERSITY

8.0 Introduction

In the CESL study, two country-specific scales were designed, to research students' attitudes on social cohesion and diversity, and the peace process, in addition to retaining items on social cohesion and diversity included in the IEA CIVED student questionnaire. The attitudes measured across the domain – social cohesion and diversity are critically important in the current context of Sri Lanka. The findings, it was felt, would be of considerable significance, in the aftermath of two decades of conflict and, the current peace initiatives. Following on the analysis attempted in writing the case study on Sri Lanka for the International Bureau of Education (UNESCO, 2003) on *Curriculum change and social cohesion in conflict affected societies*, the findings of the present analysis it was surmised, would be further enlightening.

In this chapter, the data from the social cohesion scale in the country specific section is presented and analyzed first. Students' attitudes on gender issues, ethnic groups, internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka and, non-democratic groups are presented and analyzed, in the sections that follow. The data in this chapter is presented mostly in Graphs, with the data on which each Graph was based indicated below the Graph. More comprehensive data Tables are presented, some in the body of the chapter, and others in the Chapter annexe 8.

8.1 Items in the country specific scale on social cohesion

In the student questionnaire, a scale comprising 16 items was developed to solicit opinions of students on aspects of social cohesion both in the school and out of school context. Existing relationship patterns and opportunities for children from the different ethnic groups to come together in formal learning contexts and for informal exchanges were examined. Students were

asked to what extent they have had such opportunities, and for their agreement on whether they should get such opportunities.

In data analysis, twelve of the items have been paired. Items as paired, are presented in Table 8.1 and the response percentages to all items are presented in Table 8.1a, in the chapter annexe 8.

Table 8 .1: Items as paired in scale on social cohesion

Sri Lanka: Social Cohesion Item category	Short title of item:	Item nos.
Existing relationship patterns	…close group of friends	1
	…family's close group of friends	2
Opportunities - To learn second language (Sinhala/Tamil)	…had opportunities to study second language	3
	…should get opportunities to study second language	9
Opportunities - To learn together	…had opportunities to learn together	4
	…should get opportunities to learn together	10
Opportunities - To discuss, exchange ideas	…had opportunities for mutual exchange	5
	…should get opportunities for mutual exchange	11
Opportunities - To engage in leisure activities	…had opportunities to participate jointly	6
	…should get opportunities to participate jointly	12
Opportunities - To participate in ethnic group festivals	…had opportunities to participate jointly	7
	…should get opportunities to participate jointly	13
Opportunities - To associate as pen friends	…had opportunities to associate as pen friends	8
	…should get opportunities to associate as pen friends	14
Opportunities - To spend time informally with children of other ethnic groups	…should get these opportunities	15
Opportunities - To spend time in homes of children of other ethnic groups	…should get these opportunities	16

Second language learning in school is a critical factor in forging social cohesion in Sri Lanka. In grades 6 through 9 in schools in the national system in Sri Lanka, time table time of 2 periods per week, each of 40 minutes' duration is allocated for the teaching of Sinhala/Tamil as a second language - Tamil for students studying in the Sinhala medium and Sinhala for students studying in the Tamil medium. In response to item 3 in the scale, students indicated whether they never, rarely, sometimes or often got opportunities to study the second language. In response to item 9 in the scale, they indicated whether they agree or totally agree, disagree or totally disagree with the statement that students should get opportunities to study the second language.

Mutual understanding and mutual exchanges facilitative of social cohesion would ensue, if children from the different ethnic groups learned together in classrooms. Items were designed in

paired sets to probe whether the respondents had various such opportunities facilitative of social cohesion and, whether they agree that such opportunities should be made available to students.

The respondents were asked if they had opportunities to learn together with children of other ethnic groups (item 4), to discuss and exchange ideas (item 5) for e.g., on issues pertaining to the ethnic conflict in the country. They were also asked whether students should get opportunities to learn together (item 10) and for mutual exchange of ideas (item 11). Associating with pen friends would provide similar opportunities to children; the set of items 8 and 14 were therefore designed to obtain student responses, similarly.

Further exchanges of a more informal nature and facilitative of social cohesion occur when students participate jointly in leisure time activities such as trips (item 6), and cultural events such as ethnic group festivals (item 7); items 12 and 13 correspond to these two items respectively. The existing relationship patterns were probed by querying whether in their own/family's close group of friends there were members of other ethnic groups (items 1 and 2), and whether they considered opportunities to forge such close relationships desirable (items 15 and 16, respectively).

8.1.1 Opportunities for second language learning in the school system

The responses of the total sample of students to items 3 and 9 respectively are given in Table 8.1a (chapter annexe 8). The data indicates that 84 percent agree/totally agree that they sometimes/often have had opportunities to learn the second language in school and that 90 percent agree/totally agree that students should get this opportunity in school. The student responses, by medium of instruction (Table 8.2), ethnicity (Table 8.3) and province (Table 8.4) however, indicate significant variation in opportunities they have got, and in student agreement on whether they should get such opportunities. All Tables are given in chapter annexe 8.
The responses of students in sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they had to study the second language in school is given in Graph 8.1.
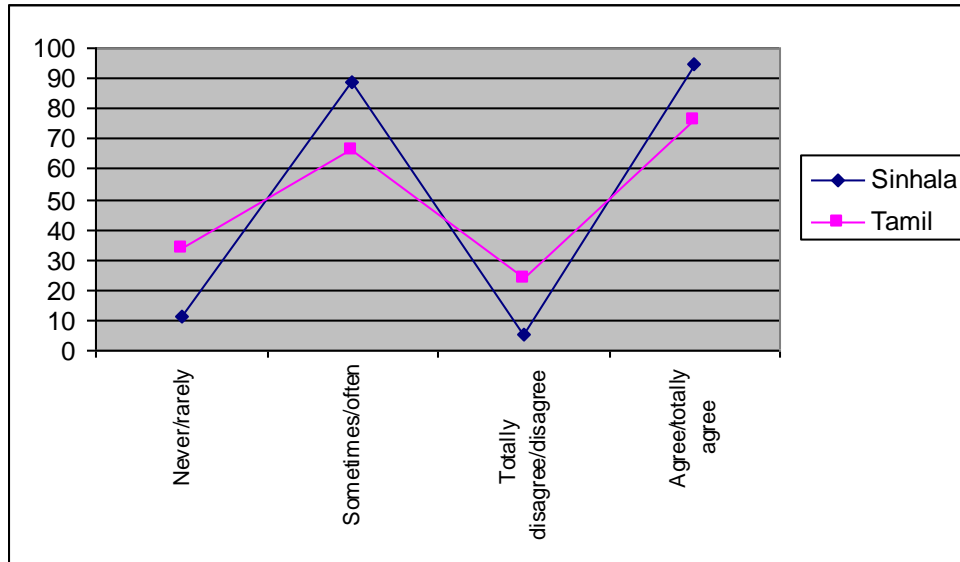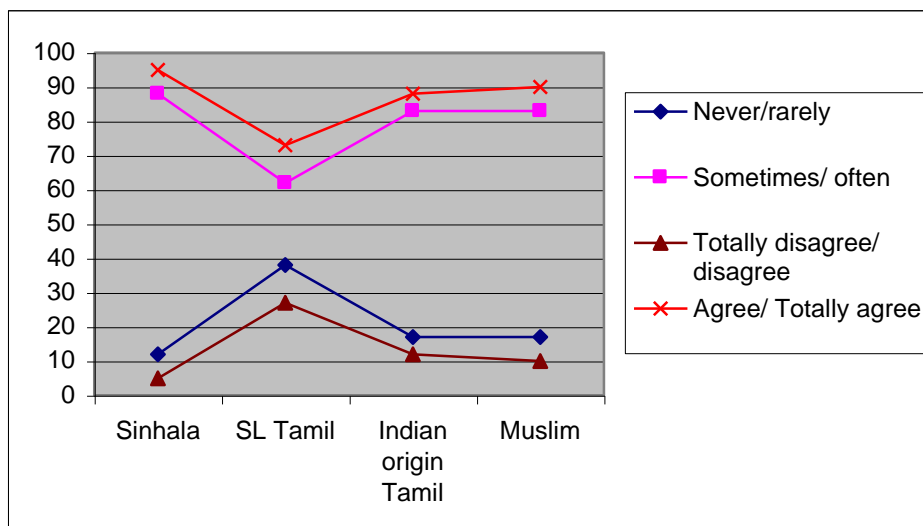
Medium	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/totally agree
Sinhala	11	89	5	95
Tamil	34	66	24	76

Graph 8.1: Students by medium of instruction indicating opportunities to study second language

In this sample 34 percent of the Tamil medium students have reported that they rarely or never got the opportunity to learn Sinhala as second language. However, they should have had 2 class periods a week, of second language learning, at least over the 4 years 2000-2003 when they studied in grades 6-9.

The data when by ethnicity of students (Table 8.3) and province (Table 8.4) shows further that Sri Lankan Tamil students (38 percent), particularly those resident in the Northern province (60 percent) comprise the majority of this group deprived of second language learning. The highest percentage - 27 percent students disagreeing with the statement that in school students should get opportunities to learn the second language, are also Sri Lankan Tamil students (Table 8.3). The province that recorded the highest - 38 percent disagreement with this statement is again the Northern, in which most of the student respondents are by ethnic origin Sri Lankan Tamil.

The responses of students in sample, by ethnicity, indicating opportunities they had to study the second language in school are given in Graph 8.2.

Ethnicity	Never/rarely	Sometimes/ often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ Totally agree
Sinhala	12	88	5	95
SL Tamil	38	62	27	73
Indian origin Tamil	17	83	12	88
Muslim	17	83	10	90

Graph 8.2: Students by ethnicity indicating opportunities to study second language

The responses of students in sample, by province, indicating opportunities they had to study the second language in school are given in Graph 8.3.
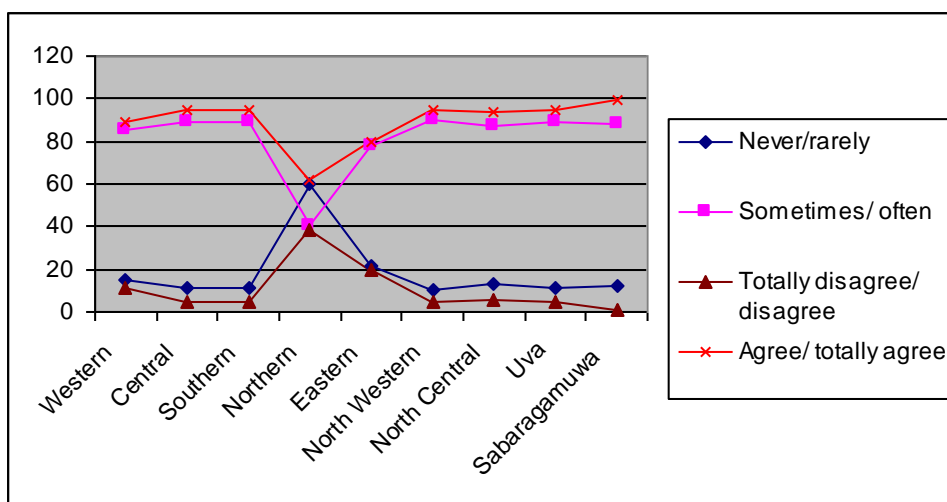
| Province	Never/rarely	Sometimes/ often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	15	85	11	89
Central	11	89	5	95
Southern	11	89	5	95
Northern	60	40	38	62
Eastern	22	78	20	80
North Western	10	90	5	95
North Central	13	87	6	94
Uva	11	89	5	95
Sabaragamuwa	12	88	1	99

Graph 8.3: Students by province indicating opportunities to study second language

The National Education Commission has declared the achievement of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity the first of the nine national goals, and as educationally relevant goals. The system however has failed in enabling schools effectively work toward achieving this goal, by ensuring that all students are provided the opportunity to learn the second language (Graphs 8.1, 8.2), as officially stipulated. In some multi-ethnic societies such as Switzerland and Sweden schools have effectively contributed to mutual understanding and social cohesion by ensuring that all students gain proficiency in the officially stipulated second languages. In Sri Lanka on the contrary the intensity of the ethnic divide and polarization of attitudes is reflected in the responses of students to the statement that students should get opportunities to study the second language. In the Northern province for example 38 percent students and, 24 percent Tamil medium student respondents (Tables 8.4 and 8.2 respectively) have disagreed with this statement. Similarly, in the Eastern and Western provinces, 20 and 11 percent (Table 8.4) respectively have indicated disagreement with this statement. To foster social cohesion in Sri Lanka, it is imperative that adequate provision be made for second language learning in all schools backed by genuine political will, to prevent further polarization of attitudes. In addressing the most critical issues that have contributed to the ethnic divide, measures must be sought to effectively counteract the segregation of students in schools by medium of instruction. This can best be fostered in the long-term by students learning each other's language enabling mutual understanding and meaningful cultural exchange.

In the present study, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had opportunities to learn second language in school, but not for a measure of their level of proficiency. The National Youth Survey (2000) requested respondents to indicate their level of proficiency in the three languages, Sinhala, Tamil and English. The level of proficiency in the second language indicated by respondents in the three ethnic groups, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim is shown in Table 8.5 (chapter annexe 8). The percentage of Muslims and Tamils in this national survey who reported good/very good proficiency in second language is 62 and 41 percent respectively whereas only 4 percent of the Sinhalese claimed so (Graph 8.4). In this sample 63 percent of the respondents were in the age category 15 – 19 and were still schooling. This indicates clearly that students reporting they 'sometimes or often' got the opportunity to learn the second language, as did 88 percent of the Sinhalese students in the CESL sample, is no indication that they have proficiency in the language to even verbally communicate with speakers of that language. Unless second language learning and teaching is functional, and proficiency levels are stipulated and tested, the

goals of fostering social cohesion and mutual exchanges through effective second language learning in schools among ethnic groups may continue to remain as mere ideals.

The percentage responses of students in the CESL sample indicating opportunities they have had for second language learning in school and, the responses of the NYS sample indicating their second language proficiency is given in Graph 8.4.
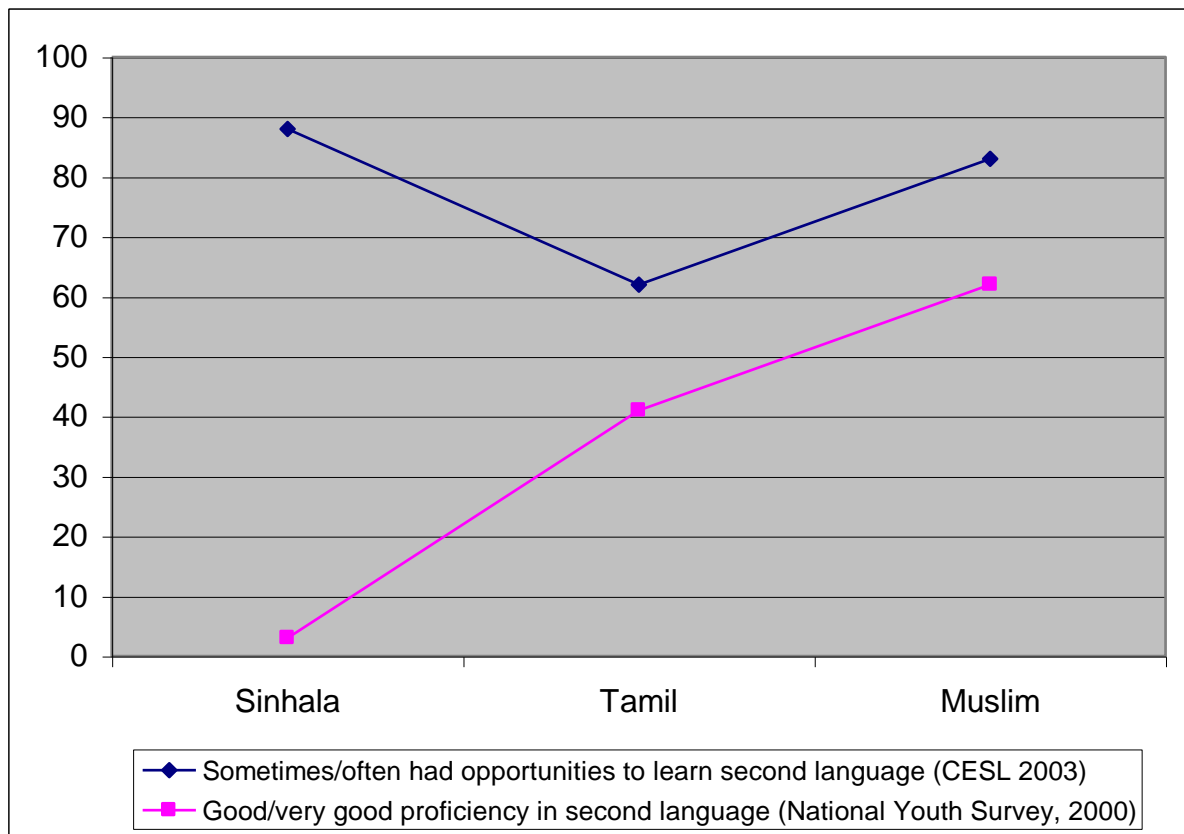

Item	Sinhala	Tamil	Muslim
Sometimes/often had opportunities to learn second language (CESL 2003)	88	62	83
Good/very good proficiency in second language (National Youth Survey, 2000)	4	41	62

Graph 8.4: Percentage responses indicating opportunities for second language learning and, proficiency in second language

8.1.2 Opportunities for students of different ethnic groups to learn together in the school system

The responses of students in sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Graph 8.5.
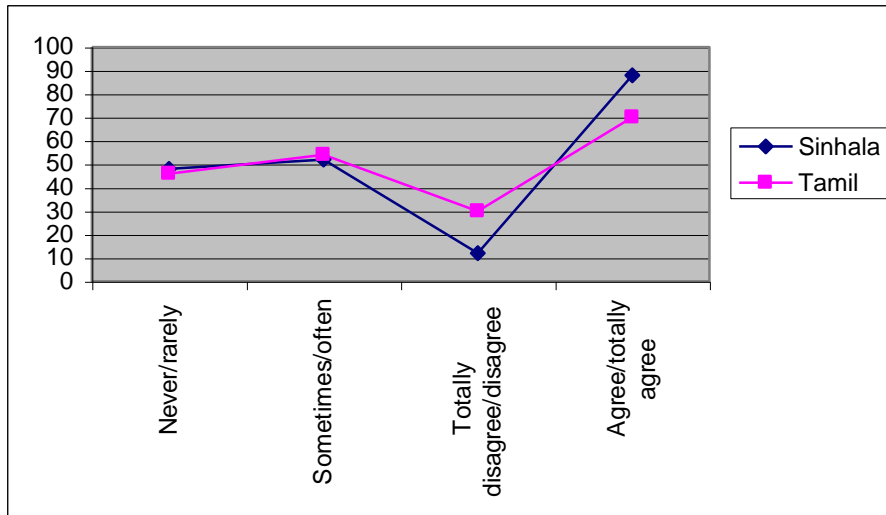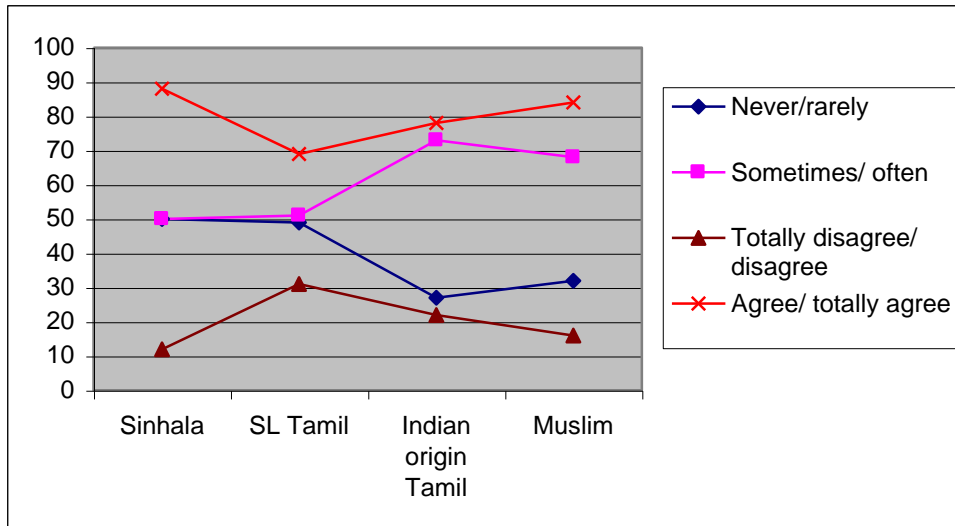
Medium	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/totally agree
Sinhala	48	52	12	88
Tamil	46	54	30	70

Graph 8.5: Students by medium of instruction indicating opportunities to learn together

Nearly a third of all students learning in the Sinhala and Tamil medium streams in this sample have never had the opportunity to learn together with students of other ethnic groups. The percentages are close to 50 percent, when the two response categories never and rarely are aggregated (Graph 8.5).

The responses of students in sample, by ethnicity, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Graph 8.6.
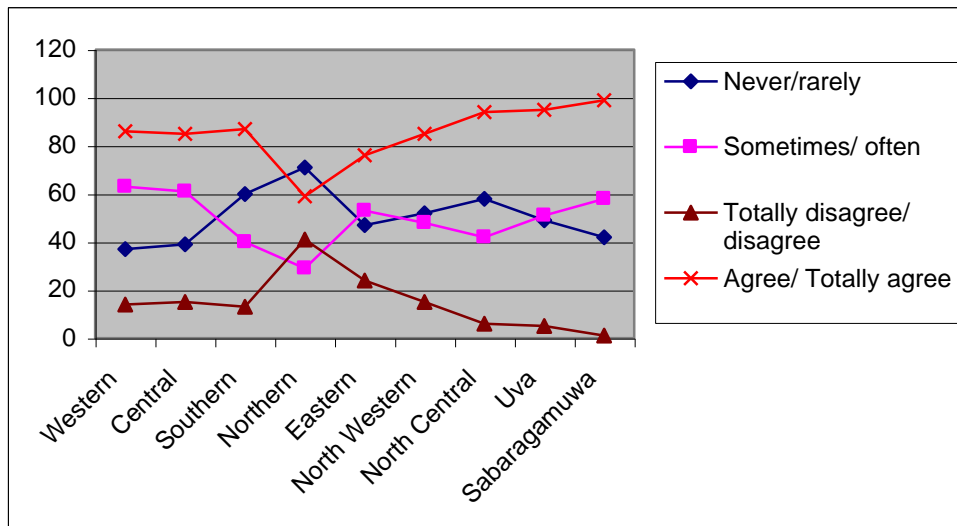
Ethnicity	Never/ rarely	Sometimes/ Often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	50	50	12	88
SL Tamil	49	51	31	69
Indian origin Tamil	27	73	22	78
Muslim	32	68	16	84

Graph 8.6: Students by ethnicity indicating opportunities to learn together

By ethnicity (Graph 8.6, Table 8.7 in chapter annexe 8), the pattern of responses is very similar, with nearly half the students in the two ethnic groups Sinhala and Sri Lankan Tamil indicating they never/rarely had the opportunity to learn together with children of other ethnic groups. The Indian origin Tamil (73 percent) and Muslim (68 percent) students in the sample have had more opportunities to learn together with students of other ethnic groups.

More than half the percentage of students in four provinces (Graph 8.7, Table 8.8 in chapter annexe 8) Northern, Southern, North Central and North Western have never or rarely had this opportunity, followed close upon by 49 and 47 percent respondents in two other provinces Uva and Eastern respectively.

The responses of students in sample, by province, indicating opportunities they have had to learn together with students of other ethnic groups in school are given in Graph 8.7.

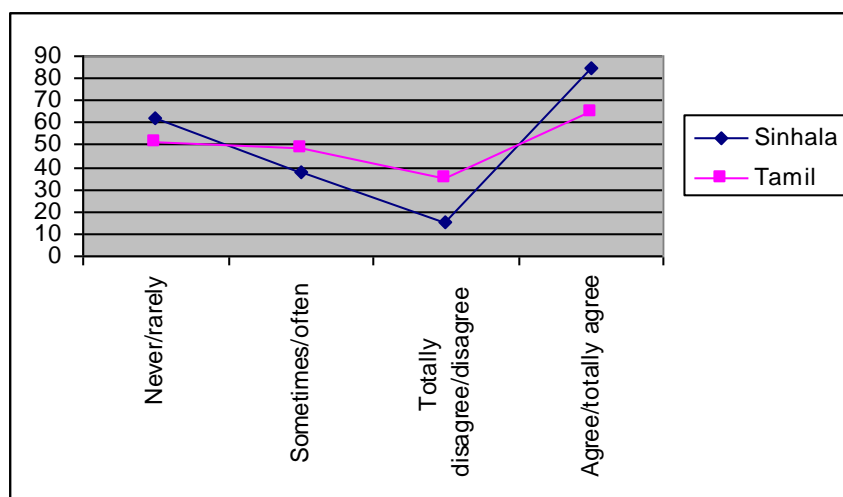| Province	Never/ rarely	Sometimes/ often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ Totally agree
Western	37	63	14	86
Central	39	61	15	85
Southern	60	40	13	87
Northern	71	29	41	59
Eastern	47	53	24	76
North Western	52	48	15	85
North Central	58	42	6	94
Uva	49	51	5	95
Sabaragamuwa	42	58	1	99

Graph 8.7: Students by province indicating opportunities to learn together

In the total sample (Table 8.1), the vast majority of students – 80 percent are in agreement that students should get this opportunity. However, by medium of instruction, ethnicity and province, the pattern that emerges is somewhat similar to the pattern of student responses to the paired items 3, 9 – on opportunities to learn second language. By medium of instruction, the disagreement with the statement that students should get the opportunity to learn together with students from other ethnic groups is higher, in the Tamil medium relative to the Sinhala medium - 30 and 12 percent responses respectively (Graph 8.5); highest disagreement by ethnic group – 31 percent is by Sri Lankan Tamil respondents (Table 8.7 in chapter annexe 8); by province (Table 8.8 in chapter annexe 8), highest percentage disagreement is in the Northern and Eastern provinces, 41 and 24 percent respectively. The polarization of attitudes in students as young as 14 years of age no doubt is patterned on the attitudinal stance in the social milieu that nurtures them. It reflects the pervasive resistance to national integration and social cohesion, which needs to be addressed realistically if the educationally relevant goal of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity are to be realized.

8.1.3 Opportunities in school for students of different ethnic groups to exchange ideas

If the educationally relevant goals of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity are to be realized, school should ideally be a venue and forum for discourse and exchange of ideas among students of different ethnic groups. Conditional to the prevailing limitations to opportunities for students from the different ethnic groups to learn together, and the attitudinal stance of students themselves to the proposition that such opportunities should be available, the data from their responses to the paired items 5 and 11 can be interpreted. Tables 8.1 (p.109), Tables 8.9, 8.10, 8.11 in chapter annexe 8 and, Graphs 8.8, 8.9, 8.10 respectively present the data as appropriate, to facilitate such analysis.

The responses of students in sample, by medium of instruction, indicating opportunities they have had to exchange ideas in school with students of other ethnic groups, for example on the ethnic issue, are given in Graph 8.8.
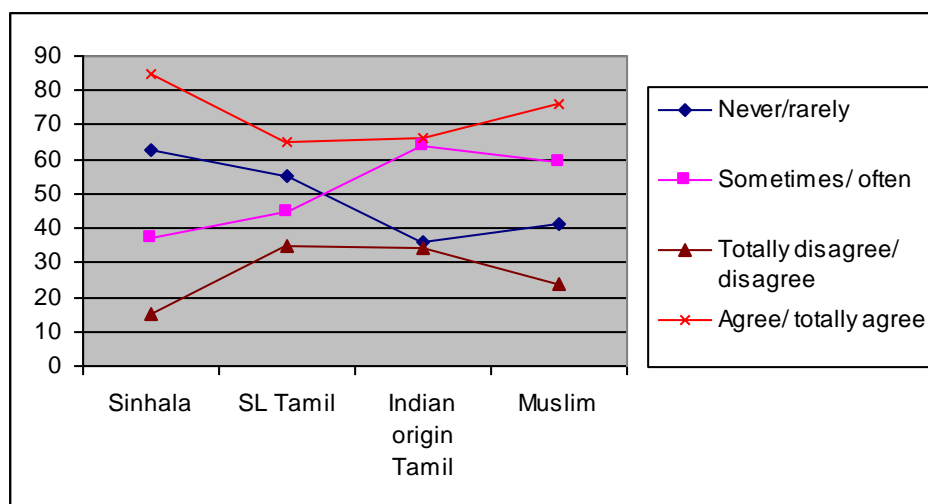

Medium	Never/rarely	Sometimes/often	Totally disagree/disagree	Agree/totally agree
Sinhala	62	38	15	85
Tamil	51	49	35	65

Graph 8.8: Students by medium of instruction indicating opportunities to exchange ideas
The responses of the total sample of students to items 5 and 10 respectively are given in Table 8.1a (chapter annexe 8). The data indicates that 41 percent agree/totally agree that they sometimes/often have had opportunities to discuss openly and exchange ideas with students of other ethnic groups in school, for example on the ethnic problems in Sri Lanka. Also, that 80 percent agree/totally agree students should get this opportunity in school. By medium of instruction 62 percent Sinhala medium students relative to 51 percent Tamil medium students (Graph 8.8, Table 8.9 in chapter annexe 8) indicate that they never or rarely engaged in such

exchange of ideas. A higher percentage of Sinhala medium students relative to Tamil medium students agree that they should get opportunities to do so.
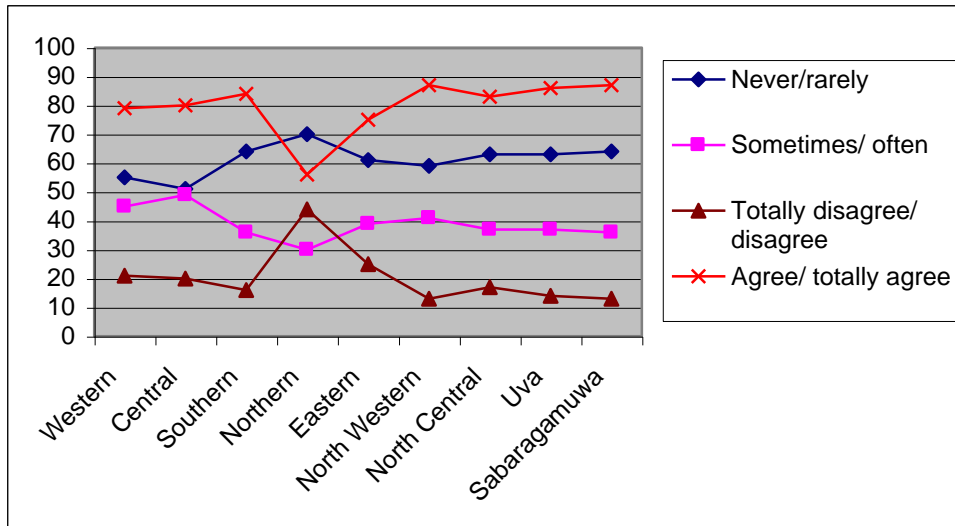
By ethnicity (Table 8.10), the highest agreement with the statement that students should get the opportunity to do so is reported by 85 percent Sinhalese followed by the 76 percent Muslim students. In the other two communities too, the percentage agreement with this statement is high, 66 and 65 percent respectively (Graph 8.9).

Ethnicity	Never/rarely	Sometimes/ often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Sinhala	63	37	15	85
SL Tamil	55	45	35	65
Indian origin Tamil	36	64	34	66
Muslim	41	59	24	76

Graph 8.9: Students by ethnicity indicating opportunities to exchange ideas

The data by province (Table 8.11 in chapter annexe 8) indicates that in all 9 provinces, a majority of the students have never or rarely engaged in open discussions with their peers from other ethnic groups, on national issues of critical concern such as the ethnic conflict. It is noteworthy that the Northern province indicates the highest - 70 percent agreement in the combined response category that students never or rarely had such opportunities and also records the highest disagreement - 44 percent in the combined response category that such opportunities should be available to students, thus reflecting the extent of polarization of attitudes, mistrust and alienation.

Province	Never/rarely	Sometimes/ often	Totally disagree/ disagree	Agree/ totally agree
Western	55	45	21	79
Central	51	49	20	80
Southern	64	36	16	84
Northern	70	30	44	56
Eastern	61	39	25	75
North Western	59	41	13	87
North Central	63	37	17	83
Uva	63	37	14	86
Sabaragamuwa	64	36	13	87

Graph 8.10: Students by province indicating opportunities to exchange ideas

8.1.4 Responses of students to paired items 6/12, 7/13, 8/14

The three pairs of items, 6/12, 7/13, 8/14 request students' agreement on statements regarding opportunities to engage in co-curricular/cultural activities sponsored by school and, as pen-friends with students of other ethnic groups that would result in associations of a more informal nature being forged among them.

The responses of students to the three sets of paired statements on opportunities to engage jointly with students of other ethnic groups in leisure time activities, to participate in activities such as ethnic group festivals and to associate as pen friends is given in Graph 8.11.
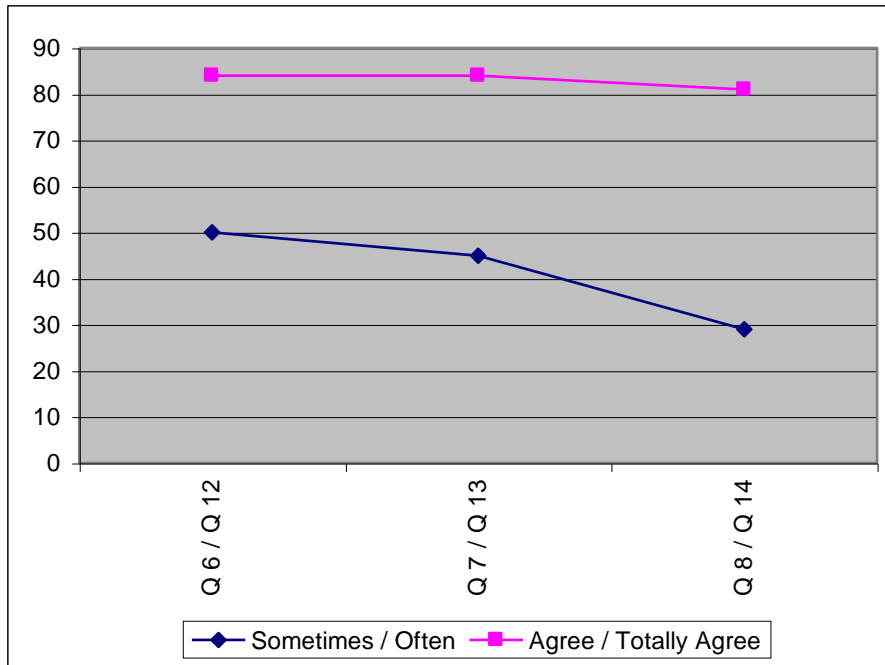
|	Sometimes/ Often %	Agree/ totally agree %
6/12	50	84
7/13	45	84
8/14	29	81

Graph 8.11: Agreement of total student sample with statements in items 6/12, 7/13, 8/14

The student responses to these three sets of paired items, as reported in Table 8.12 (chapter annexe 8) indicate that relatively few have associated as pen friends with children of other ethnic groups. Even in events that are traditionally sponsored by schools such as trips, festivals and competitions, many never or rarely had the opportunity to forge informal associations with children of other ethnic groups whereas the vast majority in the total sample agree that students should get the opportunity to do so. It is mostly when students of different ethnic groups study together in schools that they get these opportunities. However, in schools where the student composition is mono-ethnic or, if students are segregated in classrooms by medium of instruction, opportunities for relationships being fostered among students from different ethnic groups are limited or non-existent.

8.1.5 Responses of students to items 1, 2, 15, 16

The two questions 1 and 2 were asked to investigate opportunities students have had to forge relationships with members of other ethnic groups as peers and family friends. Questions 15 and 16 solicited their agreement with the statements that students should get opportunities to spend

time informally with peers of other ethnic groups studying in other parts of the country, and to reside in their houses while on such visits. The findings are reported in Graph 8.12.
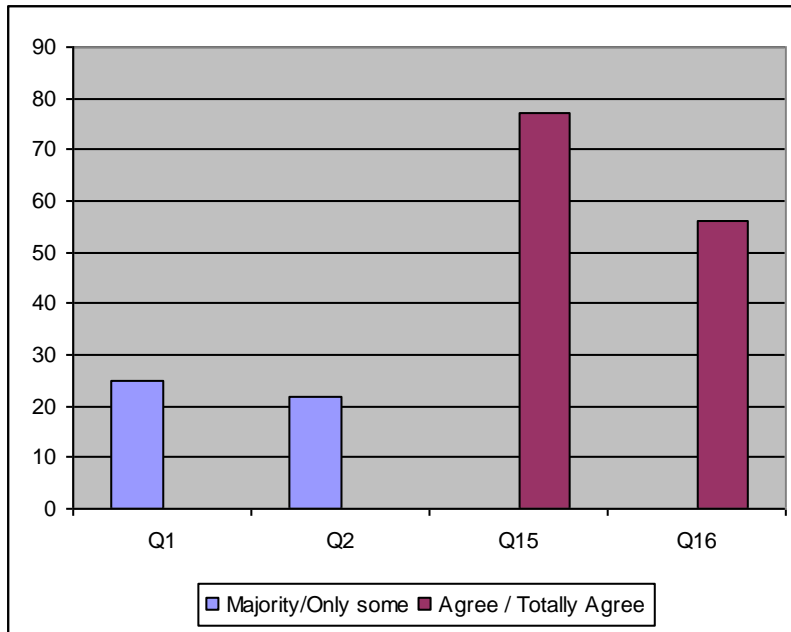
	Majority/Only some	Agree / Totally Agree
Q1	25	-
Q2	22	-
Q15	-	77
Q16	-	56

Graph.8.12: Percentage responses of students to items 1, 2, 15, 16

In the 16 item scale on social cohesion, items 1/2, and 15/16 were designed to probe the existing pattern of relationships relative to what was considered as desirable by student respondents. The data in Table 8.13 (in chapter annexe 8) indicates that a majority of students do not have children of other ethnic groups in their close groups of friends; neither do they get this opportunity, through their circle of family friends. The opportunity to spend time informally with students of other ethnic groups studying in other parts of the country was considered desirable by the vast majority of students although some were not as enthusiastic about residing in the homes of children they were to spend time with. The responses of the majority of students in the total sample to statements focusing on mutual relationships are quite positive. A sample of students from the Northern, Eastern and North Central province who had responded to the student questionnaire and with whom focus group discussions were conducted, enthusiastically endorsed the suggestion that such opportunities should be provided to children in all parts of the country.

8.2 Student perceptions on gender rights and equality

The perceptions of students on gender rights and equality were probed in Part 3 of the student questionnaire and items that focus on gender but appear in a number of different scales are presented together in this section. In the test section (Part 1) of the student questionnaire, two items, Q 3 and Q 13 touched on gender discrimination and gender equality respectively. The relatively low percentage correct responses of the total sample of SL students to these two items was discussed in section 3.1, in Chapter three, on Civic Knowledge.

In section G of the student questionnaire, items G1 – G5 are statements about opportunities women should have relative to men. Items F2 and F7 are statements about the opportunities girls and women in Sri Lanka really do have. In section C on what responsibilities should the government have, item C9 queried students whether ensuring equal opportunities for men and women should or should not be a government responsibility. In section A, in item 16, students were asked to indicate whether it is good or bad for democracy when laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed. The responses of the total sample of students to these items are presented in Table 8.14.

**Table 8.14: Percentage responses of total sample of students to items related to gender rights**

	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
G1	Women should contest elections and take part in the government just as men	5	11	46	38
G2	Women should have the same rights as men in every way	3	14	35	48
G3	Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women	22	34	28	16
G4	When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women	23	35	26	16
G5	Men and women should get equal pay when they are in the same jobs	4	12	36	48
F2	Girls have fewer chances than boys to get a good education	25	37	24	14
F7	Women have fewer chances than men to get good jobs	18	32	31	19
Sec. A	Item	v. bad for democracy	Somewhat bad for democracy	Somewhat good for democracy	Very good for democracy
A16	When laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed that is	26	24	26	24

Item G2 is an inclusive statement on women's rights in general, G5 is on the rights of women to equal pay for same jobs, and G1 is a statement on women's political right to contest elections. All three are stated in relation to men's rights. Over 80 percent of the student respondents are in agreement with all three statements. Although a relatively high percentage - 44 percent agree with the opinion stated in item G3 that men are better qualified than women to be political leaders, 84 percent of the respondents contend that women should contest elections and take part in the government just as men.

In item G4 when the right of women to jobs is stated conditionally - 'when jobs are scarce', 42 percent respondents have agreed that men should have a better right to a job than women. The respondents are equally divided, in both confirming and refuting the statement in item F7, that women have fewer chances than men, to get jobs. Likewise, they are equally divided in their opinion on whether it is good or bad for democracy when laws that women claim are unfair to them are changed (A16).

Some interesting variations in student responses are noted when the responses to the two particularly gender sensitive items G4 and G3 are analyzed by gender and ethnicity.

The majority of girls - 65 and 61 percent disagree with the two statements in G4 and G3. A majority - 51 percent of the boys agree that men should have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce (G4), but are equally divided in their response to G3.
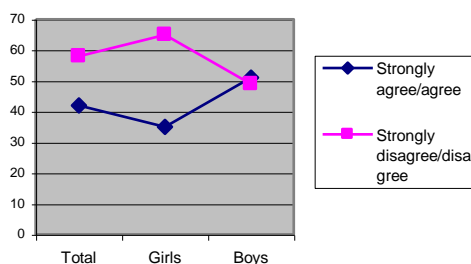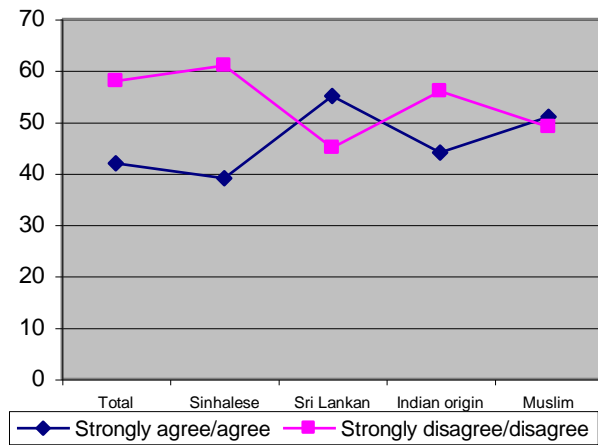

Graph.8.13.1: Item G4 (by gender)

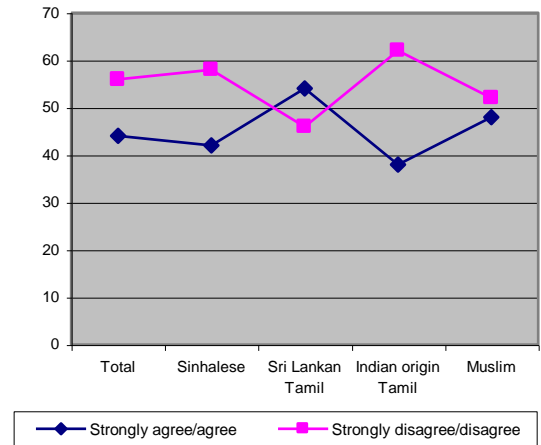| | G4: When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women | |
	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree
Total	42	58
Girls	35	65
Boys	51	49
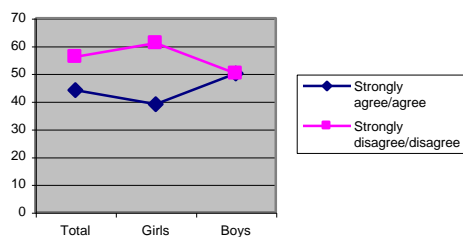
Graph .8.13.2: Item G3 (by gender)

| | G3: Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women | |
	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree
Total	44	56
Girls	39	61
Boys	50	50

Graph .8.13.3: Item G4 (by ethnicity)

Graph 8.13.4: Item G3 (by ethnicity)

| | G4: When jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than women | | G3: Men are better qualified to be political leaders than women | |
	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree	Strongly agree/agree	Strongly disagree/disagree
Total	42	58	44	56
Sinhalese	39	61	42	58
Sri Lankan Tamil	55	45	54	46
Indian origin Tamil	44	56	38	62
Muslim	51	49	48	52

By ethnicity, the Sinhalese (61, 58) and Indian origin Tamil (56, 62), relative to Sri Lankan Tamil (45, 46) students in particular, are less in agreement with these two statements, respectively.

8.3 Student perceptions on rights of ethnic groups

The responses of students to items in Section G that indicate their perceptions on rights of ethnic groups are given in Graph 8.14 and Table 8.15.
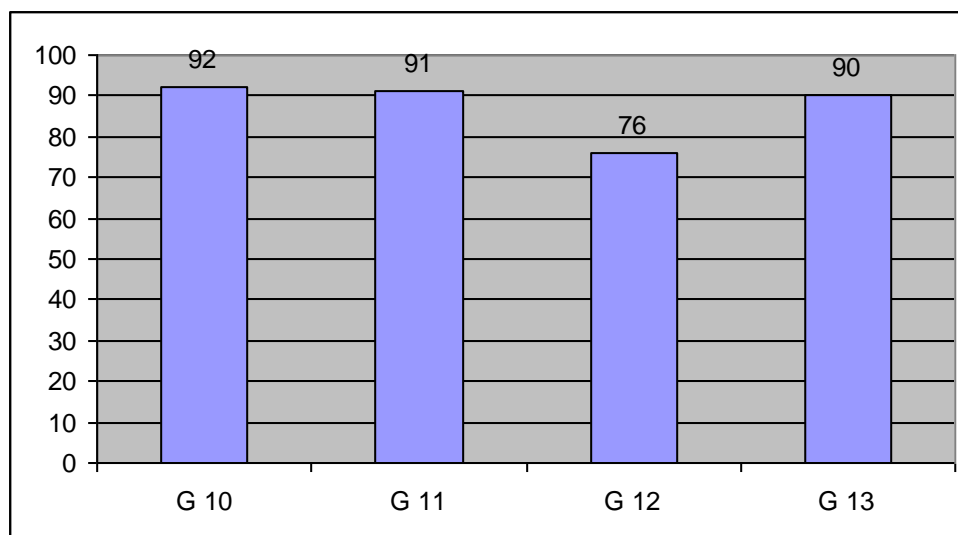
Graph 8.14: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on rights of ethnic groups

Table 8.15: Percentage responses of students indicating their perceptions on rights of ethnic groups

|	Item: All ethnic groups should	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree
G10	…have equal chances to get a good education in this country	08	92
G11	…have equal chances to get good jobs in this country	09	91
G12	…be encouraged to contest elections for political office	24	76
G13	Schools should teach students to respect members of all ethnic groups	10	90

Overall, the responses of the total sample to items G10-G13, on rights of ethnic groups is extremely positive, with percentages of 90 and above in agreement with three of the statements. The percentage response in favor of statement G12 is relatively lower - 76 percent. The vast majority of student respondents are in agreement that members of all ethnic groups should be respected, have equal chances to a good education and good jobs, and be encouraged to contest elections for political office. In the aftermath of 20 years of ethnically oriented civil war in the country it is heartening to note that the younger generation stand by the rights of all citizens irrespective of their ethnicity.

8.4 Student perceptions on rights of internally displaced persons

Section H in the CIVED study was focused on the rights of immigrants, whereas in the CESL study, it focuses on the rights of internally displaced citizens/refugees. Most items in this scale were drawn up to probe the perceptions of student respondents on issues pertaining to internally

displaced citizens in Sri Lanka.   Graph 8.15 gives the response percentages of students to the relevant items in Section H.

Graph 8.15: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons
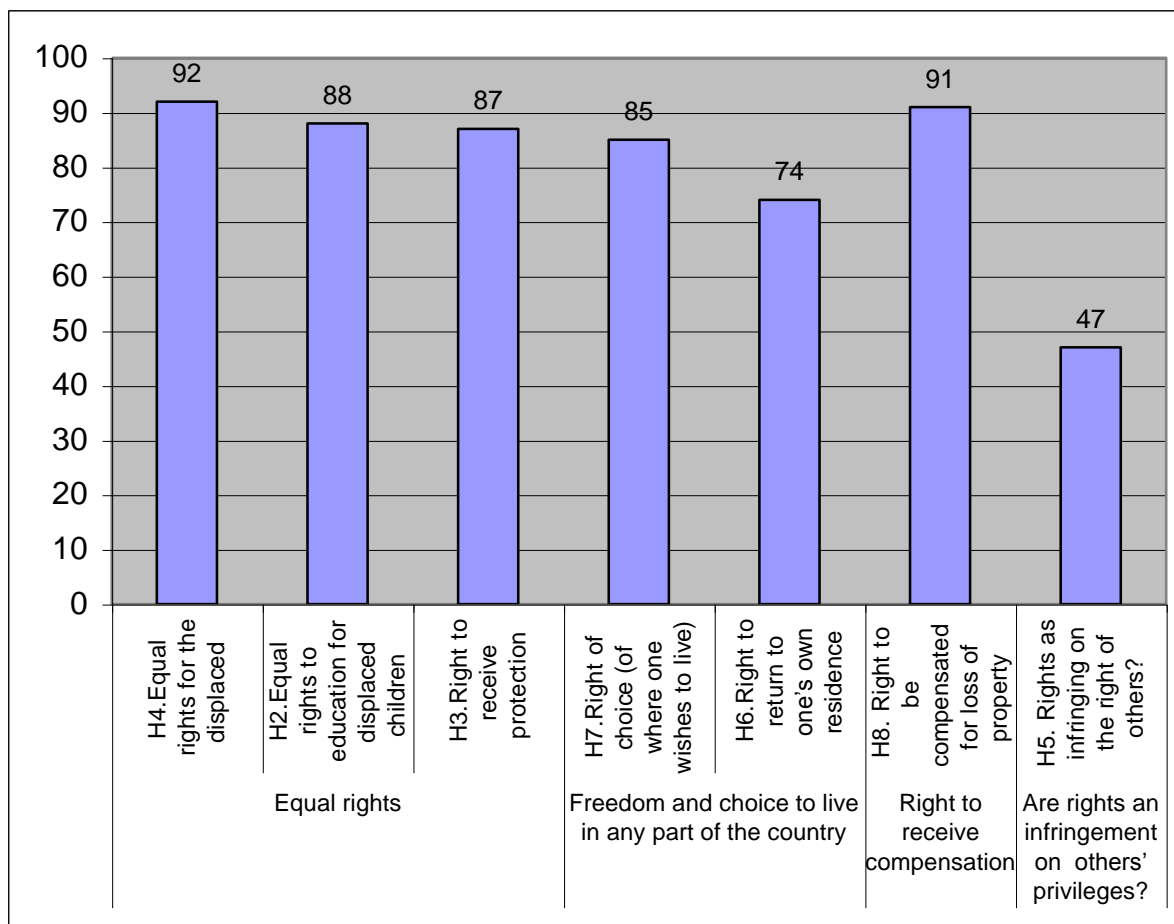
		Agree/ Strongly agree
Equal rights	H4.Equal rights for the displaced	92
	H2.Equal rights to education for displaced children	88
	H3.Right to receive protection	87
Freedom and choice to live in any part of the country	H7.Right of choice (of where one wishes to live)	85
	H6.Right to return to one's own residence	74
Right to receive compensation	H8. Right to be compensated for loss of property	91
Are rights an infringement on others' privileges?	H5. Rights as infringing on the right of Others?	47

Graph 8.15: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons

The perceptions of students are very positive, on rights of internally displaced citizens. The rights of refugee/displaced people to equal rights, of children to equal educational opportunities, to receive protection by being accepted in any part of the country was endorsed by over 80 percent agreement to statements. Students in this sample were equally fair and objective, in considering the more contentious issues of the rights of internally displaced persons to return (item H6), to the decision on whether to return (item H7), their right to compensation (item H8) by the government. Only 47 percent agreed with the opinion stated in item H5 that having many displaced people makes it difficult for people in a region to be united and live peacefully. Overall, the respondents have demonstrated enlightened civic perceptions on the rights of internally displaced persons, irrespective of how contentious the issues may be.

8.5 Student perceptions on rights of members of anti-democratic groups

Some items in Section G solicited student perceptions on the rights of members of anti-democratic groups, a sensitive issue in the context of Sri Lanka. The responses of students to these items are given in Table 8.17.

Table 8.17: Percentage responses indicating students' perceptions on rights of members of anti-democratic groups

	Item: Members of anti-democratic groups should be prohibited from engaging in the following activities	Strongly disagree/ Disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree
G6	Contesting elections for political office	44	56
G7	Making public speeches about their ideas	35	65
G8	Hosting a television show to talk about their ideas	38	62
G9	Organizing peaceful demonstrations or rallies	40	60

The rights of members of anti-democratic groups is a sensitive and contentious issue in Sri Lanka, clouded by disagreement on criteria by which groups in effect are to be categorized as anti-democratic. This state of ambiguity is probably what is reflected in the responses of student to this set of items. A majority of the respondents to all four items agree that 'anti-democratic groups' should be prohibited from contesting elections for political office, making public speeches about their ideas and hosting television shows for the same purpose, and even organizing peaceful demonstrations and rallies. However, the percentage of respondents disagreeing that anti-democratic groups should be prohibited from engaging in activities stated in these items, is relatively high.

8.6   Summary

The findings in section 8.1, based on a detailed analysis of data obtained using the country specific scale on social cohesion, point to some significant school system related factors that constrain the achievement of educationally relevant goals of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity.   If the process of schooling is to contribute to social cohesion   the inadequacies and disparities in opportunities for second language learning for students from the different ethnic groups to learn together; to exchange ideas; for more informal interactions and cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding are issues that need to be addressed urgently. The polarization of attitudes based on ethnicity is an indication that the school system has not been sufficiently proactive and effective in facilitating social cohesion through the various processes it has in its command to do so, such as providing equal opportunities for second language learning.   The redeeming feature in the findings however is that the majority of students are positively oriented towards participation in processes that will contribute to social cohesion, if opportunities are provided in the school system.

In Section 8.2, the findings on gender rights and equality indicate that the vast majority of students in Sri Lanka take a firm positive stand on equal rights for men and women, when presented as ideals.   However, when issues of equality for men and women are presented in contexts such as job scarcity, a partiality towards men on the part of males in particular is noted. In the international CIVED study, a similar pattern of findings is reported. While generalizing that "the average 14 year old is more likely to have a positive than a negative attitude toward rights for women" (p.185), it states that "a very substantial gender difference in support for women's rights continues to exist" (p. 186). Another pertinent finding in the international study is that in the endorsement of rights and opportunities for women, relatively low scores are indicated in several countries facing economic difficulty (p. 183).

The findings in the CIVED study indicate that particular groups experiencing discrimination differ between nations – immigrants in many countries, but also, racial, linguistic and religious groups among others (p.183).   A positive feature in the findings of the CESL study is that students stand by the rights of all citizens, irrespective of their ethnicity, particular status as internally displaced citizens or, as members of anti-democratic groups.