FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.0   Introduction

The findings and recommendations of the Civic Education – Sri Lanka study are presented in the two sections in this chapter. A synopsis of the key findings as summarized in the last section in each of the chapters 2-8 are presented in section 9.1 Based on the findings, broad recommendations have been made for education strategies and activities to promote the competencies that the education system seeks to develop in students, in section 9.2.

The government of Sri Lanka is committed to developing a comprehensive long-term program to promote democratic and pluralistic values through the school education system. A credible base of evidence on the status of civic and democratic competencies in school children is fundamental to facilitation of the achievement of this national objective. An assessment of the status of democratic and civic competencies of a sample of secondary school students and an analysis of the school and out-of-school factors that impact on the development of democratic and pluralistic civic values was therefore considered particularly timely, in response to which the present CESL study was conducted.

The need to research the civic related student learning outcomes of the 1997 reforms, and for comprehensive and national level research in Sri Lanka on more generalized student learning outcomes of civic education gained in the school and classroom and, home and out of school contexts has been focused on, to inform civic instruction in formal classroom contexts as well as in out of school contexts.

A credible base of evidence on the status of civic and democratic competencies in school children is fundamental to facilitation of the achievement of this national objective.

The broad objective of the present research study on civic education, based on the Civic Education Study conducted in 28 countries in 1998 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), is to assess the democratic and civic competencies of a national sample of 14 year old Grade 9 students, and analyze the data by selected variables such as school type, medium of instruction, gender and ethnicity, relative to international student norms. An investigation of the attitudes and perceptions of students on peace and social cohesion in the national context was a special focus of this research study.

The sampling frame for this national study was all schools in Sri Lanka that have Grade 9 classes, other than schools categorized as international schools. The sample comprises of 133 schools representative of all 9 provinces and 25 districts island-wide, stratified by school type and total number of students in grade 9 classes by district. The sample of schools comprises of 44 1AB, 46 1C, 35 Type 2 and 8 Private schools, of which 90 were Sinhala Medium, 19 Tamil Medium and 24 Bi-Media (Sinhala and Tamil) schools. The actual samples of students, teachers and principals comprises of 2655 students, 265 teachers and 132 principals.

The three instruments of data collection comprises of a student questionnaire, teacher questionnaire and school questionnaire, adapted from the three original questionnaires used in the international Civic Education Study and translated to Sinhala and Tamil. The student questionnaire comprises of three main sections, a test section to assess students' civic knowledge, a section for background data and, a section comprising of items on concepts, attitude and behavior. For purposes of this study, a special country specific section on social cohesion and peace was also presented, in the student questionnaire.

The teacher questionnaire is divided into 5 parts, on teachers' work experience and education, their views on civic education, civic education related subjects, activities and lessons, on instruction and learning goals. The school questionnaire administered to principals of schools solicited information on principals' work experience and education,

views on civic education, school climate related attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of students, teachers and parents.

Data collection was by trained research assistants. The data collection exercise was conducted in most schools in November 2003 and, in the second week of January 2004 in the remaining schools. Computer data entry and analysis was by the National Education Research and Evaluation Centre (NEREC), with statistical consultancy provided by a statistician from the Department of Census and Statistics. In the presentation and analysis of data appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods has been adopted.

9.1   The findings of the CESL study

9.1.1   Findings on Civic Knowledge of students

9.1.1.1   The achievement of Sri Lankan students in civic knowledge, content and skills is lower, in general, relative to the achievement of international students in the CIVED study, as assessed by a comparison of the respective mean scores of the 16 test items. The test items are in six categories and the SL students' achievement is lower by the composite mean scores for the six categories. The SL students have fared poorly in items that test their interpretive skills in particular. A recurring critique of the learning teaching process in schools in the national system in Sri Lanka has been that acquisition of content knowledge takes precedence over students' analytical skills development. The need to engage students more in learning activities that call upon their thinking, interpretive, discrimination and related skills has been reiterated over time, for e.g. in Chief Examiners' reports of the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level and Advanced Level examinations. The need to challenge students' critical thinking in focused, practical learning contexts is highlighted, in the findings on student performance in the 'test' section.

9.1.1.2 The students' civic mean scores by selected school variables has highlighted the differences in student achievement by school type and medium of instruction, which has been a consistent finding in national level research studies and, in student achievement in public examinations such as the General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level and Advanced Level examinations.

The 1AB and Private schools in the sample have a 10 percentage points' lead in the civic knowledge mean score of 61 respectively, over the school type - 1C schools with the next higher mean score of 51. The comparable mean score of the Type 2 schools is 47. The mean scores in civic knowledge, civic content and civic skills respectively of 61, 68 and 52 (of 1AB schools) and 61, 67 and 53 (of Private schools) compare well with the international mean scores of 65, 70 and 58. The challenge therefore is to bring the 1C and Type 2 schools to the level of 1AB schools. Likewise, the medium-wise difference in achievement needs to be addressed urgently.

9.1.1.3 In the analysis of SL students' mean scores by memberships and participation in organizations, a positive correlation is shown between the variables. The finding therefore is that memberships in organizations and active participation devoting a fair percentage of time each month to activities conducted by organizations is positively correlated with civic achievement scores.

9.1.1.4 By demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity and religion, there is a significant difference in test mean scores of students. By gender the males, by ethnicity the Muslims and the Sinhalese and by religion, the Buddhists have scored relatively higher.

9.1.1.5 The selected out of school variables, particularly home literacy and, family and home environment variables were found to correlate positively with mean scores.

Students in whose homes there were more books, whose parents' educational qualifications were G.C.E.A.L or higher, and students who expected to continue studies till they obtained a degree or the necessary qualifications for employment, had higher mean scores than others.

Likewise, students from smaller families had higher mean scores than those from relatively large families.

Students who spend a reasonable amount of time with friends after school and, engage in TV/Video viewing - even fairly heavily on school days - record higher mean scores than those who do so very sparingly.

Home literacy, family and home environment, time spent with friends and, in using media clearly impact on civic knowledge of students.

9.1.2 Findings on the school and classroom context of civic knowledge

The findings on the school and classroom context of civic knowledge are based on both the review of related literature and empirical data gathered for purposes of the present research, from questionnaires administered to teachers, Principals of schools and students in the sample.

9.1.2.1 It is noted that the attempt since 1972 to impart civic education through curriculum integration has failed to bring about the expected integration and the desired learning outcomes. The 'curriculum integration' is recorded as being aborted at implementation level and, learning outcomes critiqued as unsatisfactory.

9.1.2.2 The failure in translating the aims of education to contribute to the development of good citizens and caring individuals with exemplary character and values reflected in policy statements and official documents in the 1980s and 1990s in particular is commented on strongly by the National Education Commission. The indictment that education has failed adequately to promote quality in education and relevance in terms of social stability, national unity and human values is a strong critique on civic instruction in classrooms. The lack of civic and social responsibility is considered as pointing to lacunae in the curriculum and in the activities in the 'hidden curriculum' that pervades the social climate of the school.

9.1.2.3 The findings on coverage of secondary school civic related curriculum, the importance accorded to a list of 20 topics by teachers, their level of confidence in teaching these topics, and the opportunities Grade nine students have had to study these topics as indicated by teachers, provide a contextual basis for the identification of curriculum areas that need to be strengthened, in both coverage and in teacher training.

9.1.2.4 The model that integrates civic education into other social sciences is the most popular among teachers, in indicating how civic education should be taught. The support for civic education as its own subject is overshadowed by teachers' support for the integration model, which may be a reflection of the familiarity of teachers with the status quo in Sri Lanka, for over three decades.

9.1.2.5 The more important finding is that teachers strongly affirm that schools are places where civic education ought to be taught and can be taught effectively. For large proportions of teacher respondents, civic education matters a great deal in facilitating students' civic development and teachers therefore fulfill an important role in their country.

9.1.2.6 Teachers believe that agreement on what is worth learning in civic education is possible although tending to doubt societal consensus. The great majority stress official curriculum as points of orientation, but this orientation does not stand in the way of teachers' willingness to negotiate with students over what is to be studied in civic education.

9.1.2.7   Teachers agree that students learn in school to understand people, to cooperate, to solve problems, to protect the environment, to develop concern about the country and to know the importance of voting. In general, teachers in Sri Lanka seem to favor inculcating the more conventional forms of political allegiance and participation over attitudes and skills that imply a more activist stance, in the future citizens they teach.

9.1.2.8 Teachers in Sri Lanka reportedly draw both from externally generated materials such as official curriculum and textbooks and, from internally generated materials such as teachers' own ideas and self-generated materials, in preparation for teaching.

9.1.2.9 The three need areas that teachers in Sri Lanka prioritized to improve civic related subject teaching were additional training in subject matter knowledge, in teaching methods, and better materials and textbooks. One contrast in the findings of the international study is that in many countries, teachers' more urgent needs refer to core activities of the subject, and more strongly to concerns relating to content than to instructional methods.

9.1.2.10 The teaching learning methodologies used more frequently in civic education classrooms in Sri Lanka are teacher and didactic teaching focused than learner initiated and inquiry based learning focused. Student interactive approaches are used sparingly. In classrooms across the countries participating in the international CIVED study too, the findings were similar. A redeeming feature however, is that across countries, teachers testify to a fairly frequent occurrence of discussions of controversial issues in their civic education classrooms.

9.1.2.11 The methods of assessment used in civic education classrooms too were similar, such as written compositions, oral participation and multiple-choice tests.

9.1.2.12 In Sri Lanka, students were inclined towards proactive participation in school life. They also had very positive perceptions on their own capacity to bring about change and to democratize the way schools function, by participation in groups in particular, in the life of the school.

However, aside from engaging in problem solving - such as cooperating with teachers to solve problems of discipline, resolving problems among students, between teachers and students and school problems in general, the participation of students in the political life of the school is minimal.

Making provision for student participation in the political life of the school in a responsible and accountable manner than the minimal participation indicated, accompanied by empowerment of students to decide for themselves, may facilitate schools transform into democratic institutions promoting self-governance on the part of students.

9.1.2.13 Negative behaviors such as truancy, bullying, vandalism and violence occur sometimes in more than half the schools in sample. In addressing student negative behaviors, students' active participation as responsible members of the school community, to bring pressure on peers who engage in these deviant behaviors is suggested.

The opportunities schools provide for meaningful participation, self-government and respect for rights are among the factors potentially influencing students' attitudes and behaviors, as school citizens and, of society outside.

9.1.2.14 The school climate for learning as reflected in students' and teachers' attitudes, and in parental involvement, is positive and supportive of academic achievement.

9.1.3 Findings on Students' concepts of Democracy Citizenship and Government

9.1.3.1 The findings on SL students' concepts of democracy, citizenship and government in general compare well with findings in the CIVED study and are consistent with the pattern of responses of the INT student sample.

9.1.3.2 On the concept of democracy, citizens' freedom to express opinions, free elections, strong civil society in the form of organizations are attributes that the sample of students in the CIVED study and the vast majority of SL students believe to be good for democracy.

Likewise, attributes that are judged to be bad for democracy by strong consensus across countries, in the CIVED study, such as monopoly newspaper ownership, political influence in the judicial sphere, and special influence by the wealthy on the government are similarly judged by the SL student respondents.

9.1.3.3 On the concept of citizenship, across countries, the items relating to participation in social movement groups were more likely to be endorsed as important for citizenship than conventional citizenship activities. The findings in the CESL study is that both social movement related participation and conventional political activities are included in the SL students' concept of good citizenship for adults, with more importance accorded to voting than to activities that imply conflict of opinions such as joining a political party ad engaging in political discussions.

9.1.3.4 On the concept of government, the findings of both the CIVED and CESL studies are very similar. Only a very small percentage of the students in both studies say that

economy and society related activities definitely should not be the government's responsibility. In general, 14 year olds are more likely to think of societal items rather than economic items as the government's responsibility. In the responses of the SL students, there are signs that with the young, the concept of an open economy is gaining ground over the strongly held protectionist affiliation to the concept of welfare state.

9.1.4 Findings on current and expected participation in political action

9.1.4.1 SL students are more interested in national than in international politics, and are more likely to discuss national and international politics with parents/family members and peers than with teachers.

9.1.4.2 The vast majority of students are familiar with the most crucial national political agenda, the peace talks and matters related.

9.1.4.3 A little over half the respondents consider themselves politically interested and knowledgeable, although how superficial their understanding is, of national politics, was evident in focus group discussions conducted with students.

9.1.4.4 Television is the media most used by students to obtain news, in preference to radio news broadcasts and the newspapers. In indicating trust in media, students' response patterns in the two studies were similar.

9.1.4.5 Other than voting in elections, the majority of SL and INT students do not envisage more direct political participation such as contesting elections or joining a political party. However, they expect to participate in social movement activities such as volunteering time to help the poor and collect money for social causes, and approximately half the students would even join in non-violent protest marches. Few would engage in unconventional illegal activities, with 'spray painting protest slogans on walls' being the most preferred of the illegal activities listed.

9.1.5   Findings on trust in institutions

9.1.5.1   The trust indicated by students in the CESL sample relative to comparable data from the CIVED study and, the NYS (2000) indicate that, a higher percentage of SL students have trust in the government-related institutions listed. Fourteen year-olds across countries including Sri Lanka are moderately trusting of their government institutions. Courts and the Police are trusted the most, followed by national and local governments. In contrast, political parties are trusted very little. As they grow older, more Sri Lankan youth seem to lose some of the trust in institutions than they indicate, at fourteen years of age.

9.1.5.2   In almost all the participating countries, including Sri Lanka, the average young person seems to have a sense of trust or attachment either to the country as a political community or to government institutions or both and, a positive sense of national identity.

A higher percentage of Sri Lankan students relative to students in the international sample have responded positively to most items in the scales on national identity and, international relations.

Given the trend in the country for young adults in particular to seek greener pastures elsewhere, and the degree of disillusionment evident among citizens in general the attitudes of fourteen-year olds are promising and signal hopes for the future.

9.1.6 Findings on Social Cohesion

The findings 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.

9.1.6.1 The inadequacy of 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, if the process of schooling is to contribute to social cohesion.

9.1.6.2 The polarization of attitudes based on ethnicity, on the part of students, 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.

9.1.6.3 The redeeming feature in the findings 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.

9.1.6.4 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 difficulties (p. 183).

9.1.6.5 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.

9.2 Recommendations of the CESL Study

9.2.1 Facilitation of outcomes based civic instruction in the school system

The failure to effectively impart civic instruction through the integrated subject Social Studies, a reform in place since 1972 is well documented, alongside a strong critique on civic instruction in classrooms. The decision to re-introduce civics as a subject in its own right, beginning in Grade 7 in 2005 and subsequently in other secondary grades is intended to address the lacunae in the curriculum and to bring about the desired behavioral outcomes of civics instruction in the school system. The government of Sri Lanka is strongly committed to the development of good citizens and caring individuals with exemplary character and values, and it is envisaged that these objectives will be achieved through the subject Civics in the secondary school curriculum.

The evaluations conducted on the effectiveness of reforms implementation in Sri Lanka indicate clearly that curriculum reforms and good intentions alone will not produce the expected student learning outcomes. The magnitude of the task envisaged and the desired transformation is Herculean, in the aftermath of more than two decades of war and destruction of the very social fabric of life in Sri Lanka. **School is but a microcosm of the wider society which should also mirror the desired transformation**. It is futile to expect the school system to produce norms, values and practices that are very different from those obtaining in the society at large, **for significant structural and ideological changes cannot realistically be undertaken at the level of the system of education alone**.

9.2.1.1 The re-introduction of Civics, History and Geography in the secondary school curriculum alone will therefore not result in the desired learning outcomes. Through cross-curricular integration and co-curricular activities, schools should strengthen the promotion of civic instruction related student learning outcomes. Teacher training should be

prioritized, if teachers are to proactively facilitate the desired transformation. The initiatives being promoted by the Peace Education Unit of the Ministry of Education should be part of the integrated school level development plans. Lessons learnt in other countries and systems, particularly success stories in conflict-affected societies should inform local school level initiatives. All this should ideally be undertaken in parallel with comprehensive wider-society initiatives to ensure that society is in balance with itself.

9.2.2 Assessment of learning outcomes of civic instruction in the school system

9.2.2.1 Performance indicators of achievement of Sri Lankan students in civic knowledge, attitudes and skills should be spelled out in assessable terms, for all grades in the school system including the three Key Stages at the primary level. If the competencies to be assessed at each grade level and the performance indicators are carefully designed and spelled out in terms of behavioral outcomes that can be assessed, and prototype assessment measures and tools are developed, the tracking of competency development and attainment over the general education cycle will be facilitated.

9.2.2.2 This activity should ideally be undertaken in parallel with curriculum development for civic education, with attention to across the curriculum integration, indicating civic competencies to be assessed in school based assessments conducted in the subject Civics and in other civic related subjects such as History, Geography, Languages and Religion.

9.2.2.3 In drawing up the lists of competencies for each grade level the National Institute of Education should work in collaboration with the Peace Education Unit (PEU) of the Ministry of Education, to ensure the assessment of student learning outcomes of co-curricular activities proposed for the school system by the PEU specifically to bring about social cohesion and to foster peace through intra and inter school activities.

9.2.3 Improving student learning outcomes

9.2.3.1 The disparities in student achievement both in knowledge of content and in skills by school type and medium of instruction focuses on the urgent need to address proactively this recurring school system phenomenon that has persisted over time as reported in numerous assessments of student learning outcomes.   As part of an on-going national level initiative to promote school based management, school committees are to be assisted to draw up their own school development plans, in two education zones in each province selected for piloting this initiative.   Improvement of student learning outcomes should be accorded priority, in such development planning, informed by an in-depth investigation of factors impacting on student achievement.   **Students' learning outcomes in respect of civic values and social cohesion should be one target area focused on in the school development plans**.

9.2.3.2 One significant finding in this study is the positive correlation of students' membership in organizations with their civic achievement scores. **Encouraging and enabling student participation in organizations both in school and community should be targeted**, in comprehensive national level planning for the development of civic values, in fostering national integration through the school system, and, in school level development planning.   **Fostering student initiatives to set up their own youth organizations, and to design and conduct innovative programs at inter and intra school level** will contribute significantly to the achievement of these national educational objectives.

9.2.3.3 The statistically significant differences in students' civic achievement by demographic variables such as gender and ethnicity is a finding that needs to be investigated further, by more in-depth analysis of the CESL study data, to identify school system related factors if any that contribute to these differences in achievement. **The system should ensure that there is no bias or discrimination by gender, ethnicity or other demographic variables and that equal opportunities are provided to all students**.

9.2.3.4 That home literacy and family and home environment variables correlate with students' learning outcomes is a recurrent finding in many previous research studies that has shown itself in the present study too. **Schools should provide the necessary enrichment**

and motivation to overcome the limitations imposed by home literacy, family and home environment factors. Likewise, the **school should encourage students' meaningful interaction with friends in learning and other contexts, and their judicious use of media both in the learning teaching process in school and at home**, for spending time with friends after school and use of media correlate positively with high civic mean scores.

9.2.4. Continuing education and training of teachers

9.2.4.1 The findings of the present study are significant, for teacher training. **In the continuing education of teachers, the upgrading of content knowledge should be given priority**, for the level of confidence they expressed, in teaching some of the topics listed calls for strengthening of teachers' content knowledge. **Additional training in subject matter knowledge** was the first priority indicated by teachers in Sri Lanka, to improve civic related subject teaching. **Better materials and textbooks** are teachers' third priority, indicating that to extend student learning teachers as well as students should have access to resources of good quality.

9.2.4.2 The analysis of the mean scores obtained by Sri Lankan students, in the test of civic knowledge indicated that they are poor in interpretive skills, relative to the international student sample. A recurring critique of the learning teaching process in schools in the national system in Sri Lanka is that acquisition of content knowledge takes precedence over students' analytical skills development. **It is critically important to train teachers to design and manage the learning teaching process with focus on students' skills development, by engaging students in interactive learning activities that exercise their thinking, interpretive, discrimination and related skills**.

9.2.4.3 A finding in the present study is that in general, teachers in Sri Lanka seem to favor inculcating the more conventional forms of political allegiance and participation over attitudes and skills that imply a more activist stance, in the future citizens they teach. The level of violence, injustice, inequality and irrationality that is tolerated in contemporary Sri Lankan society indicates that democracy and fair-play have been reduced to mere technical

concepts deprived of meaning and context. **The teachers in imparting civic instruction should engage constructively in social activism, and to enable them to play such a role, teachers should be facilitated to engage in reflective analysis, individually and with colleagues, in training sessions**. Both teachers and students report that controversial issues are discussed in classrooms; **in the process of training, the skills teachers need to design and manage such interactive classroom sessions to maximum effect must be developed.**

9.2.4.4 The teaching learning methodologies used more frequently in civic education classrooms in Sri Lanka are teacher and didactic teaching focused than learner initiated and inquiry based learning focused. **Student interactive approaches** are used sparingly, which further indicates that **more focused training on the use of such methods and the management of such classroom processes** should be provided to teachers.

Teachers themselves have indicated that they need training in effective civic instruction by giving second priority to teaching methods, to bring about improvement in civic related subject teaching.

9.2.4.5 Training in the use of more qualitative and varied methods of assessment of learning outcomes suited for the subject civics is indicated, for the methods reported as being used in classrooms are the more traditional written compositions, oral participation and multiple choice tests.

9.2.5 Climate of the school and classroom

9.2.5.1 A finding in the present study is that students were inclined towards proactive participation in school life, but that their *de facto* participation was limited to engagement in problem-solving exercises. They had very positive perceptions on their own capacity to bring about change and to democratize the way schools function. **Fostering more democratic and participatory processes of student engagement in the life of the school is recommended**, for, the opportunities schools provide for meaningful

participation, self-government and respect for rights are among the factors potentially influencing students' attitudes and behaviors, as citizens of the school and of society outside. **9.2.5.2** Negative behaviors such as truancy, bullying, vandalism and violence were seen to occur sometimes in more than half the schools in the sample. **In addressing student negative behaviors, students' active participation as responsible members of the school community, to bring pressure on peers who engage in these deviant behaviors is suggested**.

9.2.6 Strengthening students' concepts of democracy, citizenship, and government

9.2.6.1 The finding in the present study is that Sri Lankan students' theoretical understanding of the concepts of democracy, citizenship and government is sound. Whether this concept understanding is mere rote learning or the outcome of experiential learning is the question that should be raised. Students in classrooms are often reduced to passive recipients of knowledge, uncritically accepting definitions of terms that are blatantly contravened in their lived reality. Unless **students experience the lofty principles of democracy in practice, engage actively in being citizens of the school and society, and critically investigate democratic governance in practice**, their concept understandings will be mere untested idealistic rhetoric. The challenge in imparting civic instruction is to bring these concepts alive in the contexts in which students function.

9.2.7 Strengthening students' current and expected participation in political action

9.2.7.1 The findings of the CIVED study indicate that disinterest in active participation in politics is a phenomenon common to youth the world over. Other than voting in elections students do not envisage more direct political participation such as contesting elections or joining a political party. The level of trust indicated by students in government related institutions also reflects their disillusionment. In the present study the pattern of student responses is similar. **What importance does Sri Lanka as a democracy give to civic engagement, to fostering a deep interest on the part of citizens in the business of government and having an ongoing brief or possible check on the excesses of government? This stance should be clear and be reflected in the civic instruction**

imparted to students in the school system. If we want citizens in the future who are engaged in the democratic process, a good deal of work will need to be done to convince them that it is a useful and beneficial thing to do.   Schools appear to be a good place to do some of this work.

9.2.8   Promoting social cohesion through the school system

9.2.8.1 Some significant school system related factors that constrain the achievement of educationally relevant goals of national cohesion, national integrity and national unity were identified in the findings of the present study.   **Constructive measures must be adopted in the school system to address these issues**.   Inadequacy of and disparities in opportunities for second language learning is one major finding. Lack of opportunities for students from the different ethnic groups to learn together, to exchange ideas and for more informal interactions and cultural exchanges that foster mutual understanding are among other issues that should be addressed.

9.2.8.2 The potentially most proactive and effective measure in facilitating social cohesion though the school system is the development of second language (Sinhala/ Tamil) proficiency in all students. However, the findings indicate that second language learning in the school system suffers from many constraints such as the lack of teachers to teach the second languages, lack of will and enthusiasm on the part of stakeholders to make the necessary provision, teach, and learn.   The fact that students' second language proficiency is not assessed, and given due credit detracts from the importance accorded to second language proficiency by students, parents and teachers.   The findings also indicate that the system has failed to provide equal opportunities for second language learning.   **Due recognition and importance should be given to the acquisition of second language proficiency by all students, learning and teaching made functional, proficiency levels stipulated and tested. Removing barriers to communication between students from different ethnic groups will enable the fostering of social cohesion and mutual exchanges among them.**

9.2.8.3 Improving English language proficiency of students is another effective strategy to open channels of communication to students. Promoting this learning outcome is less problematic than that of second language learning, for the motivation to learn is by no means lacking. **A concerted effort to promote the English language proficiency of all students and the facilitation of English medium instruction are measures that have been adopted. Considerable work needs to be done to sustain these initiatives.**

9.2.8.4 The segregation of students from different ethnic groups in schools by medium of instruction, lack of opportunities for students from different ethnic groups to learn together, to exchange ideas and for more informal interactions and cultural exchanges **has resulted in polarization of attitudes based on ethnicity**. At national, provincial, zonal and school level, **there should be systematic planning, design and implementation of diverse and innovative programmes** to enable students from different ethnic groups to come together and engage in activities conducive to the promotion of social cohesion. **The Peace Education Unit, Ministry of Education should spearhead these initiatives** and enlist the collaboration of all groups already engaged in similar activities interfacing with the school system.

9.2.8.5   The findings on gender rights and equality indicate that a gender difference in support for women's rights continues to exist. **An in-depth analysis of the data in the present study to identify school related factors if any, that contribute to this gender bias would provide further insights and suggest measures to be adopted**.